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Gendering Cabinet Reshuffles in France and Spain

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Abstract

Presidents and prime ministers who form gender-parity cabinets receive positive news coverage and public praise. Cabinet reshuffles, with less attention, may offer scope to decrease the numbers of female ministers. Although research on the gendered impact of reshuffles is sparse, some studies suggest that women's presence declines during reshuffles. This article explores the gendered dynamics of reshuffles that follow initial gender-parity cabinets, asking whether the reshuffle context affects the proportions of men and women in reorganized cabinet teams. Employing a comparative case study approach, the article analyses initial gender-parity cabinets and subsequent reshuffled cabinets in France and Spain across three different presidents and prime ministers. We find that gender parity functions as a concrete floor, sustained in cabinet reshuffles, unaffected by political shocks and party system changes, and without consequence for women's appointments to high-prestige ministerships.

Keywords: female cabinet ministers; cabinet reshuffles; gender and cabinet formation; French cabinet reshuffles; Spanish cabinet reshuffles; gender and cabinet reshuffles

Women's presence in cabinets has grown dramatically around the world. In 2021, 37 countries had cabinets where women held more than 30% of portfolios; in 13 of these countries, women held more than half of ministerial posts (Inter-Parliamentary Union 2021). Changing societal views of women's place in politics, media attention and feminist activism have made all-male cabinets obsolete. Research seeking to explain the gendered dimensions of cabinet construction rarely distinguishes between women's presence in post-election and reshuffled cabinets, however. In this article, we ask if norms for women's inclusion differ for reshuffled cabinets compared to post-election cabinets, comparing two countries with different political systems and multiple gender-parity cabinets across time: France (2007–2021) and Spain (2004–2021).

We ask whether presidents and prime ministers maintain women's inclusion in similar proportions when they reshuffle their cabinets. Overall, we find that leaders

who construct gender-parity cabinets tend to maintain them. Nonetheless, our study reveals notable patterns indicating that full gender equality remains elusive. In both countries, we find men more likely to serve in high-prestige portfolios. At the same time, we find no evidence that cabinet reshuffles disadvantage women at the level of individual ministers or at the level of the cabinet as a collective. Our study finds no significant differences in how individual men and women experience cabinet reshuffles, and we find, in general, that presidents and prime ministers maintain similar proportions of women in cabinet across initial and reshuffled cabinets.

The gendered logic of cabinet reshuffles

Why might we expect different gender logics for reshuffles? Two conditions shaping cabinet formation following elections are absent for reshuffles and may affect women's cabinet inclusion. First, media attention to ministerial selection is greater during the immediate post-election period, when prime ministers or presidents form their first cabinet. 'The presentation of a team of ministers after an extended election campaign (and, in many countries, lengthy negotiations between different parties) regularly marks a genuine highlight of the government-building process in terms of media attention and public excitement' (Helms and Vercesi 2022). For leaders who have made public commitments to diversity, activist women and the media pay close attention to women's inclusion in the new cabinet. The features of the cabinet as a collective body are closely scrutinized at the initial stage, with attention to the proportion of women and to the proportion of ministers representing other collectivities such as region, race or generation. Cabinet reshuffles, however, attract less media attention, providing presidents and prime ministers more leeway in selecting ministers from their (generally homogenous) personal networks and in slighting cabinet representational requirements.[1] Second, the timing of elections is relatively predictable while timing of cabinet reshuffles is not. Reshuffles often result from random 'shocks', such as a scandal, 'social protests' or other unanticipated events (Fischer et al. 2012: 515). Where reshuffles are unforeseen, feminist activists lack the opportunity to raise issues of women's cabinet inclusion, enabling a president or prime minister to replace female ministers with men.

Despite these differences, research on cabinet reshuffles offers little guidance on how such inter-election changes in cabinets might be gendered differently from cabinets formed following an election. Jörn Fischer et al. (2012: 507) suggest in passing that gender might affect the frequency with which events lead to changes in cabinet that result in 'ministerial exit', but they do not speculate on women's inclusion or exclusion in a reshuffled cabinet.

Some researchers, however, find that the proportions of women in cabinet are indeed lower for reshuffles compared to initial cabinets. There is suggestive evidence that leaders pay less attention to representation during reshuffles than when forming their cabinets after an election, except in cases of reshuffles motivated by an upcoming election. Studying presidential appointments in the United States, Janet Martin finds that 'all presidents make a greater effort at the beginning of their term in office to recruit and appoint women than is the case during the course of an administration' (1989: 165). MaryAnne Borrelli's study of gender and presidential cabinets (2002: 43) similarly finds women more likely to be appointed to

initial cabinets, noting that greater media scrutiny leads newly elected presidents to be more concerned with symbolism. Not all reshuffles are the same, however. When leaders seek to refresh their image ahead of an election, as Marcelo Camerlo and Aníbal Pérez-Liñan (2015: 608, 609) note, 'the electoral calendar decisively shapes cabinet dynamics', particularly in presidential systems with fixed terms of office, providing 'incentives to mobilize voter support'. These motivations for cabinet reshuffles have gendered implications. Because they are intended to signal a government's direction, if re-elected, such reshuffles increase the likelihood of bringing new faces into cabinet, creating opportunities for women, who are more likely to be political newcomers. Rebecca Davis's study of women's cabinet appointments in Western Europe examined pre-election reshuffles, defined as those occurring 12 months or fewer prior to an election. She found no evidence that women are brought in as 'fresh faces' for pre-election manoeuvres. Instead, like Martin and Borrelli, she found women's appointments more likely immediately following elections than within a government's term (1997: 79).

Many reshuffles are provoked by economic or political shocks, but the gendered consequences of such reshuffles are not straightforward. Although economic or national security crises provide advantages to men, given the association of masculine traits and competence on economic and security issues, crises may also advantage women if the government in power is linked to serious mismanagement or corruption scandals. In such cases, senior men in government circles will suffer tarnished reputations if they are considered political insiders. Women's status as outsiders may confer opportunities during such crises. Karen Beckwith (2015) explains that political crises pose gendered opportunities for women to access party leadership because senior men are likely to be too close to the unpopular leaders and junior men may prefer to delay seeking leadership until their party's fate improves. A similar gendered logic may apply to cabinet reshuffles provoked by political crisis, such as widespread discontent with the government or mass protests against specific policy initiatives.

