

## Chapter 8

### The Government and the Prime Minister: More Than *Primus Inter Pares*?"

By Martin Ejnar Hansen

#### Abstract

The formation of Danish governments and their governance continues to be of interest both on their own and comparatively. Minority coalition governments are the norm in Denmark, increasing the importance of support parties for the government to pass its policies. Danish politics can increasingly be seen as two blocs: the 'red' bloc led by the Social Democrats and the 'blue' bloc led by the Liberals (although it was the Conservatives in the 1980s). This division may have increased the tendency of the presidentialization of Danish politics, not least with the prime minister's increasing engagement in the day-to-day running of the government, especially with regard to foreign policy. Similarly, the Minister of Finance is ever more important as well for the day-to-day running of other departments. Ministerial turnover through reshuffles happens during the tenure of most governments, but portfolio redesign mostly occurs when governments are formed. The distribution of portfolios is proportional, but there is much variation in which portfolios parties prefer, with some valuing importance over number of portfolios. Overall, the Danish government and the prime minister is a well-researched area, although there is still significant scope for research innovation.

**Keywords:** government, prime minister, minority, coalition, support parties

## **A Popular Case of Coalitions and Minority Governments**

The Danish government and especially its formation has been of interest to political scientists and historians over the past 65 years. Political scientists have studied the formation of Danish governments (Damgaard 2000), the termination of Danish governments (Damgaard 1994, 2008), the use of coalitions in Danish politics (Damgaard 1969), and the frequent minority governments (Christiansen and Damgaard 2008; Damgaard and Svensson 1989).

Coordination within the government (Christensen 1985), portfolio turnover (Mortensen and Green-Pedersen 2015), and ministerial turnover (Hansen et al. 2013) have also been topics of focus, all in a frequently comparative perspective. Historians have predominantly described cases of government formation (e.g. Kaarsted 1988) and the cabinets in general (Kaarsted 1992; Olesen 2017; Olesen 2018), or taken a more popular approach to explore the nature of Danish prime ministers (Mørch 2004), notwithstanding the number of well-researched biographies on Danish prime ministers and memoirs available.

The case of Denmark has always been popular in comparative studies of governments, not least due to its frequent use of minority coalitions and their relative stability. This is also the basis on which the topics of the government and prime minister will be explored in this chapter. In particular, the focus will be on why minority coalitions are functioning so well in Denmark. This topic will be discussed in relation to how Danish governments are formed, how coalitions are governed and coordinate policy, what role the prime minister plays in the governance, and with regard to the selection and turnover of ministers, and design and allocation of portfolios. The chapter proceeds with a discussion of government formation and termination, including the formation of coalitions, before turning to the prime minister, followed by ministers and ministerial turnover before discussing coordination within

government. The discussions are summarized and set into context in the conclusion where some avenues for further research are also discussed.

### **Government Formation and Termination in Denmark**

On the evening of a general election, when the votes are counted and it is clear how many seats each party has won, it is for the most part also clear which party leader will become prime minister. If the fortunes of the incumbent government and its support parties has not declined, it can continue. Should the government and its support parties have lost seats, making it possible that a parliamentary majority can be commanded against it, it cannot continue and will resign as a government (Christensen 2019: 89). In such a case, it is necessary for either an *informateur* or a *formateur* to be selected. Each party leader advises the Queen what their party will support, and on the advice of the outgoing prime minister, a decision will be taken to appoint either an *informateur*, i.e., a person with a clear task to clarify the demands and objectives of potential coalition partners in terms of policy programme and preferences over government leadership and party composition (de Winter 1995: 120), or a *formateur*, i.e., a person asked to start formal negotiations to form a government (de Winter 1995: 120). Damgaard (2000: 241) argues that the distinction between the two roles may be negligible for practical purposes. However, de Winter (1995: 125) finds Denmark as one of the few countries actively using *informateurs*, albeit infrequently. From a legal perspective, Christensen (2019: 94-97) also distinguishes between the idea of the *informateur* and *formateur* and what limits may be placed on either. An example where both roles were used was seen after the 1988 election where two *informateurs*, the Speaker of the Parliament, Svend Jakobsen, and the leader of the Social Liberals, Niels Helveg Petersen, were appointed in turn before the *formateur*, Poul Schlüter, was asked to form a government (Olesen 2018: 359-364). When a new government is to be

formed, the outgoing government continues as an interim government until such a time the new government can take office.

