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The Power of Prime Ministers: Results of an Expert Survey

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Abstract. Prime ministers are self-evidently important actors in the politics of parliamentary democracies. While there has been an ongoing debate about prime ministerial power in the political science literature, progress has been slow in a debate dating from the 1960s. This lack of progress is because of two connected factors. One is the lack of a theoretical framework to study prime ministerial power. A framework is less likely to be developed because of the lack of data on which hypotheses could be tested. This article reports in detail the methodology and results of an expert survey that was conducted to measure prime ministerial power. These data will provide a significant resource for the future study of prime ministers, cabinets, and the core executive.

Keywords: • Parliamentary executives • Prime ministers • Expert surveys • Veto players

Introduction: The Study of Prime Ministers

Some three decades ago, Anthony King (1975: 173) lamented that the literature on executives "is mainly descriptive and atheoretical: general hypotheses are almost never advanced, and when advanced almost never tested." Writing on the presidency, Bowles (1999: 4–5) reiterated many of the obstacles that both King (1975) and Hart (1998) had earlier identified as impeding the effective study of executives. These included the small sample size within countries and problems of comparability across countries; the difficulty in identifying a dependent variable, and once identified, quantifying it; and the secrecy under which most executives operate, making many salient variables unobservable.

The study of political executives and especially the power of and within executives, despite empirical advances, arguably still suffers from too little systematically collected data to develop and test hypotheses. This is not surprising given that none of the problems just identified have gone away.

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There are a number of literatures that deal with political executives in different ways. A rational-choice literature studies various aspects of the relationship between government and parliament, government survival, and policy-making in a theoretically illuminating way. With a few exceptions most concentrate on the relationship with parliament – executive actions in parliament or some other publicly visible actions, such as the use of confidence motions (Huber, 1996). Where the theoretical models are developed which attempt to look into the "Black Box" of cabinet government, empirical tests tend to be minimal and the position of prime minister is passed over. For instance, in their models of policy-making power distribution in coalitions, Laver and Shepsle (1996: 260) are forced to remain "silent on the distinctive roles of the prime minister."

A Blondel-led research group and others in that tradition have increased our empirical knowledge of the operation of cabinet government in western Europe. Many of these authors deal directly with the power of prime ministers by attempting comparison either within or between countries (Helms, 2001; Jones, 1965, 1991; King, 1994; Müller et al., 1993). These do not attempt to explain prime ministerial influence on policy in an inductive theoretical way and the evidence is impressionistic. This is understandable as we only get rare glimpses inside the "Black Box" of cabinet government, usually in exceptional cases that have been the subject of significant controversy. More recently, prime ministers have been a focus of study through the concept of the "presidentialization" of prime ministers (Poguntke and Webb, 2005). These correctly interpret presidentialism in parliamentary democracies to relate to the style of prime ministers rather than to the impact of the prime minister on policy.

As can be seen, though the position of the executive and prime minister is not ignored, it is rarely the subject of systematic theory testing in the way we see in other areas of political science. Arguably, one of the reasons is because one important concept is so difficult to capture and measure quantitatively. Measuring policy-making power is, as is the case in measuring any contested concept, rife with difficulties. One way to measure prime ministerial power may be to look at the powers granted in the political rulebook or constitution. This method has been used to measure presidential power comparatively (compare Metcalf, 2000). In all parliamentary democracies the prime minister will be among the more important actors in the policy-making process of the state, yet in only a few countries do constitutions or legislation give the prime minister the right to make policy directly, and even then only in a few areas. In some countries' constitutions, such as Australia's, the office of prime minister is not even mentioned. So this makes studying constitutions futile because very often the "Constitution [of a country] is a rulebook that has only a tangential connection with the ... political and governmental game" (Farrell, 1987: 162).

One can still look at the institutional resources of the prime minister. Bergman et al. (2003) constructed indices of prime ministerial powers using institutional factors and party-system formats (although they do not combine the two on a single scale). This method has the problem that it uses to measure prime ministerial power some of those factors we may wish to test as explanatory variables of prime ministerial power. This is fine if we require the measure for empirical purposes and not theory testing. However, one cannot test the importance of institutional factors when the measure is constructed using these same factors. A complete measure of prime ministerial power is required.

If we should be wary of using political rulebooks to measure power, another method is needed. One could also look at the large number of policies made and estimate a prime minister's power based on what he or she wanted to achieve and what he or she actually achieved. This has two problems. One is that we do not know what political actors' real goals are, as it may be necessary to conceal these in playing the political game, and post hoc statements of intent in the form of autobiographies are often biased by the actual outcome. Therefore, one cannot say with certainty whether a prime minister or government actor actually achieved their policy goals. The second problem is that there is an indeterminate universe of cases of policy-making (especially as policy retention is often the result of the process). It may be difficult in such circumstances to select a representative sample of cases. That said, conducting case studies of policy conflict may be a useful way to test theories of power in executive policy-making.

Another method to measure prime ministerial power is to use expert surveys, which as we shall see, is widely used today to measure parties' policy positions. It is the purpose of this article to outline the process and results of an expert survey designed to measure "prime ministerial influence on policy" in 22 parliamentary democracies. This article reports the empirical results, making these available to the academic community, and compares these to an existing scale. I also use the data to provide a basic test of veto-player theory. These data are available electronically from the Irish Social Science Data Archive (http://www.ucd.ie/issda/data.htm).