Few scholars have examined gender and ministerial exits specifically, but the evidence from those studies is mixed. Studying five presidential democracies, Maria Escobar-Lemmon and Michelle Taylor-Robinson (2016: 183; 193) found few gender differences in how men and women left their posts, suggesting that, once appointed, women ministers experience similar treatment while in office. The absence of gender differences could mean that the motivations for including women in post-election cabinets do not disappear with reshuffles. Where 'rules specify group representation', a reshuffle may require replacement of an outgoing minister with another who fits the group representational requirements (Annesley et al. 2019; Fischer et al. 2012: 511).

This dynamic fits what Claire Annesley et al. (2019: 252–255) call the 'concrete floor': the number or proportion of women deemed necessary for a cabinet to be perceived as legitimate. Concrete floors are established over time at different thresholds, but there is evidence that, once established, they are maintained by subsequent leaders when forming post-election cabinets. Following work by Annesley et al. (2019), we ask if the pattern of concrete floors for initial cabinets holds for reshuffled cabinets.

We further extend this work by examining gendered patterns of portfolio allocation in initial and reshuffled cabinets. Previous research shows that women are

less likely to receive high-profile appointments (Goddard 2019; Kroeber and Hüffelman 2022) and more likely to head ministries associated with feminine (and less prestigious) policy areas (Krook and O'Brien 2012). Regarding reshuffled cabinets, ministers serving in prestigious posts are more likely to survive in cabinet and, in a study of seven west European countries, men were found to 'have significantly higher survival rates' than women (Bright et al. 2015: 442, 456). We further consider how gendered patterns of portfolio allocation affect women's prospects for remaining in cabinet during reshuffles.

In sum, scholarship on gender, ministerial recruitment and cabinet reshuffles has paid little attention to women's representation in reshuffled cabinets. We address these lacunae in cabinet research by examining cabinet appointments across time in two countries with multiple gender-parity cabinets following elections, France and Spain, and we provide a hard test of the concrete-floor model by focusing on gender-parity cabinets.

Case selection and methods

We explore the gendered dimensions of cabinet reshuffles through a paired comparative case study of cabinets in France and Spain, since the first parity cabinet appointed in each country.[2] We seek to identify the mechanisms or events 'that alter relations among specified sets of elements in identical or closely similar ways over a variety of situations' (Tarrow 2010: 239) to understand how initial gender-parity cabinets establish a concrete floor of gender parity in cabinet reshuffles (or fail to do so). In focusing on gender-parity cabinets – those with equal numbers of male and female cabinet ministers and arguably the most challenging to construct, we provide a hard test of the concrete-floor model.[3]

France and Spain differ on two structural factors with implications for ministerial selection: (1) fixity of government term and (2) degree of centralization. The term of government – fixed for the French presidency, or flexible, as in the Spanish parliamentary system – establishes the level of political (and potentially electoral) risk of cabinet reshuffles. French presidents enjoy fixed terms of five years and hence have clear information about when the next election will take place, providing opportunities for strategic pre-election cabinet reshuffles.[4] In Spain's parliamentary system, prime ministers must win an investiture vote and maintain the support of parliament throughout their term;[5] hence, prime ministers must consider the possibility that a cabinet reshuffle could lead to a fall of government before the next scheduled election.[6] Fixity of government term should affect the number of cabinet reshuffles throughout a government, with opportunities for gendered cabinet changes. Multiple cabinet reshuffles require continuing reassessment of women's places within each cabinet and a recommitment to gender parity.

Second, France is a unitary state with no politically significant territorial cleavages. Spain, in contrast, is a multilevel state with 17 regions enjoying varying degrees of autonomy and several regions with their own distinct party systems (Field 2016). The territorial dimension of Spain's politics has become increasingly conflictual, with one of the largest and wealthiest regions, Catalonia, pursuing independence. The territorial cleavage has exacerbated left–right conflicts and made government formation more difficult. Representational requirements to include

cabinet members from specific regions further complicate cabinet formation (Annesley et al. 2019: 155–175) and make it more likely that prime ministers focus on cabinet as a collective rather than individual ministers when reshuffling their teams.

France and Spain share similarities on a range of factors relevant to cabinet formation and women's inclusion. Both the French president and the Spanish prime minister have autonomy in cabinet formation. Except during *cohabitation*, the French president appoints the prime minister and the cabinet (Bucur 2017; Grossman 2009: 269–270). The Spanish Constitution gives the prime minister sole power to select ministers (Rodríguez-Teruel 2011); ministers are formally appointed by the monarch once a successful investiture vote for the prime minister has taken place (Ajenjo 2015).

Second, the pool of eligible candidates for ministerial appointment extends beyond national parliaments in both countries; there is no requirement that ministers be drawn from the legislature. In France, deputies appointed to cabinet must leave their legislative seats on becoming minister; nonetheless, 'the recruitment pool for ministers remains dominated by parliamentarians' (Kam and Indriðason 2005b: 47). In Spain, while many ministers are drawn from the lower house of parliament, non-parliamentary ministers have become more common in recent years (Rodríguez Teruel and Mir 2018).

An additional similarity concerns women's political representation. Although neither country mandates gender parity for cabinet appointments, each country has legislative gender quotas for elective offices. France adopted a gender-parity law for candidates for all political parties in 2000.[7] In 2008, quota requirements were extended beyond elected office to include 'professional and social responsibilities' (Jacquemart et al. 2020: 54). By 2012, the Sauvadet law extended quotas to senior executive positions in the bureaucracy (Jacquemart et al. 2020: 53), and in March 2021, France introduced 'gender quotas on the Executive Teams and leadership pipelines of companies over 1,000 people'.[8] The steady spread of gender quotas over time heightened French presidents' awareness of gender in cabinet composition, and not just in post-election cabinets (see also Claveria 2014). According to Valentin Behr and Sébastien Michon (2013: 335, 332), 'gender parity has progressively become a mandatory rule of cabinet composition … At every cabinet reshuffle, political leaders, journalists and analysts measure representativeness … on the basis of the number of women.'

In Spain, too, quota laws apply to elected office, corporate boards and the public sector (Verge and Lombardo 2018). Gender quotas were used by left parties, including the Partido Socialista Obrero Español (Spanish Workers' Party – PSOE), for over 30 years, but the 2007 Equality Law made them mandatory for all political parties. The law established a 'principle of balanced presence', meaning that neither sex could exceed 60% of candidates for office, members on corporate boards or appointed positions in the public sector (Verge and Lombardo 2018: 134–144). Although the right-wing Partido Popular (PP) opposed the law, it has complied with the rules, leading to a steady increase in the proportion of women in parliament. Although electoral quotas were slower to succeed in France, women's representation has reached similar levels in the two countries, with women holding 39.5% of seats in the French National Assembly in 2020 and 44% of seats in the

Spanish Congress of Deputies following the 2019 elections. These similarities – autonomy of the selector in cabinet formation, a ministerial eligibility pool beyond members of parliament and a history of gender quotas in other political arenas – should facilitate gender parity in reshuffled cabinets.