Government formation and termination come in different forms. According to Damgaard (1994), findings regarding terminations of Danish governments depend on how the concept of a government is defined. The literature has different views on when a new government is formed. For Strøm (1984), a new government is formed whenever a prime minister changes, no matter the reason. Damgaard's (1969) study of Danish coalitions use a change in party composition as an indicator for government change. Laver and Schofield (1991: 147) argue that a new government occurs after an election even when the government continues without a change in the partisan composition as the bargaining situation changes in terms of seats and policy positions. In this chapter, a new government occurs when there is a change in the prime minister, a change in partisan composition, or after an election. The overview of all Danish governments since 1953 can be seen in Table 8.1 where the official date of entry, the formal resignation date, the government composition, and the majority status can be found.

<Table 8.1 around here>

Since 1953, Danish governments have primarily been minority governments. Only the governments serving from 1957-60, 1968-71, and 1993-94 were majority governments, and for the latter government, it is even debatable whether it commanded a majority throughout its entire existence. Coalition governments have been much more predominant, especially in the last thirty-five years, than single-party governments – the latter observed only in 1953-57, 1964-68, 1971-78, 1979-82, 2015-16, and again in 2019-. All of the majority governments were coalition governments, meaning that even the single-party governments needed support

from one or more parties to pass any policies. This does not mean that Danish politics is chaotic and that governments secure support at random. To a large extent, Danish politics can be seen as having two blocs of parties: one centre-left and one centre-right (Green-Pedersen and Thomsen 2005), and it is within these blocs that the government secures its primary support. In modern popular vernacular, we can speak of a ‘red’ bloc consisting of the Social Democrats, the Socialist People’s Party, the Red-Green Alliance, and for the most part the Social Liberals, and also the Alternative since 2015, whereas the opposite is the ‘blue’ bloc made up of the Liberals, the Conservatives, the Danish People’s Party, and the Liberal Alliance. Only the Social Liberals have been a part of either bloc at various times over the past sixty-five years and served in governments led by Social Democrats and Conservatives, although the Social Liberals appear more firmly in the left bloc since 1993. The formation of two blocs also means that the traditional choice for prime minister is the leader of the largest party in the bloc with the most support.

#### *Coalitions and Coalition Governance*

Given the predominance of minority coalition governments and their relative success, it is important to study how coalitions are governed in order to understand their occurrence. The literature on coalition governance suggests distinct perspectives of how government coordinates. For instance, there is the notion of ministerial government where each minister is powerful in his or her own right to determine policy through a division of labour (Laver and Shepsle 1994:8), or a system is setup to keep tabs on ministers from a different party either through junior ministers (Thies 2001) or parliamentary committees (Martin and Vanberg 2004). There is little evidence for Denmark to suggest coalition partners use strategic assignment of members to parliamentary committees to coordinate policy or keep tabs on each other (Hansen 2019), and junior ministers are not used in the Danish government.

Coalitions are negotiated between parties, and besides the distribution of portfolios, the focus of the coalition is also negotiated and written down in a coalition agreement. This agreement has the dual role of signalling a coherent policy agreed on by the government as well as committing parties and ministers to a common goal. This might be a reason for enhancing the durability of minority coalitions in that the coalition partners agree what direction policy is to take in general yet still leave certain aspects open to the individual ministers. It is the case that while the coalition agreements can be specific, they far from cover every topic, allowing individual ministers some leeway on matters not specified in the agreement (Christiansen and Pedersen 2014), which might characterize the government as using a form of controlled division of labour when it comes to categorizing the Danish approach to ministerial government.

Given that the vast majority of Danish governments are minority governments, it is necessary when forming a government that it can secure support from parties outside the government, ensuring that no majority is found against it. In most cases, knowledge of which government a party is willing to support is clear. When the Liberal leader Anders Fogh Rasmussen formed a government in 2001, it was with the support of the Danish People's Party who supported his governments throughout their existence, as well as those of his successor Lars Løkke Rasmussen. The Danish People's Party did not enter government but secured much influence on the policies put forward by the government in return for their support in the government formation and the life of the governments. The presence of support parties can entail that a notional minority government can be as stable as a majority government if the pay-off provided to the support party is large enough to make the relationship stable. The negotiations with support parties mean that significant concessions are granted to these

parties and that they take on a role as veto players on the policy issues where the concessions are granted (Ganghof and Bräuninger 2006). Generally speaking, the government must pay attention to the preferences of not only the supporters of their own parties but also to those of their support parties (Hobolt and Klemmensen 2005). While negotiations between support parties and the government are done at the ministry level between the minister and the support party spokespeople in the day-to-day operations, it also often results in legislative agreements (see Green-Pedersen and Skjæveland 2020; Pedersen 2020, in this volume). With the clear knowledge of which parties support the government, it is possible for a minority government to have the functional equivalence of a stable majority as it is also in the interest of the support parties to stay in power to increase their policy influence. This contributes to explaining the relative success of minority coalition governments in Denmark.