Evaluating Prime Ministers

As actors with a good deal of influence on the politics of a country, it is common and understandable to desire to evaluate the prime ministers of different countries. There have been some attempts to evaluate prime ministers and presidents (Granatstein and Hilmer, 1999; Schlesinger, 1997; Theakson and Gill, 2005). These are based on the evaluations of academic experts, and often measure "greatness" or attempt to rank presidents or prime ministers on a scale running from the "best" to the "worst."

Implicit in the idea of "greatness" is that the prime minister or president has achieved something, usually a major policy goal or goals. One immediate difficulty is that these evaluations may be affected by the tastes of the respondents, as "greatness" is a necessarily subjective criterion. Power, though essentially contested and difficult to define or measure, can be assessed in a more objective way. While few would consider Adolf Hitler "great," most would agree that he was hugely powerful in setting policy within Germany during his rule. Therefore, both because it is theoretically more interesting to study policy and policy change and because the results are more objective, it is more useful to rate prime ministers on their influence on policy outcomes.

Estimating Prime Ministerial Influence

Selecting Cases

When comparing prime ministers across countries, it is common to treat the country as the unit of analysis. This limits the number of cases. To over come this, each term of a prime minister can be treated as a distinct case. Prime ministers

in those parliamentary democracies that had been democratic for 20 consecutive years up to January 1, 2000 and were covered by the *European Journal of Political Research* (EJPR) data yearbook were taken as cases. The established parliamentary democracies featured in the EJPR data yearbook were chosen because the yearbook offers a source of reliable and standardized information for each country.

Definition of "Parliamentary Democracies"

This raises the problem of defining a parliamentary democracy. Others have provided minimal definitions (Müller et al., 2003: 12–13), but without getting into a debate regarding definitions, an acceptable definition is that a parliamentary democracy is a system in which the executive, consisting of a prime minister (whatever the post is called) and a cabinet, is dependent on the parliament for its continuing survival. However, using this or any definition of parliamentary democracies raises classification problems for some of the regimes featured in the EJPR yearbook.

Many of these countries have directly elected presidents, which could make them presidential or semi-presidential systems. Categorizing most countries is straightforward. The Irish president, for example, has few extra powers than a constitutional monarch possesses, and in practice uses them sparingly (Elgie, 1999). Iceland and Austria also have de facto parliamentary systems, despite their presidents being directly elected. France is possibly not a hybrid system, but one which moves between presidentialism and parliamentarism (Lijphart, 1993: 120), although this characterization is contested. As most variation in prime ministerial power depends on whether he or she is of the president's party, French prime ministers were excluded. As Switzerland does not have a prime minister per se, it was not included in the survey. This leaves the following countries: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, and the UK.

All the prime ministers in office between January 1, 1980 and January 1, 2000 were selected, but with a maximum of seven for each country and subject to certain conditions (the most recent seven were included). The number of prime ministers was limited in order to maintain a relatively similar number of cases for each country, so that the greater number of prime ministers in some countries, for instance Japan, would not bias results and so that respondents would have broadly similar tasks.

Cases of prime ministers who were in charge of caretaker governments and those who were in power for fewer than 200 days were removed. When a single person had been prime minister continuously for a number of years, but the party composition of the government had changed marginally and regularly, these individual terms were conflated to create a single case. In Israel and Italy, what would have otherwise been the distinct premierships of certain individual prime ministers were merged. The cumulative effect of these definitions is that there are 22 countries in the dataset with 139 different prime ministerial terms between them (see the Appendix for a full listing).

Expert Surveys

One solution to the problem of estimating the relative power of different prime ministers in different governments, and other difficult-to-observe variables, is to

ask others who claim expertise in the field to do so. This method has been used for some time in political science, beginning with the eliciting of the "expert judgments" of others using a coded review of a listed literature (De Swaan, 1973; Taylor and Laver, 1973). More recently, King (1994) analyzed the literature on prime ministers in order to categorize countries' prime ministers in western Europe (discussed in more detail below).

Expert surveys have become more systematic in their attempts to estimate values for political variables. Since the 1990s, expert surveys have become common, but their use has been restricted principally to estimating the positions of political parties. Castles and Mair (1984), Laver and Hunt (1992), and Huber and Inglehart (1995) have all used expert surveys to derive interval measures of party policy on a number of dimensions. These surveys have been shown to be reliable over time. Huber and Inglehart (1995: 79) report that the correlation of the Castles and Mair scores and their scores is .94.

Expert surveys have the advantage of giving a quantitative measure to the concepts being investigated, and experts should provide a reasonably accurate quantitative reflection of the "true" score. Though, as Mair (2001) points out, the data are not "real," they are the product of many sources, all asking the same question, and should have a higher probability of being valid and reliable than estimates drawn from a review of the literature.

The Survey

The purpose of the survey was to estimate the level of prime ministerial "influence over the policy output of the government" and the ability of prime ministers to get their "preferred policies enacted." The survey was quite short – the estimated completion time was 10–15 minutes. Either seven or nine questions were asked in the survey, depending on whether coalition government was the norm.[1] The other questions dealt with certain constitutional prerogatives (which are not reported here, but are available from http://www.ucd.ie/issda/data.htm). Possible responses to the questions were on a scale between one and nine, where one indicated "no freedom" to use the given prerogatives and nine indicated "a great deal of freedom" to use them.