A final similarity concerns the types of political change and crises that serve as the backdrop for cabinet reshuffles in the two countries. Each country has experienced profound changes to its party system as well as several political crises in the past decade. France has experienced party system changes across the board. The French post-war party system had conventionally been constructed as: a combination of parties and political elite groupings of the centre right (e.g. the Union pour un Mouvement Populaire, UMP); the left anchored by the Parti Socialiste (PS); with various minor parties of the right and left, including a Green Party (Les Verts).[9] Recent French party system changes have included the confirmation of the right-wing nationalist Front National (FN, now Rassemblement National) as an established political party.[10] Following its 2012 presidential re-election loss, the UMP re-established itself in 2015 as Les Républicains; this transformation followed several years of renaming and recombining of political elements of the centre right in France. Most important, France saw the rise of a new political party formulation, En Marche! (subsequently renamed La République en Marche – LREM), which produced in 2017 a successful presidential candidate in Emmanuel Macron, who had never held elected office. In those same elections, the PS imploded, its presidential candidate eliminated in the first round.

Spain's politics have likewise undergone profound transformation in the past decade. A stable two-party system with the leftist PSOE and the rightist PP normally holding a majority of parliamentary seats has been transformed by the emergence of new state-wide parties and the reinvigoration of territorial crises (Vidal and Sánchez Vítores 2019). The declining combined vote share received by the PSOE and PP and the emergence of a new centre-right party, Ciudadanos, and a radical left party, Podemos, added to increased regional conflict and created significant volatility, with frequent elections after failed attempts by party leaders with narrow pluralities unable to gain enough support to win investiture votes in parliament.[11]

These party system changes in France and in Spain, not yet solidified in either country, and the various related crises faced by their governments, are factors that should arguably mitigate against attention to gender equity and women's equitable inclusion in reshuffled cabinets. Because party system change is common across Western Europe (Emmanuele and Chiaramonte 2018), our focus on France and Spain can serve as a basis for hypothesis-generating comparative cases in other countries, providing the foundation for further research.

Data and hypotheses

We constructed an original dataset of all cabinets from the first gender-parity cabinet in each country, including both initial and reshuffled cabinets, to 15 January 2022. For France, data include ministers appointed throughout the Sarkozy, Hollande and Macron presidencies; for Spain, all ministers appointed during Zapatero's, Rajoy's and Sánchez's governments are included. In addition to the

sex and portfolio for each minister, we also recorded the dates they entered and exited.[12] Following Christopher Kam and Indriði Indriðason (2005a: 329), we define cabinet reshuffles 'as any change in ministerial personnel or responsibilities that affects more than two officeholders and at least two portfolios' during the lifetime of an existing cabinet. Initial cabinets are defined as those formed: (1) following a general election (for French presidents and Spanish prime ministers); or (2) appointment of a new prime minister of a different party affiliation from his or her predecessor, in the absence of an election (for Spain).

With data for initial and reshuffled cabinets in the two countries, we make *within-case comparisons* across time, as well as *cross-case comparisons* between France and Spain. We derive our hypotheses about the gendered logics of cabinet reshuffles based on the literature discussed in the previous section. Regarding within-case comparisons across time, we hypothesize a concrete-floor impact: *the proportion of women in cabinet should persist across reshuffles* (H1). Because both countries have legislated gender quotas, we expect that leaders in both countries will maintain that proportion of women in cabinet reshuffles. Individual women may of course be removed, but we expect the gender balance to be maintained (i.e. other women will be brought into cabinet).

Second, although there is no research on party system change and gendered cabinet formation triggered by political crises, we anticipate potential impacts. Because changes in actual parties and party formations create uncertainty and unpredictability, and increase competition in the party system (Kitschelt 2011), presidents and prime ministers may be reluctant to appoint inexperienced or relative newcomers to cabinet (although see Ennser-Jedenastik 2021). Historical patterns of men's political over-representation mean that women are more likely to be newcomers and thus outside party leaders' inner circles. We expect that *when reshuffles are motivated by political crises, the proportion of women will change* (H2), but the direction of change will depend on the type of crisis. In France and Spain, new parties challenged political elites on unemployment and austerity but also highlighted corruption and the need for political renovation. Gender and politics research finds that women benefit from gendered expectations that women are more concerned with social welfare and are more honest than men (Barnes and Beaulieu 2014; Esarey and Schwindt-Bayer 2019). We therefore hypothesize that *corruption crises will lead to increased numbers of women in cabinet* (H2a); *as will crises provoked by austerity and unemployment* (H2b). However, *when crises are provoked by terrorism, we expect the proportion of women to decline* (H2c), given men's presumed competence on national security issues.

Leaders may also reshuffle their cabinets ahead of an election, with an eye to improving their electoral position. Previous research finds no gendered effect of pre-election cabinet reshuffles (Davis 1997). Theoretically, it makes sense to assume that leaders may wish to signal inclusiveness by bringing in more women during a pre-election reshuffle but also that leaders might bring in well-known heavyweights to signal the strength of their political team. As such, we hypothesize that *pre-election reshuffles will not change the gender balance, even if individual men and women are replaced* (H3).

We explore other gendered patterns in cabinet reshuffles by examining portfolios and whether women are more likely than men to exit within a term. For

portfolios, we distinguish between high-prestige, mid-prestige and low-prestige portfolios, following coding schemes common in cabinets and gender scholarship (Goddard 2019; Krook and O'Brien 2012). High-prestige posts are the inner-circle posts, including interior, finance, presidency, justice, foreign affairs and defence. Low-prestige posts include sport, culture, science, women and youth, while mid-prestige posts include all the economic and social welfare posts such as energy, industry, education, housing and the like. Based on consistent findings of women's lower likelihood of receiving high-prestige portfolios (Goddard 2019; Kroeber and Hüffelmann 2022; Krook and O'Brien 2012), we expect to see similar patterns, *with men more likely to hold high-prestige posts for both initial and reshuffled cabinets* in France and Spain (H4).[13]

Research on whether women are more likely to exit during a term is limited; hence, we have no firm basis on which to predict gender differences in cabinet survival rates. That said, precisely because we hypothesize that norms of gender balance in the two countries will minimize reductions in the proportions of women when cabinets are reshuffled, *we do not expect to find differences between men and women when it comes to exiting cabinet early* (H5).