### *Government Termination*

The duration between elections in Denmark is four years at most. However, it is the prerogative of the prime minister to call early elections if he so decides. Elections are also the most important reasons for governments to terminate. If the election results in the government losing enough support to make it questionable whether the government can command a majority with its support parties, the government will usually terminate. In 1975, the incumbent Liberal government performed well in the election and attempted to carry on, but only two weeks after the election, a motion of no confidence was passed in parliament and the government stepped down. This is the last example of a government attempting to carry on and losing a confidence vote in parliament. Twice, Danish governments have terminated without an election, and the new government came from the other bloc as in 1982 when the Social Democrat Anker Jørgensen's government terminated in favour of the Conservative Poul Schlüter, and in 1993 when Schlüter's government terminated, and Social

Democrat Poul Nyrup Rasmussen took office. A change in coalition status outside of an election has happened four times since 1953: first, when the Liberals joined the Social Democrats in a coalition in 1978, terminating the previous single-party Social Democratic government, then in 1996 when the Centre Democrats left the coalition with the Social Democrats and Social Liberals, in 2014 when the Socialist People's Party left the coalition with the Social Democrats and Social Liberals, and finally, in 2016 when the Liberal single-party government was terminated when the party was joined in a coalition by the Conservatives and the Liberal Alliance.

A change in prime minister is also a termination event, and Danish governments have seen the death of two prime ministers while in office: Hans Hedtoft in 1955 and H. C. Hansen in 1960. Viggo Kampmann resigned in 1962 due to illness, and Jens Otto Krag stepped down voluntarily in 1972. Anders Fogh Rasmussen resigned in 2009 to take up the position of Secretary General of NATO. In all other instances, Danish governments have terminated due to elections and a resulting change in the bargaining environment. The overview of all terminations can be found in Table 8.2 below.

<Table 8.2 here>

### **The Prime Minister**

The prime minister is the head of government, and as such, ultimately responsible for its successes and failures. The Prime Minister's Office is responsible for a relatively small portfolio of policy areas, namely only the North Atlantic area (Greenland and the Faroe Islands), the media, government affairs (government formation, constitutional law, and portfolio distribution), and all issues concerning the Royal House and the flag. Most of the



work dealt with by the Prime Minister's Office is focused directly on supporting the prime minister in his work, be it on foreign policy, the EU, or domestic policy where the prime minister takes on a coordinating role. Work relating to the European Union has obviously increased in line with the increased integration (Damgaard 2004: 120-121), but broader foreign policy has also become more important. This appears to have been the case particularly since Poul Nyrup Rasmussen took office in 1993 (Pedersen and Knudsen 2005: 162-164). Where previous prime ministers played a less active role in foreign policy, Rasmussen and his successors as prime minister have all allowed foreign policy to become more important in their job, decreasing the importance of the previously strong Minister for Foreign Affairs and allowing the Prime Minister's Office more control over foreign policy (Damgaard 2004: 120).

For most of the occupants of the post, the traditional way to become prime minister has been through the post of leader of the largest party in their bloc. The only exception to date was the 1968-1971 government of the Social Liberals, the Liberals, and the Conservatives where the latter party was the largest and the post of prime minister nevertheless went to the Social Liberals, the smallest of the three parties. Where prime ministers have resigned or passed away in office, the person nominated to take over also became the party leader. Most often, there was a clear heir apparent; for example, when H. C. Hansen took over from Hans Hedtoft; when Hansen passed away and Viggo Kampmann became prime minister; and when Kampmann's health forced him to resign and Jens Otto Krag was the heir apparent. Jens Otto Krag's choice of Anker Jørgensen as his successor in 1972 was not a case of an heir apparent being chosen, but it was nevertheless accepted by the party (Olesen 2017: 22-30), and Jørgensen served several terms as prime minister. The prime ministers of the 1950s and 1960s left office predominantly due to death or illness. Krag losing the election in 1968 was

the first time since 1953 that an incumbent prime minister lost an election, and since then, turnover due to electoral losses has become the norm. When Lars Løkke Rasmussen lost the 2011 election and still ran as the prime ministerial candidate at the 2015 election, it was the first time since the election of 1975 that a former prime minister ran again after having a full term away from serving as prime minister.