The question asking respondents for an estimate of prime ministerial power required respondents to provide judgments of each prime minister's influence on policy, and each one's ability to get "his or her preferred policies accepted and enacted" in their different terms of office. The full question was as follows:

> In some countries the prime minister has very little influence over the policy output of his/her government. In others the prime minister has a great deal of influence over the policy output of the government and is usually able to get his/her preferred policies enacted.
>
> Below is a list of recent [nationality] prime ministers. How much influence do you think each had in terms of getting his preferred policies accepted and enacted? For each prime minister please indicate your views on the 1–9 scale where "1" means you think that particular prime minister had very little power to influence government policy and get his preferred policies accepted and "9" means you think that prime minister had a great deal of power to get his favoured policies enacted.

It can be argued that this question asks respondents to consider two distinct factors: power within the government and power within the parliamentary policy-making process. This is true. Arguably, as power to achieve one's goals requires power in both forums, it would have been better had two distinct questions been asked. Of course, there are incalculable important relationships in any policy-making process, and identifying all would be difficult, as they change across countries and policy areas. However, the experts were able to give an overall opinion of the power of prime ministers within their systems, combining power in both. If a prime minister can control his or her cabinet, but the government has little control over parliament, then the experts could decide themselves the level of prime ministerial influence on policy generally.

The Experts

The survey was posted to academic specialists in the politics of the countries in question. In order to achieve a more reliable estimate of academic opinion, the aim was to contact the universe of political scientists in each country who study that country's executive or policy-making process.

The experts were chosen using a number of criteria and sources. The first criterion was to use those academics who had published in English academic work on the prime ministers and cabinets of specific countries. The next source was the Thematic Network in Political Science website directory (http://www.epsnet.org). This gave lists of political scientists throughout Europe, allowing them to be broken down by area of expertise and language spoken. Only those academic experts who claimed fluency in English and whose research expertise or interest was in the executive politics of the country in question were selected. The European Consortium of Political Research's directory of members (http://essex.ac.uk/ecpr) was consulted, with experts chosen based on their list of interests. While these were the main sources, for Japan and Luxembourg the American Political Science Association's directory of members was also used. For the Commonwealth countries other than the UK, for Luxembourg, Iceland, and Greece, individual department websites were used to identify potential respondents. Having failed to achieve more than one target for Iceland, Malta, and Luxembourg, other political scientists and the political editors of newspapers were also selected. In the UK and Germany, the universe of political scientists with an interest in executive politics is much larger than in other countries, and the search was restricted to those who had published in English work on prime ministers or policy-making. Surveys were sent to 34 and 31 experts from these countries, respectively, whereas for most other countries the number was between 15 and 20.

Unlike previous expert surveys, nonindigenous experts were also selected. The majority of the respondents for each country were indigenous, except in Japan where only a quarter of respondents were native to Japan (43 percent of targets). Given that only 8 percent of Japanese experts questioned responded to one previous survey (Laver and Hunt, 1992), the response rate of 57 percent using nonindigenous experts shows that this is a beneficial route to take.

Another difference between the selection of targets for this survey and that of other expert surveys is that it was restricted (as much as possible) to those experts claiming knowledge of the specific subject. In limiting the number of potential

respondents to those with a professed interest in the subject, a higher response rate could be expected and perhaps, therefore, the survey's results offer a more accurate estimate of prime ministerial power.

In all, 413 different surveys were sent, eliciting 262 responses. Some 13 of these were refusals, the bulk of which cited a lack of expertise. Of the 249 completed responses, 15 were anonymous. The response rate was just in excess of 60 percent. Most respondents gave estimates for all prime ministers, though some respondents did not give estimates of influence on policy for the earlier prime ministers, which may vindicate the decision not to select prime ministers whose terms ended before 1980.

Data Quality

Reliability

At the broadest level, the reliability of expert surveys generally can be ascertained first, by their continued use and popularity as a way to operationalize concepts in political science, such as ideological position. Surveys continue to be used to measure parties' policy positions. Second, expert surveys of policy positions performed at roughly the same time produce similar results (compare Huber and Inglehart, 1995; Laver and Hunt, 1992). The results of expert surveys on policy positions are also consistent with other data regarding party policy based on manifesto coding, such as the Manifesto Research Group's data (Budge et al., 2001).

Of the actual tests for reliability, apart from the *test-retest check* for reliability, which is usually impractical, there is the *split-half check*. It is used to test that the different factors making up a scale in fact measure the same concept. If the elements making up a measure are randomly split into two groups, then the two summary measures should correlate if they are accurate measures of the same property.

In this case, the estimate is based on just a single question, so this cannot be done. However, we can test the reliability of the different respondents, and exclude those estimates deemed unreliable where respondents gave responses at variance from each other. Estimates of prime ministerial power are calculated as the average of the responses for each prime ministerial term. Rather than require a set minimum number of respondents to accept an estimate as valid, one can look at the standard errors of the means of the responses. This checks the dissonance of the different responses. Where all experts respond to a question in the same way, then the standard error of the mean is zero. To accept an estimate as valid, one needs the responses of at least two experts. This is smaller than is usually found in expert surveys, but it allows the inclusion of those counties where it was difficult to find experts or elicit responses from them. In fact, Huber and Inglehart (1995) report some party policy positions on the basis of just one respondent and frequently with just two or three. The *standard error of the mean* provides a coefficient that measures the consistency of the elements that make up the estimate. Those estimates with standard errors greater than one might be deemed to be unreliable. Where there are just two respondents and they are within two points of each other on a nine-point scale, the standard error is one.