Gender parity and cabinet reshuffles in France

Three French gender-parity cabinets were constructed following national elections in 2007, 2012 and 2017, respectively, by French presidents Nicolas Sarkozy (UMP), François Hollande (PS) and Emmanuel Macron (LREM). Each commanded a governing majority in the National Assembly and reshuffled their cabinets several times. Sarkozy made six major changes to his cabinets; François Fillon continued as prime minister across all cabinet reshuffles. Hollande thrice changed the composition of his cabinet, with three prime ministers (Jean-Marc Ayrault 2012–2014; Manuel Valls 2014–2016 and Bernard Cazeneuve 2016–2017). Macron, elected in 2017, reshuffled his cabinet three times.

Confirming our first hypothesis, gender parity was generally maintained across reshuffles (see Figure 1), with the exception of Sarkozy's cabinets. Sarkozy's initial cabinet was the first gender-parity cabinet in French history. However, his first reshuffled cabinet fell slightly below parity, keeping the number of female ministers constant ($n = 7$) but increasing the size of the cabinet (from 15 to 16). Thereafter, women's cabinet inclusion declined. Although cabinet size remained generally constant, only three women survived to serve in the reshuffled cabinets of June 2009 and March 2010, constituting less than 20% of ministers. By Sarkozy's fourth cabinet reshuffle in November 2010, seven women were included in a cabinet of larger size (20), but women's numbers declined in the two subsequent reshuffles (to six and five, respectively),[14] even as cabinet grew in June 2011 to 23 ministers. Although women's numbers were relatively constant, Sarkozy increased the number of ministries, appointing more men (but not more women) to cabinet, hence decreasing the percentage of female ministers across time.[15]

Presidential candidate François Hollande promised gender parity in his 2012 campaign; nine women and ten men provided such parity in his initial cabinet; minor cabinet adjustments on 18 June 2012, not constituting a cabinet reshuffle, increased the number of women in cabinet to ten, equal to the number of male

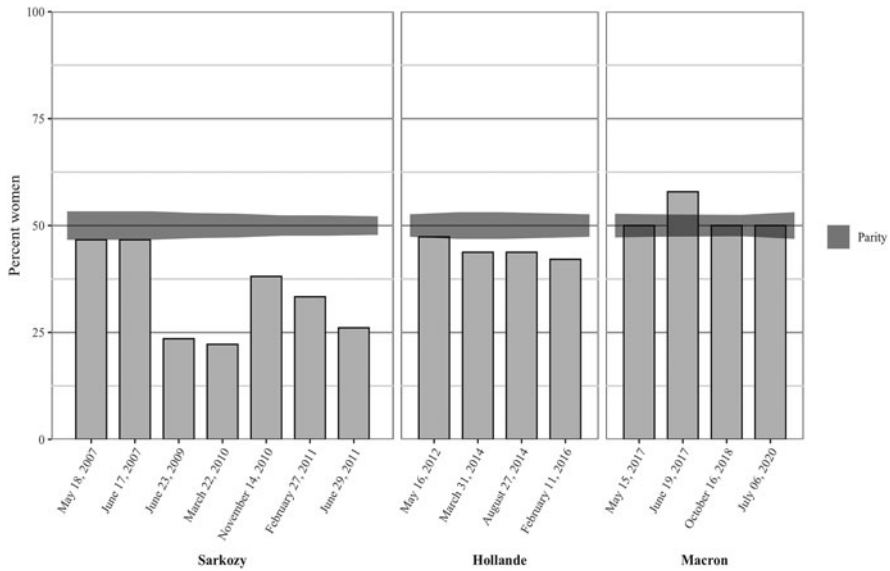

Figure 1. Percentage of Women in Cabinet, France 2004–2021, by President

ministers.[16] Hollande reshuffled his cabinet three times thereafter. Seven women and nine men served in the first reshuffled cabinet of 31 March 2014, just missing parity. A major reshuffle, on 27 August 2014, resulted in a cabinet of eight women and nine men, meeting the standard for parity. Hollande's final reshuffle, 11 February 2016, achieved parity, with ten women and ten men. A final adjustment, in December 2016, resulted in a gender-parity cabinet of nine women and ten men.

In 2017, presidential candidate Emmanuel Macron promised to form a gender-parity cabinet if elected and, like Hollande, he did so, appointing nine women and nine men to his initial cabinet. Macron reshuffled his cabinet three times, and generally maintained gender parity across these reshuffles. His first, on 19 June 2017, gave women a majority: eleven women and nine men. His second reshuffle, in October 2018, violated gender parity, with twelve men but only nine women, the sole Macron cabinet with fewer women than men. The July 2020 reshuffle restored gender parity, in a slightly smaller cabinet. Fourteen women served in the Macron cabinets, three of whom served continuously. After his initial cabinet, Macron reshuffled most of his female ministers out of cabinet but brought in four new women as ministers.

Gender-parity predictions and variation in France

We hypothesized that cabinet reshuffles resulting from different types of political shocks would affect women's inclusion differently: corruption and austerity crises would increase women's cabinet inclusion (H2a and H2b) but terrorism would reduce women's inclusion (H2c). Recent French presidents have had to address multiple political shocks: corruption, terrorist attacks, high unemployment and party system changes.

All three presidents examined herein have confronted corruption charges involving their governments and cabinet members. Contrary to our prediction, corruption crises had no impact on women's cabinet presence in France (H2a). Most issues were resolved by ministerial resignation, although in some cases, a president used the opportunity to engage in a broader reorganization of his governing team. Sarkozy's minister of employment, social relations and solidarity, Éric Woerth, accused of a conflict of interest, lost his post in the March 2010 cabinet reshuffle (Erlanger 2010); Sarkozy did not increase the number of women in cabinet with this reshuffle, and hence did not employ women's presence strategically to signal opposition to or resolution of corruption. Hollande confronted several corruption scandals, most of which did not involve cabinet ministers and none of which involved women (BBC News 2013a, 2013b). Near the end of Hollande's presidency, in March 2017, PS interior minister Bruno Le Roux resigned in response to claims that he had employed his children in government positions for which they did little or no work, paying them with public funds (Morenne 2017). Le Roux's resignation prompted his replacement but not a cabinet reshuffle or change in the number of women in the cabinet.

At least three of Macron's cabinet ministers had been accused of corrupt activities, including illegal nepotism (Vinocur 2017), misuse of public funds and conflict of interest (Reuters 2021). Most seriously, Macron survived a vote of no-confidence in July 2018 (Young 2018) related to corruption charges (*Le Monde* 2021; McAuley 2019). Despite the no-confidence vote, which Macron easily withstood, no cabinet reshuffle ensued.[17] Charges of corruption neither triggered increases in women's cabinet appointments to signal a clean sweep nor removed women from office.