It was not until 2011 that Denmark had its first female prime minister when Social Democrat Helle Thorning-Schmidt became prime minister in her second election as leader of the Social Democrats. When it comes to the age profile of when prime ministers are first appointed, most of those serving since 1953 have been just under 50 when they took office. Lars Løkke Rasmussen and Helle Thorning-Schmidt were in their mid-40s when they took office, and Poul Hartling and Poul Schlüter were the eldest (59 and 53, respectively). In terms of seniority the three latest Social Democratic prime ministers, Helle Thorning-Schmidt, Poul Nyrup Rasmussen, and Anker Jørgensen had less than ten years of parliamentary service when they took office (6, 5, and 8 years, respectively). However, the three latest Liberal or Conservative prime ministers were all in the double digits when it comes to years of parliamentary experience before taking office, with 15 years for Lars Løkke Rasmussen, 23 years for Anders Fogh Rasmussen, and 19 years for Poul Schlüter.

Prime ministers rarely propose legislation in parliament due to the limited policy areas under their direct control. They are, however, required to give an opening speech each year when parliament opens or after an election to set out the status and the agenda of the country. These speeches are seen as the authoritative presentation of the governments' goals in the coming legislative period (Hobolt and Klemmensen 2005, 2008) and can therefore be used to examine government policy agenda (Mortensen et al. 2011). Recently, Klüver and Zubek

(2017) found that the government will put forward close to 90 percent of the proposals laid out in the opening speech. Overall, the opening speeches are perhaps one of the best sources for examining the dynamic element of government policy priorities that must necessarily develop between elections. It also provides an annual opportunity to reassess the plans of the government and set the agenda for what negotiations its support parties can expect during the coming parliamentary year.

### **Ministers and Ministerial Turnover**

The formal power of hiring and firing cabinet ministers lie with the prime minister. In a single-party government, the prime minister will also be the leader of his or her party, and the selection and de-selection of ministers is not subject to outside influence, bar a necessity to balance internal party divisions. In coalition governments, the prime minister will usually allow the coalition partners to choose their ministers as they please given the constraints of which portfolios have been made available to which party.

The division of labour between ministers – otherwise known as portfolios – is provided by the prime minister. At each government formation, new ministerial departments are created and others vanish. Mortensen and Green-Pedersen (2015) studied the overall development of Danish ministries and found that the rising number of ministries was explained by the expanding issue agenda. While there mostly is a clear relationship between the number of seats a party brings to the coalition and number of ministers they get, there is a different relationship when it comes to which portfolios each party receives.

Not all ministerial portfolios are equal, and party leaders have the first choice of which government position they would prefer. Some party leaders would prefer to increase the

number of ministers they are allocated and give up portfolios seen as important. For example, at the 1993 government formation, the Social Liberals had seven parliamentary seats and took three portfolios (economic affairs, foreign affairs, and education). In contrast, the Centre Democrats had nine parliamentary seats and took four portfolios (church affairs, communication and tourism, research, and coordination), two of which were new portfolios with limited content. This example suggests that studying the number of ministries tells only part of the story. Part of the survival of minority coalitions is that the smaller coalition partners are given some, if not all, of the portfolios they desire, allowing them to concentrate their efforts on policy areas with which they have affinity.

While the number of ministries can be stable, expand, or contract, it is also necessary to consider how much change there is in the design of the portfolios and that is likely linked to the issue agenda. When the Liberal-Conservative government took power in 2001, the previously powerful Ministry for Environment and Energy was stripped, with energy going to the Ministry of Economics, and other issues that were higher on the agenda for the government parties formed the basis of a new ministry, namely the Ministry for Refugees, Immigrants, and Integration. Changes in portfolio design can be based on purely administrative reasons if the responsibility for an office is moved from one ministry to another. It can also be due to a name change as when the Ministry for Agriculture and Fisheries in 1997 was renamed the Ministry for Food, Agriculture, and Fisheries and at the same time was given some responsibilities previously in the domain of the Health Ministry.