Validity and Comparability

The measure was designed to elicit directly the judgments of academic experts on the variable in question (the power of individual prime ministers to set policy) and to measure this. Therefore, this measure is valid if one accepts on face value that these experts are qualified to make these judgments, and that these judgments are superior to the judgments of any other easily reachable group.

As well as checking the data are valid in themselves, a further question arises about the comparability of the data across countries. The measure for prime minister X of country A might well show she is more powerful that prime minister Y from the same country. But can one say that prime minister X is more powerful than prime minister Z of country B?

If experts used the end points of the scale as theoretical extremes rather than points to be used to plot the range of cases within their own countries, then the estimates will be comparable across countries and one would expect to see that there is a good deal of variation between countries. Variation is expected because the comparative literature suggests that a good deal of the variation in prime ministerial power occurs between countries rather than between the prime ministers of each country (see Jones, 1991).

One simple way to check the validity of the measures for comparison across countries is to see, first, if there is variance across countries and, second, if the distribution of prime ministerial power across countries is as would be expected according to the literature on prime ministers. Figure 1 uses box-plots to show the distribution of prime ministerial power by country. It shows the distribution of the five-to-seven prime ministerial terms from each country on an eight-point scale, where one indicates "not much influence on policy" and nine indicates a "great deal of influence on policy."

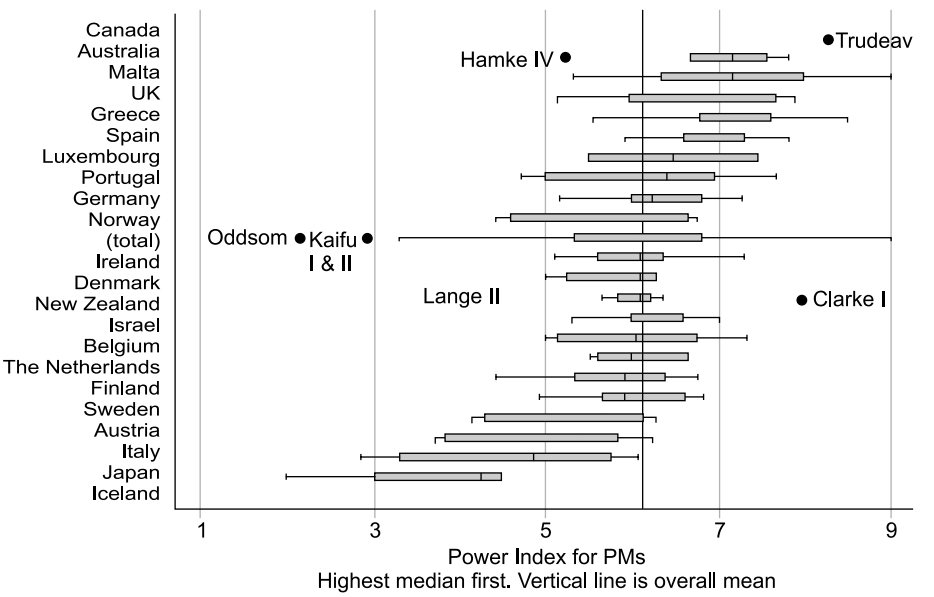

FIGURE 1. *Distribution of Prime Ministerial Power*

Looking at the box-plots of the distribution of prime ministerial power, there appears to be considerable variation in the level of influence of prime ministers between countries. As one would expect, the median prime ministers from Westminster-system countries, Greece and Spain, are estimated to be well above the overall average influence on policy in their own country. At the other end of the scale, the median Italian and Japanese prime ministers (on the power scale) are well below the overall average.[2] This indicates that the estimates from the expert survey are broadly in line with the literature, and that the data can be considered comparable.

The expert survey estimates of prime ministerial power in each country can be cross-validated against other empirical measures of prime ministerial power provided by King (1994) and Bergman et al. (2003). King's index is based on a review of the academic literature; he categorized the prime ministers of 13 European countries according to their "degree of influence within government." King (1994) grouped and scored countries using an ordinal measure of low, medium, and high power (see Table 1).

Although King deals with each country's prime minister's "degree of influence within government," and not within the policy-making process as a whole, government is an important forum in the policy-making process, so one would expect the two measures to be related. The relationship between the King measure and the measure based on the expert survey of prime ministerial power is strong and positive. The Pearson's correlation coefficient for King's measure and the expert survey estimates is .72 (using the 13 countries to which King assigned scores).