Recent French presidents have also grappled with the economic shock of serious unemployment challenges, but these generally have not affected cabinet gender balances (H2b). Only for Sarkozy, approaching the midterm of his presidency, confronted 'with an economy reeling from the euro crisis and nearly zero growth [with an] unemployment rate of 9.9%, a 12-year high, and rising' (Erlanger 2012), were women removed from cabinet. Sarkozy reshuffled his cabinet in June 2009 and March 2010, keeping only three women in each. Hollande, who 'had publicly announced … that his candidacy for a second mandate would be conditioned by the decline in unemployment' (Durovic 2019: 1488), nonetheless maintained a relatively constant number of women in cabinet. In general, Hollande did not reshuffle women out of cabinet, even in response to unemployment challenges.

Although unemployment hit a decade low by 2019 (Vaudano 2019), Macron's economic policies provoked massive civil resistance in the Gilets Jaunes protests against a proposed gasoline tax, involving hundreds of thousands of protesters across France (*Le Monde* 2019). Macron's approval ratings dropped, with 'only 26 percent of the French having a good opinion' of their president, a condition under which a cabinet reshuffle might have been expected.[18] Nonetheless, the only change of cabinet was the removal of Interior Minister Christophe Castaner, 'widely criticised for his handling of the … protests' (Henley 2020). Macron refrained from reshuffling his cabinet, and minor changes of ministers had no impact on female cabinet members. In sum, at a collective level, women's inclusion is not affected by political shocks as motivations for cabinet reshuffles; the proportion of women in cabinet remains generally constant.

With respect to terrorism-related crises (H2c), France experienced several politically motivated violent attacks between August 2007 and August 2019.[19] Nonetheless, such threats have not reduced the proportion of female ministers. Some of the worst attacks occurred during the Hollande presidency, including the violent attack on staff of the satirical newspaper *Charlie Hebdo* in January 2015, a deadly assault on a Jewish kosher grocery, a series of coordinated violent attacks across Paris on 13 November 2015, resulting in more than 100 deaths, and an attack on a crowd of celebrants in Nice on Bastille Day, 2016, which killed 86 people, with an additional 433 injured. These attacks had no impact on women's representation in Hollande's cabinets. Terrorist attacks have continued during the Macron presidency, including an attack on 3 October 2019 on the Paris police headquarters, resulting in five deaths, and an attack on 29 October 2020 on the Notre Dame basilica in Nice. These events did not lead the president to remove women ministers and replace them with men. None of these events has had any impact on the proportion of women in Macron's cabinets.

Does the approach of an election encourage a president to increase the number of women in cabinet, to remove a potentially contentious issue from his campaign? Conversely, does a president with discouraging re-election prospects reshuffle his cabinet to include the 'big beasts' who might increase his re-election chances? Limited research suggests that as an election approaches, leaders will abandon gender parity among ministers in a pre-election reshuffle (H3). Following Davis (1997), using a 12-month lead time for French presidential elections, the evidence for France is inconclusive. Two of the three French presidents reshuffled their cabinets within a year or less of the scheduled presidential election. Sarkozy's 2010 cabinet reshuffle, more than a year before scheduled elections, was considered to have been a strategic move in anticipation of the 2012 elections (Erlanger 2010). In the 2010 reshuffle, Sarkozy increased the number of women ministers. In his final reshuffle in June 2011, the number of women stayed constant (although their percentage of cabinet posts dropped to 21.8%). Hollande, declining to run for re-election, reshuffled his cabinet in February 2016, more than a year before the election, but made minor adjustments in December 2016 that shifted the ultimate cabinet below parity. Macron, facing re-election in April 2022, had not reshuffled his gender-parity cabinet since July 2020. This most recent reshuffle, however, was nonetheless targeted towards re-election (Henley 2020). Given the relative brevity of cabinet duration across the three presidencies, cabinet reshuffles in a year preceding an election appear to be part of the regular pattern of cabinet renewal; changes within cabinet support a conclusion of cabinet member durability with little disadvantage for female ministers or women's collective presence in cabinet, even when presidents strategically reshuffle cabinet ministers to bolster re-election chances.

The allocation of cabinet posts does, however, follow a clear gendered logic, confirming our prediction that women are less likely than men to receive high-prestige portfolios (H4). Of 36 high-prestige cabinet appointments in France since 2007, men received 16 (69.6%) of them (see Table 1). Women are even less likely to be appointed to a high-prestige post during a reshuffle: 11 men and just two women were appointed to high-prestige appointments in cabinet reshuffles.

We also examined whether women and men are equally likely to exit cabinet within a term (H5).[20] We found that women are as likely as their male counterparts

Table 1. Gender and Portfolio Allocation in France in Initial and Reshuffled Cabinets

	High-prestige		Medium-prestige		Low-prestige	
	%	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*
Initial						
Men	69.6	16	51.3	20	10.0	1
Women	30.4	7	48.7	19	90.0	9
Total	**100.0**	**23**	**100.0**	**39**	**100.0**	**10**
Cramer's $V = 0.371$, $p < 0.007$						
Reshuffled						
Men	84.6	11	65.9	27	50.0	6
Women	15.4	2	34.1	14	50.0	6
Total	**100.0**	**13**	**100.0**	**41**	**100.0**	**12**
Cramer's $V = 0.227$, not significant at $p < 0.183$						

to continue in cabinet and are not more likely than men to exit cabinet early, confirming our hypothesis. Although nearly half of all cabinet ministers exit early, there is no statistically significant gender difference. Some 70% of women appointed to initial cabinets exit early as do 70.6% of men (see Table 2).

In sum, we do not find that reshuffles follow a gendered logic that is different from considerations around women's inclusion for initial cabinets. With the exception of Sarkozy, French presidents have generally maintained gender parity. Nor have French presidents used political shocks – not even terrorist attacks – as opportunities to remove women from cabinet. Instead, the political autonomy of French presidents permits them to form cabinets as they wish; the ease of constructing gender-parity cabinets and the diffusion of gender quotas combined to sustain gender-parity cabinets across time in France.

Table 2. Gender, Exits and Ministerial Survival in France

	Women		Men	
	%	*N*	%	*N*
Survive in cabinet	30.0	12	29.4	15
Exit early	70.0	28	70.6	36
Total	**100.0**	**40**	**100.0**	**51**

Notes: Phi = 0.006, not significant at $p < 0.951$.