There is no requirement for a minister to be a member of parliament, and a policy has been in place at times to allow ministers to be granted leave from their parliamentary seat for the duration of their ministerial tenure. This has mostly been used by the smaller parties,

although not all minor parties have taken up the possibility. It is a normal occurrence that one or two ministers are found outside parliament, either due to particular competencies that otherwise are missing, or former MPs not getting re-elected or serving in other positions – in recent years, mostly as Members of the European Parliament. Ministers selected this way normally run in the next election and attempt to secure a parliamentary seat although this is far from guaranteed to end successfully. The vast majority of ministers are selected from within the parliamentary party group, and there is a balance to be struck on gender and age profiles but also with regard to duration of previous tenure, whether anyone holds previous ministerial experience, or whether they were previously spokespersons for the party on the particular subject matter. When Helle Thorning-Schmidt formed her coalition government in 2011, only one of her Social Democratic ministers had previous ministerial experience. This is an extreme example of very little previous experience being included, whereas most other governments will have more than just one member having previously served in government.

It is rare that a government serves the entire period without changes. In the past, being a minister was a hazardous job, and most governments of the 1950 and 1960s lost at least one – if not more – members to illness and death. In recent years, it is rare that ministers step down due to illness. What is much more likely to happen is either that the prime minister decides that it is time for a change and wants to reshuffle the ministers, that a party leader changes or decides to freshen up his team to prepare for an election, that a minister steps down of their own accord to pursue a role outside of politics, or the rare event that a minister is involved in some form of scandal that obligates them to step down. There is also the theoretical possibility that a minister could be forced to resign if they lost a vote of confidence in parliament, but in practice, no vote of confidence has been called on individual ministers as the ministers have usually resigned of their own accord or been removed by the prime

minister. Lars Løkke Rasmussen's third government (2016-2019) experienced the unusual feature that it went into the 2019 election with three serving ministers not running for re-election, with one seeking election to the European Parliament and the other two deciding that three years as a minister was enough and wanting a different career, though all were kept in office after stating their intention not to run again.

The literature on ministerial turnover relies on the assumption that the prime minister delegates power to cabinet ministers (Strøm 2003). When a prime minister delegates power, delegation problems can threaten the policy efficacy of the prime minister and potentially his position within the government. At the time of the ministerial appointment, the prime minister in some cases only has limited information about a minister's ability to run a ministerial department effectively, and it may happen that a minister uses his or her portfolio in a way that is counter-productive to the prime minister's interests, for example if ministers become too aligned with the sectoral interests associated with their department. In coalitions, there is the further danger that ministers focus on the interests of their parties and not the coalition as such (Müller and Meyer 2010). Strøm and et al. (2010) argue that there are *ex ante* and *ex post* mechanisms to deal with these problems. *Ex ante*: the parties should engage in a screening of their ministerial candidates, allowing for the selection of a cohesive set of ministers. *Ex post*: the most used tool is the reshuffle either by moving ministers to portfolios more suitable to their skills or dismissal (Huber and Martinez-Gallardo 2008).

Ministerial remuneration guarantees each minister at least DKK 1,227,675 (approx. USD 188,000) before tax, with the prime minister earning DKK 1,534,594 (approx. USD 234,695), while the foreign minister and finance minister are entitled to 1,350,443 (approx. USD 206,565). If the minister is also a member of parliament, the ministerial salary is reduced by

the income from being an MP. It is expected that all other offices and positions than MP are resigned when taking office as a minister. A declaration of financial interests must also be completed by the minister, and it is expected, though not required, to also include the economic interests of the minister's partner. Ministers have the right to a severance pay depending on their tenure, regardless of how short. Six months of salary is the minimum paid after one day of tenure, with the maximum being thirty-six months of salary after six or more years of tenure. For pension rights to be earned, a tenure of one year is required, which would provide a yearly payment of DKK 80,000 (approx. USD 12,000) the maximum pension rights that can be earned is eight years of service, which would provide a yearly payment of 287,000 DKK (approx. 44,000 USD). Ministerial pensions are payable to ministers after they have left office and their severance pay has ended and then depending on when they were appointed. For those appointed after 2017, it is payable when the minister reaches the normal retirement age. For ministers appointed from 2006-2017, it is payable when early retirement is allowed, which is currently at 62 years, and for those appointed from 2000-2006, it is payable when the minister turns 60. Ministers who were appointed before 2000 had the right to a ministerial pension the day after their severance pay ended. Earnings from public sector jobs will result in a deduction in pension, but jobs in the private sector will not.