It is also possible to correlate the survey estimates for the countries not included in King's analysis. Scores were assigned, following his approach, by looking at the relevant literature. This was carried out before the results of the expert survey were available. For some countries assigning the level of prime ministerial influence was obvious. Japan, according to many writers on the subject, has an ineffectual prime minister (Curtis, 1999; Hayao, 1993; Mulgan, 2000). Although it is claimed that Israel had prime ministerial government up to the 1980s (Arian, 1985), up to the Sharon government, the country has arguably had little government control of public policy (Sprinzak and Diamond, 1993). These countries were assigned to the "low power" category. The Westminster systems are traditionally regarded as having strong executives and prime ministers (Weller, 1985). Canadian writers are clear on the issue, claiming that the prime minister is exceptionally strong in his own system (Campbell, 1980; Savoie, 1999), as do writers on New Zealand (McLeay, 1995; Palmer, 1994). A former New Zealand prime minister referred to

TABLE 1. *King's Rank of Prime Ministerial Power*

Low	Medium	High
Italy	Austria	Germany
The Netherlands	Belgium	UK
Norway	Denmark	Greece
	Sweden	Ireland
		Portugal
		Spain

Source: King (1994).

the influence of the New Zealand *government* as "unbridled power" (Palmer, 1987). In Australia, the prime minister's position is similar. The federal system means the Australian prime minister lacks power in some policy areas, but Australia can be coded as having a "high power" prime minister. The Icelandic government, according to Kristinsson (2000: 87), "is not a strong collective body, nor does the prime minister have substantial powers within the government." Iceland is therefore assigned a score of "low power."

When the new King estimates are added and all countries in the analysis are used, the correlation coefficient between King's scores and the expert survey estimates is .70 (N = 22). Both this correlation coefficient and the coefficient based on just the 13 original King scores (.72) are statistically significant. This analysis shows that the mean response for each country is roughly as expected. However, as one variable is ordinal, correlation is not the ideal method to test the relationship between these measures of prime ministerial power. The analysis of variance reported in Table 2 shows that the three King categories do not have equal means for the expert survey scores, and that the differences are in the expected order.

Bergman et al. (2003) have constructed an index of a prime minister's institutional powers for 16 European countries. This includes the ability to appoint and dismiss ministers, whether the PM is accountable to parliament alone or as part of the government, and the right to determine ministerial jurisdictions and to control the cabinet agenda. They do not argue that power is purely institutionally based, but institutional powers might be expected to explain at least some of a prime minister's power. There is a mild positive correlation with the expert survey (the coefficient is .58; p-value = .024; n = 15, and the institutional power index's correlation with King's measure is .75 (n = 13)). These results indicate that the expert respondents took the country-specific causes of variation in prime ministerial power into account when assigning scores to the individual prime ministers, and that the estimates in the survey are valid for comparison.

Results

Table 3 reports the mean scores of "prime ministerial power" for each country, based on the average of the between five and seven prime ministers in each country for whom we have estimates. Some scores are notable, but only Iceland's score of 3.75 is more than two standard deviations from the overall mean of 6.13.[3] One would expect that prime ministers occupy the space on the upper end of the scale, as surely these important political actors will have more influence than most other actors in the policy-making process.

TABLE 2. *ANOVA of Difference of Means for Survey Results According to King's Categories*

	Expert survey estimate		
King's measure	Mean	Standard deviation	Number
Least power	5.30	.897	7
Medium power	5.95	.393	5
High power	6.79	.659	10
Total	6.13	.943	22

Note: F = 9.50 Probability > F = 0.0014

TABLE 3. *Country Averages for PM Influence*

Country	King's mean	PM score
Canada	high	8.24
Malta	high	7.16
Greece	high	7.10
Australia	high	6.98
Spain	high	6.92
UK	high	6.80
Luxembourg	medium	6.50
Germany	high	6.29
Israel	low	6.21
Portugal	high	6.20
New Zealand	high	6.15
The Netherlands	low	6.09
Ireland	high	6.08
Belgium	medium	6.05
Sweden	medium	6.01
Denmark	medium	5.77
Finland	low	5.76
Norway	low	5.72
Austria	medium	5.42
Italy	low	4.98
Japan	low	4.61
Iceland	low	3.75
Total	Mean	Standard Deviation
PM scale	6.13	.943

Note: Pearson's correlation coefficient for the relationship between King's measure and my scale is 0.71 (sig. 0.0002). Each country's result is based on the mean of the means of the different PMs in that country. So each score reported above is the mean of between five and seven prime ministers in each country. The overall mean is the average of the 22 country means.

Except for Ireland and Israel, all countries with prime ministers that are categorized as high or low power in King's measure are on the expected side of the mean. It is possible that the experts based their responses on King's measure or the literature it is based on, but one would expect that the experts do more than just mirror the literature. It is more likely that both the literature and the experts are independently accurate.

The mean estimate for Ireland's Taoiseach (prime minister) is, surprisingly, slightly below average at 6.08. One study, which was not atypical, concluded that "within his own political system the Irish prime minister is potentially more powerful than any other European prime minister, with the exception of his British counterpart" (O'Leary, 1991: 159).

Scholarship on the Taoiseach is not plentiful. While the previous work may simply be wrong, a more likely explanation is that this assessment of prime ministerial power is based on Taoisigh (prime ministers) from 1982 to 2000, whereas other research is based on the study of Taoisigh up to 1990 at the very latest (Farrell, 1991; O'Leary, 1991). The relative influence of prime ministers in Ireland has

arguably changed over that period, especially given that no Taoiseach under study here had a single party overall majority, whereas they had been relatively common before 1980. Thus, the expert survey estimate is possibly more accurate for its time than the perhaps out-of-date King estimate.