Cabinet reshuffles and gender parity in Spain (2004–2021)

Two Spanish prime ministers, José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero and Pedro Sánchez, both leading the PSOE, formed cabinets in which women held either an equal number or a

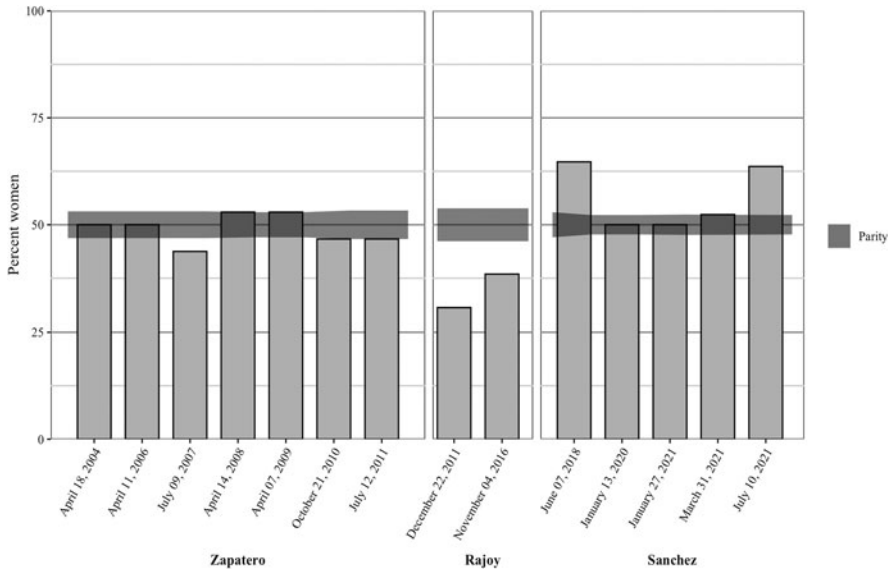

Figure 2. Percentage of Women in Cabinet, Spain 2004–2021, by Prime Minister

majority of ministerial posts. During conservative leader Mariano Rajoy's term, men made up a majority of ministers. Across all three leaders, the gender ratio did not change substantially from the initial cabinets, despite reshuffles and ministerial exits (see Figure 2). Women's inclusion persisted even as reshuffles occurred against the backdrop of economic and corruption crises and far-reaching party system change.

During his first term (2004–2008) Zapatero reshuffled his cabinet twice, maintaining gender balance in the first reshuffle but reducing women's inclusion to seven of 16 ministers (43.7%) following the second reshuffle. Upon re-election in 2008, Zapatero's cabinet grew to 17 ministers (nine women and eight men). Two reshuffles occurred during this (shorter) term; when Zapatero left office in 2011, there were seven women and eight men in cabinet. Using our definition of gender parity, particularly when cabinets contain an odd number of ministers, only one reshuffle (in July 2007) fell below parity. Gender parity was maintained for all other cabinet reshuffles during Zapatero's term.

Becoming prime minister in December 2011, Mariano Rajoy constructed a much smaller initial cabinet, with four women (30.7%) and nine men. Although eight members of the initial cabinet exited, two due to scandals, Rajoy avoided any large-scale reorganizations of his team. At the end of his first term, women's cabinet representation had dropped to 23.1%, with three women and 10 men in cabinet. Rajoy's second term, beginning in November 2016, ended when he lost a confidence vote in parliament on 1 June 2018. The proportion of women remained steady throughout (38%), with only one minister exiting during the shortened term.

Following Rajoy's defeat, PSOE leader Pedro Sánchez became Spain's new prime minister and formed the world's first cabinet where a super-majority of ministers

were women (11 women and six men). The number and percentage of women in cabinet held steady throughout Sánchez's first term in office, despite the exit of three ministers. The second Sánchez government, still in office at the time of this writing, is the first coalition government since the return of democracy. After failing to win an investiture vote on his own, Sánchez entered into coalition with Podemos, forming a cabinet with five ministers from that party. The 22-member cabinet included an equal proportion of men and women. No reshuffles occurred in its first year in office, but three reshuffles took place in 2021, leading to larger proportions of women. The first reshuffle, in January 2021, was small and maintained gender parity. The second and third reshuffles were much larger, and in both, the number of men declined. A reshuffle in March 2021 changed the gender balance to 12 women and 10 men and in the large-scale reorganization in July 2021, Sánchez increased the number of women to 14 and reduced the inclusion of men to eight (36%).

Gendered expectations and Spanish cabinet reshuffles

Consistent with H1, the proportion of women is generally maintained during reshuffles, with two exceptions where the level of women's inclusion declined and two where it increased (see Figure 2). Contrary to our expectations about the impact of different types of political crises on women's cabinet inclusion, our data do not show Spanish prime ministers including more women in reshuffles provoked by corruption or austerity crises (H2a, H2b) and terrorism threats have not led to fewer women in cabinet (H2c).

Political crises driven by corruption intensified in 2013 during Rajoy's administration. Although Rajoy did not reshuffle his cabinet, the crisis of confidence in Rajoy's government was serious, leading to significant declines in voter support for the PP (Delgado and López 2014: 290). In 2014, a corruption scandal led to the exit of the health minister, Ana Mato, who was linked to a kickback scheme (Delgado and López 2015: 279). The PP was not alone in being linked to corruption scandals; the monarchy and other political parties were likewise facing charges, and public sentiment was soon viewing corruption as an all-encompassing problem among the country's elite. Perhaps given the degree of risk, Rajoy avoided reshuffling his cabinet. As such, we cannot confirm H2a: corruption crises did not lead to cabinet reshuffles that increased the proportion of women.

During Zapatero's first term (2004–2008), Spain's economy grew, but his second term coincided with the onset of a global financial crisis. The prime minister reorganized his cabinet three times, but our data do not confirm H2b: these reshuffles did not lead to larger proportions of women to soften the image of the government's austerity measures. The first and largest reshuffle, occurring against the backdrop of anti-austerity demonstrations, involved six ministries changing hands, with embattled ministers replaced by party heavyweights (Aizpeolea and Díez 2009). Yet gender parity endured, and a woman, Elena Salgado, already one of Zapatero's top ministers, was moved from the public administration portfolio to the economy and finance portfolio. A second reorganization took place about 18 months later, amidst a worsening unemployment crisis and declining government popularity. Zapatero proclaimed the reorganization to be about renewing

and strengthening the government in order to bring about the reforms needed for economic recovery (Romero 2010). The prime minister eliminated two portfolios (equality and housing), which were absorbed into larger departments. These posts had been led by women, leaving the cabinet with seven women and eight men, still meeting our definition of gender parity.