Since 1998, all ministers have been allowed to hire a special advisor who is to leave at the same time as the minister (Knudsen 2011). The recruitment is done by the minister, and the result is often, but not exclusively, advisors with backgrounds in media. Some ministers, the prime minister, and in recent years, party leaders in a coalition government are allowed two special advisors. These advisors have no instructive power over the bureaucracy and are mostly there to help the minister navigate the intersection between media and policy related to the minister's performance (Udvalget om særlige rådgivere 2013; Christiansen and

Salomonsen 2018: 58). Danish ministers can only draw on their special advisors and no other politically appointed staff. This along with the limited number of advisors sets Denmark apart from the other Scandinavian countries in institutional design (see also Kolltveit 2016: 483). In turn, much of the work done by special advisors in other countries is performed by career civil servants in Denmark (Christiansen and Salomonsen 2018: 62).

### **Coordination within the Government**

The government ministers meet as a cabinet in two separate meetings. One is the Council of State which meets less than once a month, is chaired by the Queen, and has no political role to play but is the forum where the Head of State signs the bills passed by parliament. The other meeting is the weekly cabinet meeting which can be used for debates and ironing out any issues within the government and its coalition partners. However, with often more than twenty ministers in attendance, such meetings can be difficult forums for in-depth discussion, which is why more specialized coordination is left to a series of cabinet committees.

The general policy direction of the government is set out in the coalition agreement, but how this direction is implemented into bills presented to parliament, apart from those which might be explicitly mentioned in the coalition agreement, are discussed in a number of cabinet committees. The two most important cabinet committees are the Coordination Committee and the Economic Committee, the former chaired by the prime minister and the latter by the finance minister. The Coordination Committee has been in place since the late 1960s and can now be viewed as the norm for policy coordination within the government (Christensen 1985:116). The composition of the committees in terms of how many and what policy areas are covered and membership in terms of ministers are set by the prime minister but is agreed as a part of the coalition formation process. The most important committees include the most



important ministers, and in coalition governments, this would also be the party leaders of the coalition parties. The Coordination committee is important for the success of the coalition government as it allows for issues between the coalition partners to be sorted out before beginning negotiations with support parties in order to pass policies. It is possible that even though agreement within the coalition is reached, the necessity for securing support from yet another party (or parties) could re-open the agreement reached within the cabinet committee. Membership of the cabinet committees also signal the power distribution within the government and could be seen as a guide for who are viable successors to the prime minister within their own party (Christensen 1985: 126-127).

The functional aspects of the cabinet committees include several aspects, the most important being policy planning for the government and mutual control in a coalition governments. Policy planning alludes to the possibility for a group of relevant ministers to have in-depth discussions about which policies to pursue and put forward and deal with issues that appear on the public agenda. While policy disagreements should be expected mostly among coalition governments, the Social Democratic governments from 1979-82 were severely troubled by policy disagreement within the party that spilled over into the public, and the cabinet committees were a tool for alleviating such disagreements (Christensen 1985:130-131).

Where the Danish government differs from other European countries is the relatively small size of the Prime Minister's Office and the absence of a dedicated cabinet office. When Poul Nyrup Rasmussen took office in 1993, he expanded the staffing of the Prime Minister's Office though, comparatively, it is still a small entity. This also means that for the cabinet committees, the administrative support is given by either the Prime Minister's Office and their limited staff (Coordination Committee) or by the Ministry of Finance (Economic

Committee) which highlights the importance of these two offices even more in all aspects of government policy work. The importance of the Ministry of Finance for nearly all policy areas has become ever more pronounced since the governments of Poul Nyrup Rasmussen, and this development has continued since (see Jensen 2008).

Despite the importance of coalition coordination and the importance of the cabinet committees, there is also comparative evidence that government decision has moved even more towards a presidential style of decision-making, with the prime minister making a growing number of decisions on his or her own which is attributed to increased internationalization, increased importance of the state, the increased importance of communication, and the diminishing effect of classic cleavage politics (Poguntke and Webb 2005: 13-17). The same presidentialization in Denmark can be traced back to the government change in 1993 where Poul Nyrup Rasmussen replaced Poul Schlüter as prime minister. Rasmussen increased his involvement in cabinet committees, especially those focusing on international affairs, and this was continued by his successors (Pedersen and Knudsen 2005: 163-64).