The Israeli score is also surprising given that most writers on the subject claim that the Israeli prime minister has become much less powerful. Scholars do, however, also argue that the Israeli prime minister was a first among equals up to late 1996 (Brichta, 1998: 181). In the mid-1980s, one scholar of Israeli politics argued that "Israeli government can rightly be called prime ministerial government" (Arian, 1985: 164). The literature on which the "low" score was assigned referred to the 1996–2000 period, and possibly misrepresents the true level of prime ministerial power in Israel.

Among the notable results from the survey is the position of Canada. There is little variation among prime ministers in Canada, all being judged to be highly powerful within their own system, although Pierre Trudeau in his final term scores more highly than the others. With the possible exception of New Zealand, all other countries have much more within-country variation. The most powerful prime minister is Malta's Dominic Mintoff, who scored nine. Evidently, he could achieve most, if not all his policy goals. At the other end of the scale, Palsonn of Iceland and Kaifu of Japan are the least powerful prime ministers in the sample.

Conclusions

While it is not the purpose of this article to test theories, the data are not useful unless they can be used to test theories in political science. One hypothesized relationship that could be tested using these data is, for instance, veto-player theory (Tsebelis, 2000). One might expect, if veto-player theory were useful, that the number of veto players in a political system or government could explain some of the variation.

The progress of research on parliamentary executives has arguably been hindered by the absence of a theoretical framework caused by a lack of data. There have been no systematically collected and broadly comparative data useful to the study of power in executive politics generally, or of prime ministerial power in particular. This deficiency has made developing and testing hypotheses difficult.

That these data are systematically collected and in line with the literature should give us confidence of their validity. The fact they appear to be broadly comparative will allow scholars from different countries with distinct theoretical approaches to formulate and test hypotheses. Where the data are not in line with the literature, plausible explanations can account for the divergence, and the expert survey data are probably a better reflection of the prime minister's position in these counties. While no hypotheses have been developed or tested here, the results of the expert survey reported here provide the political science community with a valid measure for prime ministers in 22 countries. The data are not only interesting to those studying prime ministers directly, they will enable quantitative empirical testing of other work on executives and policy-making.

Appendix

TABLE A1. *Full Results*

Country	PM name	Date in office	Date out of office	PM power	Std. error mean	Number of respondents
Australia	R Hawke 2	13 Dec 84	21 Jul 87	7.0833	.19299	12
	R Hawke 3	22 Jul 87	02 Apr 90	6.6667	.22473	12
	R Hawke 4	03 Apr 90	26 Dec 91	5.2500	.37183	12
	P Keating 1	27 Dec 91	23 Mar 93	7.1667	.34450	12
	P Keating 2	24 Mar 93	10 Mar 96	7.3333	.35533	12
	J Howard 1	11 Mar 96	20 Oct 98	7.5833	.25990	12
	J Howard 2	21 Oct 98	10 Nov 01	7.8333	.20719	12
Austria	Sinowatz	24 May 83	15 Jun 86	4.2857	.68013	7
	F Vranitzky 1	16 Jun 86	20 Jan 87	6.1429	.26082	7
	F Vranitzky 2	21 Jan 87	16 Dec 90	6.2857	.18442	7
	F Vranitzky 3	17 Dec 90	29 Nov 94	6.1429	.45922	7
	F Vranitzky 4	30 Nov 94	11 Mar 96	5.7143	.71428	7
	F Vranitzky 5	12 Mar 96	28 Jan 97	5.2857	.77810	7
	V Klima1	28 Jan 97	04 Feb 00	4.1429	.70469	7
Belgium	W Martens 4	17 Dec 81	27 Nov 85	5.7500	.59009	9
	W Martens 5	28 Nov 85	19 Oct 87	5.1250	.51538	9
	W Martens 6	09 Jun 88	07 Mar 92	5.0000	.52704	9
	JL Dehaene 1	13 Mar 92	22 Jun 95	6.3333	.33333	9
	JL Dehaene 2	23 Jun 95	11 Jul 99	7.3333	.44095	9
	G Verhofstadt	12 Jul 99	–	6.7777	.46481	9

(Table A1 contdinued)

(Table A1 contdinued)

Country	PM name	Date in office	Date out of office	PM power	Std. error mean	Number of respondents
Canada	P Trudeau 4	03 Mar 80	29 Jun 83	8.5000	.17383	14
	B Mulroney 1	17 Sep 84	06 Dec 88	8.2143	.23855	14
	B Mulroney 2	07 Dec 88	24 Jun 93	8.2143	.26056	14
	Jean Cretien 1	04 Nov 93	10 Jun 97	8.1429	.17719	14
	Jean Cretien 2	11 Jun 97	27 Nov 00	8.1429	.20587	14
Denmark	P Schluter	03 Jun 84	02 Jun 88	5.2222	.36430	10
	P Schluter	03 Jun 88	17 Dec 90	5.0000	.5	10
	P Schluter	18 Dec 90	24 Jan 93	5.3333	.52704	10
	P Rasmussen 1	25 Jan 93	25 Sep 94	6.1000	.34801	10
	P Rasmussen 2	26 Sep 94	29 Dec 96	6.2000	.41633	10
	P Rasmussen 3	30 Dec 96	22 Mar 98	6.3000	.42295	10
	P Rasmussen 4	23 Mar 98	26 Nov 01	6.3000	.42295	10
Finland	K Sorsa 6	07 May 83	29 Apr 87	5.9167	.4166	12
	H Holkeri 1&2	30 Apr 87	25 Apr 91	4.4167	.45156	12
	Aho 1&2	26 Apr 91	12 Apr 95	5.3333	.52704	12
	Lipponen 1	13 Apr 95	14 Apr 99	6.4167	.51431	12
	Lipponen 2	15 Apr 99	–	6.7500	.39167	12
Germany	H Schmidt 3	04 Nov 80	16 Sep 82	5.1667	.37267	18
	H Kohl 2	30 Mar 83	10 Mar 87	6.1111	.36949	18
	H Kohl 3	11 Mar 87	03 Oct 90	6.8333	.25883	18
	H Kohl 4	17 Jan 91	16 Nov 94	7.2778	.33142	18
	H Kohl 5	17 Nov 94	26 Oct 98	6.0000	.37919	18
	G Schroeder 1	27 Oct 98	22 Oct 02	6.3529	.27036	17

