

**WHAT COMES NEXT?**

**TRANSFERS OF POWER IN THE CANADIAN CONTEXT**

by

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## **Abstract**

This thesis examines government transitions. Focusing primarily on Westminster nations and Canada in particular, I analyze the crucial periods in the political cycle in which new governments first take the reins of power. Though vitally important for new governments, studies of transitions have typically received little attention from political scientists, often overshadowed by the elections that precede them and the governing that comes after. This thesis attempts to provide a foundational account of the existing knowledge surrounding these transitions as well as proposing numerous paths forward for future research. The thesis is separated into two major parts. The first draws upon existing research, identifying the typology, phases, and key themes surrounding transfers of power. This first section also examines transitions among Westminster nations. The second part identifies three areas in need of further research: intraparty transitions, the impact of transitions on the public service, and the role the media plays as power changes hands. Analyzing each of these subjects in turn, I propose detailed research designs through which political scientists can expand our understanding of government transitions and their implications for both the short and long-term prospects of these new governments.

## **Lay Summary**

While elections and governance have received ample attention from political scientists, the transition periods during which incoming governments take the reins of power and attempt to find their footing are underrepresented. This thesis explores how power changes hands, focusing primarily on Westminster nations and Canada in particular. The paper tackles two central questions: what do we know and what do we need to find out? The first half of the paper analyzes existing literature on government transitions, providing a comprehensive account of key themes and findings derived from previous studies of this subject matter. The latter half focuses on where the research needs to go next. I focus on three key topics: intraparty (same party) transitions, the impact of transitions on the public service, and the role played by the media during these transfers of power. Each issue is accompanied by a detailed research proposal.

## **Preface**

This thesis is the original, unpublished work of the author, Eric Schultz.

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*For Rhonda, for her everlasting love and support. And Sam, who arrived during the writing.*



## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

The question of power, how it is acquired and maintained, is integral to our understanding of politics and political behaviour. Where military might was once the primary determinant of transfers of power, the advancement of democracy has allowed for these transitions to become relatively peaceful affairs, with elections serving as their primary vehicle. As the field of political science has grown, considerable research and analysis has emerged around the study of elections and the strategies utilized by parties. Correspondingly, much attention has been devoted to the ways in which power is exercised by those in office and the actions they take to maintain the trust of the electorate and achieve reelection. Though both topics are crucial to our understanding of the political cycle, surprisingly little attention has been paid to the important question of how power actually changes hands and how governments, both incoming and outgoing, manage these often delicate transfers of power. These significant political transitions are key to positioning new regimes for success and ensuring continuity of government in the interim. Despite their importance, transitions have received only limited research coverage. To better and more fully understand the mechanisms and motivations dictating how power changes hands, further research is necessary into the important periods following elections during which new regimes seek to take the reins of power and govern in their own right. With this in mind, this thesis seeks to answer two simple questions: what do we know about political transitions and what major questions should future research stress?

In the fall of 2016, United States President Barack Obama emphasized the importance of transitions, stating that peaceful transfers of power are “one of the hallmarks of our democracy” (The White House, 2016). In an increasingly polarized climate each instance in which power peacefully changes hands reaffirms that even following the most competitive elections all parties

will ultimately accept and abide by the electorate's decision. In effect, peaceful transitions provide reassurance in the continued strength of the democratic system. They also stand as defining moments for leaders, their parties, and the nation at large (Subašić & Reynolds, 2011, p. 175). For instance, if a new leader is able to take power smoothly, a new government can begin acting upon its mandate from day one. Conversely, if the transition is mishandled, it may mean months or years before a government is solidly on its feet and ready to govern. An example of the latter scenario can be found in the chaotic 1990 transition of Bob Rae's Ontario NDP government. Following an unexpected victory and a campaign in which little to no transition planning took place (Cameron & White, 2000, p. 142), observers of Rae's government reflected that while the party assumed office, it never truly took power (Cameron & White, 2000, p. 105). Remaining disorganized throughout its five year term, the Rae NDPs were easily defeated in their bid for reelection. Put simply, the quality of transitions matter.