## **Conclusion**

The frequency of minority governments, and especially minority coalitions, in Denmark means that research on government survival without an in-built majority usually includes the Danish case. Yet the Danish case was also one of the first where a Western European government was dependent for its survival on a populist right-wing party, the Danish People's Party. From 2001-2011 and again from 2015-2019, it is difficult to understand the survival of the Danish governments and their policies without also understanding the relationship with their primary parliamentary support party and support parties in general (see

also Green-Pedersen and Skjæveland 2020, in this volume). The relationships with support parties might be one of the most important factors to explain the relative success of minority coalition governments in Denmark, and it might be necessary to reconsider their importance overall. This should also be seen in connection with the now established norm of Danish governments presenting government declarations when they take office. The government declaration is the plan of which policies the government will seek to promote during its tenure, but it is also a document that is not negotiated *ex ante* with support parties. While it is generally well established that an electoral bonus might be coming for a party holding the post of prime minister, there is still precious little research on what policy benefits a prime ministerial party gets from holding the highest office of government. Recently, Green-Pedersen et al. (2018) have presented comparative research to alleviate this gap, and Becher and Christiansen (2015) have shown that the party holding the office of prime minister can threaten dissolution to enhance its policy priorities. The work by Becher and Christiansen (2015) explicitly take into account the necessity of support parties and should, therefore, be highlighted as a starting point for those wishing to achieve a deeper understanding of the still understudied relationship between support parties and government.

Reshuffles of ministers is a common feature of most modern Danish governments, although between elections it is predominantly a reshuffle of persons and not portfolios. The restructuring and reshaping of portfolios happen predominantly during the government formation process, creating a stability in this part of coalition governance that helps the survival of the minority coalition governments. Which parties gets which government portfolios, how these are prioritized internally in the parties, and what effect it has on the policy outcomes is another area where there is still a gap in the existing research. If the belief

is that it matters who gets what portfolio and how the portfolio is shaped, then it is necessary to consider these elements in the understanding of the government formation process.

There can be little doubt that the Danish prime minister is more powerful than ever internally in the government. Yet, the role of the prime minister within the government has evolved from a *primus inter pares* role to a much more presidentialized role where the prime minister is involved more in detailed policies than ever before, not least in relation to international affairs. However, the importance of prime ministerial involvement in coalition bargaining and especially coalition governance is not waning as the importance of more formalized, established support parties have increased over the last two decades. This may be one of the most important factors for the success of minority governments, and especially minority coalitions, in Danish politics.

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**Table 8.1: Government Formation in Denmark**

Prime Minister	Date In	Formal Resignation	Government Composition	Majority/Minority
Hedtoft III	30.9.1953	29.1.1955	S	Minority
Hansen I	1.2.1955	14.5.1957	S	Minority
Hansen II	28.5.1957	19.2.1960	S, RV, RF	Majority
Kampmann I	21.2.1960	15.11.1960	S, RV, RF	Majority
Kampmann II	18.11.1960	3.9.1962	S, RV	Minority
Krag I	3.9.1962	22.9.1964	S, RV	Minority
Krag II	26.9.1964	22.11.1966	S	Minority
Krag III	22.11.1966	22.2.1968	S	Minority
Baunsgaard	22.2.1968	21.9.1971	RV, KF, V	Majority
Krag IV	11.10.1971	5.10.1972	S	Minority
Jørgensen I	5.10.1972	4.12.1973	S	Minority
Hartling	19.12.1973	9.1.1975	V	Minority
Jørgensen II	13.2.1975	15.2.1977	V	Minority
Jørgensen III	15.2.1977	30.8.1978	S, V	Minority
Jørgensen IV	30.8.1978	23.10.1979	S	Minority
Jørgensen V	26.10.1979	8.12.1981	S	Minority
Jørgensen VI	30.12.1981	3.9.1982	S	Minority
Schlüter I	10.9.1982	10.1.1984	KF, V, CD, KRF	Minority
Schlüter II	10.1.1984	8.9.1987	KF, V, CD, KRF	Minority
Schlüter III	10.9.1987	10.5.1988	KF, V, CD, KRF	Minority
Schlüter IV	3.6.1988	12.12.1990	KF, V, RV	Minority
Schlüter V	18.12.1990	15.1.1993	KF, V	Minority
Nyrup Rasmussen I	25.1.1993	21.9.1994	S, RV, CD, KRF	Majority
Nyrup Rasmussen II	27.9.1994	30.12.1996	S, RV, CD	Minority
Nyrup Rasmussen III	30.12.1996	11.3.1998	S, RV	Minority
Nyrup Rasmussen IV	11.3.1998	20.11.2001	S, RV	Minority
Fogh Rasmussen I	27.11.2001	8.2.2005	V, KF	Minority
Fogh Rasmussen II	18.2.2005	13.11.2007	V, KF	Minority
Fogh Rasmussen III	23.11.2007	5.4.2009	V, KF	Minority
Løkke Rasmussen I	5.4.2009	15.9.2011	V, KF	Minority
Thorning-Schmidt I	3.10.2011	3.2.2014	S, RV, SF	Minority
Thorning-Schmidt II	3.2.2014	18.6.2015	S, RV	Minority
Løkke Rasmussen II	28.6.2015	28.11.2016	V	Minority
Løkke Rasmussen III	28.11.2016	6.6.2019	V, KF, LA	Minority
Frederiksen	27.6.2019	-	S	Minority