Greece	A Papandreou	01 Jun 81	01 Jun 85	8.5000	.17902	13
	Papandreou	01 Jun 85	01 Jun 89	7.6538	.35529	13
	Mitsotakis	01 Apr 90	01 Oct 93	5.5385	.35110	13
	Papandreou	01 Oct 93	01 Jan 96	7.0385	.41779	13
	Costas Simitis 2	13 Oct 96	24 Apr 00	6.7692	.28088	13
	Costas Simitis 3	25 Apr 00	08 Mar 04	7.1538	.27956	13
Iceland	S Hermannson 1	26 May 83	07 Jul 87	4.0000	1.0	2
	T Palsonn	08 Jul 87	27 Sep 88	2.0000	0.0	2
	S Hermannson 2	28 Sep 88	27 Sep 89	4.5000	.5	2
	S Hermannson 3	28 Sep 89	29 Apr 91	4.5000	.5	2
	D Oddssonn 1	30 Apr 91	22 Apr 95	6.5000	2.5	2
	D Oddssonn 2	23 Apr 95	27 May 99	7.0000	2.0	2
	D Oddssonn 3	28 May 99		7.5000	1.5	2
Ireland	G FitzGerald 2	14 Dec 82	09 Mar 87	5.7000	.33499	10
	CJ Haughey 3	10 Mar 87	11 Jul 89	7.3000	.33499	10
	CJ Haughey 4	12 Jul 89	10 Feb 92	5.6000	.52068	10
	A Reynolds 1	11 Feb 92	11 Jan 93	6.4000	.26666	10
	A Reynold 2	12 Jan 93	05 Nov 93	6.1000	.34801	10
	J Bruton	15 Dec 94	25 Jun 97	5.1000	.34801	10
	B Ahern 1	26 Jun 97	17 May 02	6.4000	.26666	10
Israel	S Peres	13 Sep 84	19 Oct 86	6.0833	.57019	12
	Y Shamir 2	20 Oct 86	21 Dec 88	6.0000	.56407	12
	Y Shamir 3	22 Dec 88	10 Jun 90	6.4615	.46153	13
	Y Shamir 4	11 Jun 90	12 Jul 92	6.6154	.54934	13
	I Rabin	13 Jul 92	21 Nov 95	7.0000	.49354	13
	B Netanjahu1	18 Jun 96	05 Jul 99	6.0000	.42365	13
	E Barak1	06 Jul 99	05 Feb 01	5.3077	.63432	13

(Table A1 contdinued)

(Table A1 contdinued)

Country	PM name	Date in office	Date out of office	PM power	Std. error mean	Number of respondents
Italy	G Andreotti 6	23 Jul 89	29 Mar 91	3.7059	.34046	17
	G Andreotti 7	19 Apr 91	21 Jun 92	3.8235	.40434	17
	G Amato 1	22 Jun 92	28 Apr 93	5.7647	.33791	17
	C Ciampi	29 Apr 93	10 May 94	6.2353	.37894	17
	S Berlusconi 1	11 May 94	16 Jan 95	5.4118	.49303	17
	R Prodi 1	17 May 96	27 Oct 98	5.8529	.30245	17
	M d'Alema	28 Oct 98	27 Apr 00	4.1176	.30777	17
Japan	Takeshita	06 Nov 87	02 Jun 89	5.7857	.38055	14
	Kaifu 1&2	09 Aug 89	04 Nov 91	2.8571	.41743	14
	Miyazawa	05 Nov 91	08 Aug 93	4.4286	.40211	14
	M Hosokawa	09 Aug 93	27 Apr 94	4.8571	.41743	14
	T Murayama	30 Jun 94	10 Jan 96	3.2857	.45001	14
	Rhashimoto 1&2	11 Jan 96	29 Jul 98	6.0714	.38465	14
	Keizo Obuchi 1	30 Jul 98	04 Apr 00	5.0000	.45291	13
Luxembourg	P Werner	15 Jul 79	19 Jul 84	7.5000	.5	2
	Jacque Santer 1	20 Jul 84	13 Jul 89	5.5000	.5	2
	J Santer 2	14 Jul 89	12 Jul 94	5.5000	.5	2
	J Santer 3	13 Jul 94	25 Jan 95	5.5000	.5	2
	JC Juncker 1	26 Jan 95	15 Jun 99	7.5000	.5	2
	JC Juncker 2	15 Jun 99	19 Dec 01	7.5000	.5	2
Malta	Dom Mintoff	01 Dec 81	01 Dec 84	9.0000	0.0000	3
	Bonnici	02 Dec 84	01 May 87	5.3330	.88191	3
	FenechAdami 1	02 May 87	01 Feb 92	7.3333	.33333	3
	FenechAdami 2	02 Feb 92	27 Oct 96	7.0000	.57735	3
	Sant 1	28 Oct 96	07 Sep 98	8.0000	0	3
	Adami 3	08 Sep 98		6.3333	.88191	3