Regarding terrorism, we expected that gender stereotypes would lead prime ministers to favour men as ministers given their assumed competence on national security (H2c). Yet this was not the case in Spain. The country's first-ever parity cabinet was formed in the wake of the deadly Madrid train bombings, occurring just three days before the general elections. Unlike France, which suffered several instances of international terrorism, Spain has long faced the threat of domestic terrorism linked to the separatist Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA). During Zapatero's and Rajoy's terms, some attacks occurred but there were also instances of ceasefires and positive developments. None of these events led to a cabinet reshuffle.

As with the French case, the Spanish case confirms H3: pre-election cabinet reshuffles do not change the proportion of women in cabinet. Of the three Spanish prime ministers under study, only Zapatero undertook a reshuffle in July 2007 that was clearly targeted at the next election. The portfolios that changed hands were not part of the cabinet's inner core, however, but instead included health, housing and culture. The gender balance remained the same.

Turning to expectations about portfolio prestige and duration in cabinet, our data confirm our hypothesis that men are more likely than women to serve in high-prestige portfolios (H4). Combining all appointments since 2004, only 48 ministers held high-prestige posts, but 32 of them were men (66.7%) and only 16 (33.3%) were women. A somewhat different pattern emerges when we disaggregate by initial and reshuffled cabinets. Although the numbers are smaller, men are considerably more likely to be appointed to high-prestige posts in reshuffled cabinets than are women (see Table 3).

When it comes to exiting early versus serving a complete term (H5), we find no significant differences between men and women in Spain. Of women appointed to initial cabinets, 48.9% exited early, compared to 40.4% for men (see Table 4).

In sum, reviewing cabinet reshuffles in Spain across the last three prime ministers confirms that, regardless of the factors prompting the reshuffle, the proportion of women does not generally decline. Nor are women ministers individually more likely to exit cabinet during a term than men.

Discussion: gender, cabinet reshuffles and inclusion

Our within-case comparisons of men's and women's experiences in cabinet reshuffles find that women were not significantly more likely to be disadvantaged (i.e. lose their position) when leaders reshuffle their team of ministers in either country. The similarities across the two countries lead to broadly similar gendered patterns of reshuffles: no matter the reasons for a cabinet reshuffle, women's inclusion remains equivalent to their presence in initial cabinets. Variation in political system type between France and Spain does not, notably, produce different gendered patterns for cabinet reshuffles. As individuals, women appointed to initial cabinets are not more likely than men to exit early, and in collective terms, representational

Table 3. Gender and Portfolio Prestige in Spain: Initial and Reshuffled Cabinets

	High-prestige		Medium-prestige		Low-prestige	
	%	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*
Initial						
Men	61.1	22	42.3	22	60.0	6
Women	38.9	14	57.7	30	40.0	4
Total	**100.0**	**36**	**100.0**	**52**	**100.0**	**10**
Cramer's $V = 0.185$, not significant at $p < 0.186$						
Reshuffled						
Men	83.3	10	50.0	12	50.0	2
Women	16.7	2	50.0	12	50.0	2
Total	**100.0**	**12**	**100.0**	**24**	**100.0**	**4**
Cramer's $V = 0.312$, not significant at $p < 0.143$						

Table 4. Gender, Exits and Ministerial Survival in Spain

	Women		Men	
	%	*N*	%	*N*
Survive in cabinet	51.1	23	59.6	34
Exit early	48.9	22	40.4	23
Total	**100.0**	**45**	**100.0**	**57**

Notes: Phi = –0.085, not significant at $p < 0.389$.

requirements with respect to gender that shape appointments to a leader's initial cabinet operate similarly for reshuffles.

Our examination of cabinet reshuffles and women's appointments in France and Spain offers some encouraging findings. We find little support for the various hypotheses concerning gender differences resulting from cabinet reshuffles of post-election gender-parity cabinets. We expected gender parity to be more challenging to maintain across reshuffles, particularly against the backdrop of political and economic shocks experienced in both countries. Given research on gender stereotypes of men's and women's competencies, we hypothesized that economic and security crises would disadvantage women, but that party system crises could create opportunities for women (as relative newcomers). The 'broadening and deepening' (Franceschet and Piscopo 2013) of gender quotas, on the other hand, we predicted, would insulate women against early removal and replacement by men. Our data indicate no gendered disadvantage to women when cabinets are reshuffled amidst crises. Although we cannot conclude that norms of gender balance necessarily protected women from removal, our findings are nonetheless suggestive, as we discuss below.

First, in response to crises – a failing economy, terrorist attacks and political corruption – presidents and prime ministers did not remove women from cabinet and replace them with men. Indeed, terrorist attacks do not provoke cabinet reshuffles in either country. Corruption scandals generally result in individual resignations and, in France, generally do not involve cabinet-level personnel. Although a corruption crisis brought down a government in Spain, in neither country did the proportion of women in cabinet change. French presidents resist reshuffling their cabinets in response to corruption and, when cabinet personnel are changed, women are not any more or less disadvantaged than their male counterparts. In Spain, economic crisis and political corruption (but not terrorism) produced some change of cabinet personnel but, similarly, with no disadvantageous consequences for women's inclusion.

Second, both France and Spain experienced extensive party system changes. Such change, however, has not affected the proportions of women in cabinet in either country and nor has it affected women ministers individually more negatively than men. Women continued in cabinet, similar to men, in initial cabinets and across multiple reshuffled cabinets in both countries. With the rise of new parties and the demise or weakening of established parties, French presidents and Spanish prime ministers managed to form gender-parity cabinets during reshuffles (or came close to doing so). In terms of party type, however, presidents and prime ministers of left-wing parties do better than those of right-wing parties, particularly in reshuffled cabinets. In Spain, Rajoy did not reshuffle his cabinet, which was below gender parity. In France, Sarkozy reshuffled two cabinets, removing women and/or increasing the number of cabinet seats to provide ministerial positions to men, and failed to reach parity thereafter, even as he restored numbers of women to subsequent cabinets.

Gender parity now defines the minimal threshold for women's inclusion in post-election cabinet appointments in France,[21] also supported in most cases of cabinet reshuffles. The development across time of gender quotas for women's political representation, and the autonomy of selectors in moving towards gender parity in cabinets, appear most important in ensuring gender parity (or its approximation) during reshuffles. In Spain, too, equality norms and legally mandated gender quotas, while not explicitly required for cabinets, nonetheless appear to constrain prime ministers, as evidenced by the large numbers of women in initial cabinets and the lack of difference in the fates of men and women appointed to those cabinets.