Note: This table is based partially on Damgaard (2000: 242).

**Table 8.2: Government Termination**

<b>Prime Minister</b>	<b>Date In</b>	<b>Formal Resignation</b>	<b>Government Composition</b>	<b>Reason for Termination</b>
Hedtoft III	30.9.1953	29.1.1955	S	Death of PM
Hansen I	1.2.1955	14.5.1957	S	Elections four months before end of term
Hansen II	28.5.1957	19.2.1960	S, RV, RF	Death of PM
Kampmann I	21.2.1960	15.11.1960	S, RV, RF	Elections six months before end of term
Kampmann II	18.11.1960	3.9.1962	S, RV	Resignation of PM due to illness
Krag I	3.9.1962	22.9.1964	S, RV	Election due to end of term
Krag II	26.9.1964	22.11.1966	S	Election called to improve government bargaining position
Krag III	22.11.1966	22.2.1968	S	Election due to parliamentary defeat
Baunsgaard	22.2.1968	21.9.1971	RV, KF, V	Election four months before end of term
Krag IV	11.10.1971	5.10.1972	S	Resignation of PM due to leaving politics
Jørgensen I	5.10.1972	4.12.1973	S	Election called due to parliamentary defeat
Hartling	19.12.1973	9.1.1975	V	Election called to improve government bargaining position, no confidence vote after elections
Jørgensen II	13.2.1975	15.2.1977	V	Election called to improve government bargaining position
Jørgensen III	15.2.1977	30.8.1978	S, V	Coalition formed
Jørgensen IV	30.8.1978	23.10.1979	S	Election called due to conflict between coalition partners
Jørgensen V	26.10.1979	8.12.1981	S	Election called due to parliamentary defeat
Jørgensen VI	30.12.1981	3.9.1982	S	Voluntary resignation of government
Schlüter I	10.9.1982	10.1.1984	KF, V, CD, KRF	Budget proposal defeated
Schlüter II	10.1.1984	8.9.1987	KF, V, CD, KRF	Election called five months before end of term
Schlüter III	10.9.1987	10.5.1988	KF, V, CD, KRF	Election called due to parliamentary defeat
Schlüter IV	3.6.1988	12.12.1990	KF, V, RV	Election called to improve government bargaining position
Schlüter V	18.12.1990	15.1.1993	KF, V	Voluntary resignation of government

Nyrup Rasmussen I	25.1.1993	21.9.1994	S, RV, CD, KRF	Election called three months before end of term
Nyrup Rasmussen II	27.9.1994	30.12.1996	S, RV, CD	Party left coalition
Nyrup Rasmussen III	30.12.1996	11.3.1998	S, RV	Election called six months before end of term
Nyrup Rasmussen IV	11.3.1998	20.11.2001	S, RV	Election called four months before end of term
Fogh Rasmussen I	27.11.2001	8.2.2005	V, KF	Election called two months before end of term
Fogh Rasmussen II	18.2.2005	13.11.2007	V, KF	Election called to improve government bargaining position
Fogh Rasmussen III	23.11.2007	5.4.2009	V, KF	Resignation of PM to become Secretary-General of NATO
Løkke Rasmussen I	5.4.2009	15.9.2011	V, KF	Election called two months before end of term
Thorning-Schmidt I	3.10.2011	3.2.2014	S, RV, SF	Party left coalition
Thorning-Schmidt II	3.2.2014	18.6.2015	S, RV	Election called four months before end of term
Løkke Rasmussen II	28.6.2015	28.11.2016	V	Coalition formed
Løkke Rasmussen III	28.11.2016	6.6.2019	V, KF, LA	Election called at end of term
Frederiksen	27.6.2019		S	

Note: Partially based on Damgaard (2000: 254-257).