The Netherlands	Ruud Lubbers 1	04 Nov 82	13 Jul 86	6.6667	.42163	15
	Ruud Lubbers 2	14 Jul 86	06 Nov 89	6.6667	.43278	15
	Ruud Lubbers 3	07 Nov 89	21 Aug 94	5.6000	.36253	15
	Wim Kok 1	22 Aug 94	02 Sep 98	5.5333	.35005	15
	Wim Kok 2	03 Sep 98	16 Apr 02	6.0000	.35186	15
New Zealand	David Lange	26 Jul 84	18 Aug 87	5.6364	.47237	11
	David Lange	19 Aug 87	10 Aug 89	4.8182	.65807	11
	G. Palmer	11 Aug 89	01 Nov 90	6.1000	.62271	10
	Jim Bolger 1	02 Nov 90	27 Nov 93	6.3636	.67786	11
	Jim Bolger 2	28 Nov 93	07 Dec 97	6.0417	.35063	12
	J Shipley 1&2	08 Dec 97	08 Dec 99	6.0909	.49459	11
	Helen Clark 1	09 Dec 99	14 Aug 02	8.0769	.23916	13
Norway	Willoch	08 Jun 83	25 Nov 85	6.7500	.30463	12
	G HarlemBrun 2	09 May 86	15 Oct 89	6.1667	.20719	12
	J Syse	16 Oct 89	02 Nov 90	4.4167	.28757	12
	G HarlemBrun 3	03 Nov 90	14 Sep 93	6.6667	.28426	12
	G HarlemBrun 4	07 Oct 93	24 Oct 96	6.4167	.35798	12
	Jagland	25 Oct 96	16 Oct 97	5.0833	.37856	12
	Kjell Bondevik	17 Oct 97	17 Mar 00	4.5833	.49936	12
Portugal	Soares 3	01 Jun 83	01 Oct 85	5.0000	.73029	6
	CavacoSilva 1	01 Nov 85	01 Apr 87	6.8333	.70316	6
	CavacoSilva 2	01 Aug 87	01 Oct 91	7.6670	.33333	6
	CavacoSilva 3	01 Oct 91	27 Oct 95	7.0000	.57735	6
	Guterres 1	28 Oct 95	20 Oct 99	6.0000	.68313	6
	Guterres 2	21 Oct 99	17 Dec 01	4.7143	.74687	7
Spain	F González 1	28 Oct 82	22 Jun 86	7.8333	.98319	6
	F González 2	23 Jun 86	29 Oct 89	7.3333	.35533	12
	F González 3	30 Oct 89	13 Jul 93	6.9167	.33616	12
	F González 4	14 Jul 93	03 May 96	5.9167	.39806	12
	JMª Aznar 1	04 May 96	12 Mar 00	6.5833	.48395	12

(Table A1 contdinued)

(Table A1 contdinued)

Country	PM name	Date in office	Date out of office	PM power	Std. error mean	Number of respondents
Sweden	I Carlsson 1	01 Mar 86	03 Oct 88	5.9091	.45636	11
	I Carlsson 2	04 Oct 88	26 Feb 90	5.8182	.40041	11
	I Carlsson 3	27 Feb 90	02 Oct 91	5.6364	.43217	11
	Carl Bildt	03 Oct 91	05 Oct 94	4.9091	.41460	11
	I Carlsson 4	06 Oct 94	21 Mar 96	6.3636	.47237	11
	G Persson 1	22 Mar 96	05 Oct 98	6.6364	.45272	11
	G Persson 2	06 Oct 98	01 Oct 02	6.8182	.42250	11
UK	M Thatcher 1	05 May 79	11 Jun 83	6.8261	.24872	23
	M Thatcher 2	12 Jun 83	12 Jun 87	7.8696	.18117	23
	M Thatcher 3	13 Jun 87	27 Nov 90	7.3780	.23192	23
	John Major 1	28 Nov 90	10 Apr 92	5.9565	.23922	23
	John Major 2	11 Apr 92	01 May 97	5.1304	.32244	23
	Tony Blair 1	02 May 97	07 Jun 01	7.6957	.18258	23

Note: The spelling of prime ministers' names are inexact, but should suffice to identify the prime minister in question.

Notes

1. For those countries where coalition governments have either never taken place or have not occurred since 1980 (Canada, Greece, Malta, Spain, and the UK), two questions about a prime minister's freedom to appoint and dismiss members of other parties were omitted.
2. Iceland is probably not comparable because the power estimates for David Oddsson's three premierships were dropped because of high standard errors. The respondents gave Oddsson an average score of seven, which would have increased the Icelandic average considerably.
3. See Note 2.

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