Conclusion

Despite a growing body of scholarship on gender and cabinets, few studies explicitly distinguish between post-election and reshuffled cabinets. The research that does compare initial to reshuffled cabinets is from a much earlier period – 1989–2002 – before gender-parity cabinets started to appear frequently in Europe, Latin America and beyond. Studies by Borrelli (2002), Davis (1997) and Martin (1989) found women's presence to be greater in initial post-election than reshuffled cabinets. Our study does not confirm these findings.

Despite opportunities to replace women ministers with men during reshuffles, we find few instances where cabinet reorganization follows a gendered logic that rewards men and disadvantages women. Instead, once included in cabinet,

women remain across multiple reshuffles and are not disadvantaged by changes in government and opposition, party system instability or major crises and shocks. Some women are removed from cabinet as others are added, leaving the proportions of men and women unchanged. Note that our focus on countries with multiple gender-parity cabinets – arguably the most difficult to construct, with multiple representational requirements – offers a hard test of the impact of gender on cabinet reshuffles. Employing two country cases, across time and across leaders with different party affiliations, the findings provide confidence that these results are not simply case-specific.

Many questions concerning gender and cabinet reshuffles remain untested, providing multiple opportunities for future research. First, what is the impact of legislative gender quotas on gender-parity cabinet formation and cabinet reshuffles (Jacquemart et al. 2020: 65)? Does a trajectory of gender quotas trigger gender parity in cabinets, and undergird their persistence through reshuffles, as we suggest is the case for France and Spain? Second, are women in specific ministries more susceptible to removal than others? It may be that women heading less prestigious ministries are more likely to survive than women in high-status posts, or more likely to be replaced by other women. Third, do selector *promises* of gender parity in initial cabinets hold for reshuffled cabinets, and what specific mechanisms support gender parity when a reshuffle occurs? Finally, are the gendered logics of cabinet formation different in reshuffles where no initial gender-parity cabinet has been formed? There may be strong resistance to keeping even small numbers of women in cabinet posts during reshuffles, absent the strong signal an initial gender-parity cabinet may send.

Our findings require confirmation beyond France and Spain. Tests of gender-parity cabinets (and cabinet formation generally) in other countries, including outside Europe, may modify our conclusions that political system and party system changes do not diminish the likelihood of gender-parity cabinets in reshuffles. For France and Spain, for now, it is clear that gender parity in cabinets, including reshuffles, is possible, persists across time and party, and sets the standard for subsequent heads of government.

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Notes

1 Annesley et al. (2019) identify three sets of criteria for appointment to cabinet: experiential, affiliational and representational.

2 Because the cases do not vary on the independent variable – initial post-election gender-parity cabinet – our analysis does not strictly conform with definitions of 'most different systems' research designs (Gerring 2007: 138–142; Tarrow 2010: 233–235). Our research design is akin to Van Evera's model of 'controlled comparison' (1997: 68–69) and consistent with Lijphart's 'theory-confirming' case study (1971: 692).

3 For cabinets of odd-numbered size, gender-parity cabinets are those where women constitute 50% of cabinet ministers, plus or minus one minister (e.g. French President Nicolas Sarkozy's 2007 initial post-election cabinet included seven women and eight men, for gender parity).

4 The French president is empowered to dissolve the national legislature and call new elections. Although there is a constitutional provision for parliamentary votes of confidence in France, which could remove a

prime minister or a cabinet, the removal mechanism is relatively difficult to employ; a vote of no-confidence in the Macron government failed completely (see Sieberer 2015: 318, table 182).

5 Investiture votes in Spain take place in the lower chamber only; the senate does not play a role. Likewise, only the lower house can remove a prime minister, through a constructive vote of no-confidence.

6 Since the end of the Franco dictatorship, Spain enjoyed over three decades of stability and predictable electoral cycles. That stability ended in 2015 when changes in Spain's party system created far more uncertainty, resulting in four parliamentary elections between December 2015 and November 2019.

7 The progress of French quota law was accelerated by the 'Juppettes' issue (1995). President Alain Juppé, appointing a minority of 12 women to cabinet, shortly thereafter removed eight of them. See Charest et al. 1996: 121.

8 'The targets set are 30% minimum of either gender by 2027, 40% by 2030'; Wittenberg-Cox (2021). See also Lépinard and Lieber 2015.

9 Although France has seen the rise of minor parties since the 1980s and earlier (e.g. Lutte Ouvrière, les Verts on the left, and the Front National on the far right), there are no meaningful regionally based parties, as is the case in Spain.

10 The FN competed in the second (final) presidential election round in 2017; its candidate had also competed in the second round in 2002. Two additional far-right parties are Mouvement pour la France (1994) and Debout la France (originally Debout la République; 1999).

11 Although majority governments were rare in post-Franco Spain, parties were able to avoid formal coalitions and win investiture votes even with a plurality of parliamentary seats. 'Informal quid pro quo pacts … generally involving passive support strategies to abstain in the investiture vote' allowed the PSOE or PP to govern as single-party minority governments (Lancaster 2017: 928).

12 Data for France were taken from government websites and the *Political Data Yearbook* (2004–2021). All data for Spain are from the government's website, which lists, by legislature, all ministers in each cabinet during a legislative term, including the dates for every cabinet reshuffle (www.lamoncloa.gob.es/gobierno/gobiernosporlegislaturas/Paginas/index.aspx).

13 We identify ends of the current terms for Macron and for Sanchez as 15 January 2022, the data stopping point for our analyses. We identified every ministerial appointment for initial and reshuffled cabinets; for prestige of cabinet ministerhsip, we coded the most prestigious post for those cabinet ministers holding multiple concurrent appointments.

14 These reshuffles occurred on 27 February and 29 June 2011, preceding the first round of the April 2012 presidential elections.

15 We thank Jackson Rudoff for identifying this pattern for the Sarkozy reshuffled cabinets.

16 A month into his presidency, Hollande dismissed Minister for Ecology, Sustainable Development, and Energy Delphine Batho, replacing her with Phillippe Martin. Batho had reportedly made disparaging comments about Hollande's 2014 budget on a French radio show (*Libération* 2013). Hollande appointed Nicole Bricq as minister for foreign trade, a new ministry.

17 Camerlo and Pérez-Liñán (2015: 616) found that fixed terms of office for presidents had an impact on cabinet reshuffles in response to critical events, although response varied by type and timing of events. We found no gendered impact of critical events; women and men were equally likely to be continued in cabinet (or not).

18 'Observatoire de la politique nationale'. November 2018.

19 Global Terrorism Database, www.start.umd.edu/data-tools/global-terrorism-database-gtd.

20 Not all ministers exiting within a term did so as part of a reshuffle. The number of individual ministers leaving during a term is small.

21 Upon his re-election in 2022, President Macron again appointed an initial gender-parity cabinet.

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