As previously noted, political scientists have devoted modest research to government transitions. As a result little is settled upon regarding even the most basic of concepts. Measuring success, for instance, varies considerably depending on whether a transition is viewed from the perspective of an incoming leader, a political strategist, or a member of the public service, all of whom hold different priorities (Brooks, 2000, pp. 25-26). The length of the transition period, likewise, lacks consensus with experts advancing several definitions about when transitions end and actual governing begins (Brooks, 2000, pp. 14-15). Even the traditional view of transitions as exchanges of power from one party to the next is oversimplified, as transitions can occur from turnover within parties as well as without. As we can see, transfers of power are complex affairs and, depending on how they are handled, serve as make or break moments for new governments.

This essay outlines the state of current academic research and equally suggests priorities for required research going forward. The paper focuses primarily on countries with “Westminster” systems of governance with emphasis on Canada. While each system has nuances, Westminster nations are unique in that the electorate does not directly vote for a prime minister, meaning that parties themselves play pivotal roles in the transition process, deciding which individuals will ascend to leadership and, in some nations, even determining when it is time for leaders to be removed. This additional layer of complexity allows Westminster nations to stand as excellent representations of the multitude of competing interests that factor into the transition process.

The first section of this paper analyzes the limited existing scholarship on political transitions, identifying the overarching themes found throughout. We then turn to the questions of intraparty transitions, the politicization of the public service, and the impact of the media on government turnovers. These important topics are all seldom analyzed yet crucially important aspects of the transition process. In addition to illuminating various under-researched areas, this paper also proposes detailed suggestions for further research. Finally, it should be noted that while this essay focuses on the questions at stake for political scientists, the best practices it presents also serve to aid governments coming into power, allowing new regimes to take the reins more effectively and focus on their primary responsibility: serving the electorate.

## Chapter 2: What We Know About Transitions

To what extent do transition periods influence the composition of new governments as they prepare to take power? To answer this, scholars often look to campaigns and elections in their attempts to understand how power changes hands. As researchers such as t'Hart & Uhr (2011) point out, however, the constitutional arrangements in Westminster democracies actually leave many important practical decisions to transition teams made up of political insiders, consultants, and power brokers within the ruling political party (p. 239). These findings illustrate the influence of partisan actors on the shaping of governments that ultimately take power, further driving home the necessity to study these crucial periods on a deeper level. The section that follows covers our understanding of transitions at present, highlighting past studies that, though small in number, have significantly expanded the available research, providing valuable insight on a period in the political cycle that is often shrouded in secrecy (Zussman, 2013, p. 37).

### 2.1. Types of Transitions

While transitions always involve an exchange of power, they are heterogeneous undertakings. The most common and straight-forward transfers of power are those that occur through regularly scheduled elections. A defining feature of liberal democracies, fixed electoral terms ensure that ruling governments do not retain power indefinitely and are regularly accountable to the electorate. Ranging from as short as three years in New Zealand and Australia to five years in the United Kingdom (Cross & Blais, 2011, p. 152) each electoral contest presents a potential transition as an incumbent government faces off against prospective challengers. In the event the incumbent government is defeated, this exchange of power from one party to another represents what we refer to as an *interparty* transition. The most well-known and

intuitive way for political power to be exchanged, interparty transitions are likely the first that spring to mind, representing a clear point of delineation from one ruling regime to the next.

In addition to these fixed cycles, Westminster democracies also provide for interparty transitions to occur via snap elections. These can occur following a decision by the ruling party to proactively dissolve Parliament after sensing a favourable electoral opportunity or, on the flip side, following a loss of confidence by a minority government, forcing them to the polls earlier than expected (Heard, 2005, p. 19). In the Canadian context, snap elections have occurred at both the federal and provincial level. In an attempt to add stability into the Canadian system at the federal level, Parliament (led by Stephen Harper's minority Conservative government) passed legislation in 2006 to fix election dates to a period in October on the fourth year of an elected government's mandate (Dodek, 2010, p. 216). The goal, according to Rob Nicholson, then Government Leader in the House of Commons and Minister of Democratic Reform, was to "level the playing field", putting all parties on equal footing and limiting the incumbent's advantage to call an election whose timing benefited them (Dodek, 2010, p. 224). Despite this, the Harper Conservatives would defy their own legislation, calling early elections in 2008 and again in 2011, taking advantage of the Governor General's unimpeded ability to call an election at their discretion upon the advice of the sitting government (Hicks, 2012, p. 24). The situation is much the same at the provincial level, with every province except Nova Scotia legislating fixed election dates (Alcantara & Roy, 2014, p. 256), yet snap elections continuing to occur on a regular basis, most recently in British Columbia in the autumn of 2020 (Hunter & Bailey, 2020).

Though sometimes beneficial to incumbent governments, the ability to call a snap election does not guarantee electoral success. Many Canadian governments have misread their electoral prospects and soon found themselves on the outside looking in. A famous example of

this can be found in the 1984 federal election where newly appointed Liberal Prime Minister John Turner, seeking to carve out an identity separate from that of his predecessor Pierre Trudeau, called an election a year early and was relegated to the opposition after a major shift of power to the Progressive Conservatives led by Brian Mulroney (Jeffrey, 2010, pp. 27-28). Any snap election call comes with some measure of risk and Turner's fate illustrates the limits to the ability of the incumbent to predict the behaviour of the electorate. This is not to say, however, that snap elections should be shied away from. These unexpected contests can also pay dividends, as they did for John Horgan's NDP in British Columbia, which successfully utilized an impromptu election in the latter part of 2020 to turn a minority mandate into a majority government, securing their hold on power for another four years (Hunter & Bailey, 2020). Regardless of their outcomes, the existence of snap elections as a constitutional mechanism further drives home the necessity for opposition parties to have a transition plan at the ready in the event their electoral circumstances shift unexpectedly.

Westminster systems also provide avenues through which leaders can be replaced without consulting the electorate (Massicotte, 1998, p. 97). When a leader resigns in the midst of an existing mandate, a new leader is chosen from the ranks of the ruling party. The new leader subsequently finds herself in the prime minister or premier's chair without a single vote being cast by the citizens she now oversees. These occurrences, involving the changing of leaders within the same party in-between general elections, are referred to as *intraparty* transitions or *successions* (Massicotte, 1998, p. 97). The reasons precipitating these changes are varied. In their study examining leadership departures in five Westminster countries (Australia, Canada, the Republic of Ireland, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom) Cross & Blais (2011) found that from 1965-2010, in the 20 instances of leaders departing office while serving as prime minister,

reasons for stepping down included voluntary retirement, leaving due to anticipated electoral defeat, opposition within the party to their continued leadership, and death or serious illness in office (pp. 134-135).

Though the timing of intraparty transitions are unpredictable, particularly in the cases of unexpected death or the abrupt resignation of a leader, many intraparty transitions are preceded by long periods of declining polls, scandals, and/or rank and file demands for a leadership change. As Laing & t'Hart (2011) point out in their comparative analysis of changes in party leadership, these scenarios often break down into rifts and factionalism, with various power brokers seeking to consolidate support behind their chosen successor (p. 125). This infighting, almost always discovered by the press, can damage the long-term prospects of the ruling party. An example of this is seen in the case of the Progressive Conservative government in Alberta which, following the resignation of long-standing Premier Ralph Klein in 2006, saw four different premiers in less than ten years, all of whom ascended to office via succession rather than election (Brownsey, 2019, pp. 209-210). The leadership battles during this period, often fraught with conflict, demonstrate the instability that sometimes follows a long-tenured leader stepping down. They also highlight the consequences. Intraparty rifts and uncertainty following Klein's departure would soon spell the end of the Alberta PC's electoral dominance, thrown from office in 2015 in favour of the province's first NDP government, breaking an uninterrupted forty-four years of Progressive Conservative rule (Brownsey, 2019, p. 209).

Emerging from these inner-party struggles for power, new leaders entering office via succession are faced with unique challenges. A major challenge is the difficult task of differentiating themselves from their predecessor while refraining from criticizing them too harshly. As argued by Laing & t'Hart (2011), the obligation of the new leader to demonstrate a

sense of renewal and independence is an “elementary political necessity” (p. 118). This quest can manifest itself in a number of ways. Indeed, rather than maintaining the status quo, many new leaders who attain power via appointment favour a shake-up upon taking office. The actions of Kim Campbell during her brief period as prime minister in 1993 illustrate this point. Taking office with the pledge of “doing politics differently”, Campbell reduced the number of existing Cabinet positions from thirty-two to twenty-three and merged or abolished fifteen departments (Zussman, 2013, pp. 17-18). Such changes led to many of her former senior cabinet colleagues being relegated to the backbenches. As Zussman (2013), argues in his study of Canadian government transitions, this impulse to demonstrate change can carry negative consequences (p. 18) as large-scale organizational overhauls run the risk of negatively impacting the ability of governments to effectively deliver services while also alienating party faithful. Campbell’s historic electoral defeat in the 1993 federal election, watching her majority government reduced to a mere two seats (LeDuc, 1994, p. 167), adds weight to this argument.

These examples present snapshots of the challenges that accompany intraparty transitions. Despite this, the majority of the existing scholarship remains focused on interparty cases. The major outstanding questions about intraparty transitions and suggestions for further research that will allow us to better understand this important subject are covered in detail later in this paper. Before addressing these topics, however, it is important to discuss the phases of transitions as laid out in the existing literature, understanding how the dynamics within these transfers of power typically play out.

## **2.2. Phases of Transitions**

When do transfers of power begin and end? Though intraparty transitions are unpredictable given their occurrence in the midst of a mandate, interparty transitions, occurring



through fixed elections, provide a lens through which we can analyze how transfers of power play out. At first glance, a clear definition of a 'transition period' is the weeks and months between an election and the swearing in of a new government. The rules governing the length of these periods vary considerably throughout western democracies. In the United States the constitution mandates that transition periods begin following the general election (held every four years on the first Tuesday of November) and last until noon on January 20th of the following year when the president-elect is sworn in (Beerman & Marshall, 2006, p. 1271). In the United Kingdom, on the other hand, transitions are quite short, with power handed over almost immediately after the votes are cast and counted. A new prime minister is sometimes sworn in the very day after a general election (Riddell & Haddon, 2009, p. 29). While less rigid in the timing of their elections, Australia and New Zealand have developed conventions surrounding the behaviour of incumbent governments around election time (Simms, 2011, pp. 105-106). In Australia, these norms centre around restraining the incumbent, dictating that once an election has been announced the sitting government is to act strictly as a caretaker rather than a 'normal' government, limiting its ability to use executive power for electoral purposes (Simms, 2011, p. 102). Where Australia focuses on incumbent activities prior to the election, conventions in New Zealand relate more to the transition period following the vote, with specific guidelines in place that outgoing governments should make no new policies following their defeat and should accept the advice of the incoming government on any urgent matters that may arise (Simms, 2011, p. 99).

In Canada, the transition period is governed by the understanding that once the writ is dropped the government should confine itself only to necessary public business and refrain from binding future governments by the actions it takes during this timeframe (Government of

Canada, 2019). Following the election and prior to the swearing in, however, discretion is left to the newly elected prime minister, allowing her more flexibility in getting her government in order. Even so, Canadian transitions are often quite short. New Canadian governments typically take office within two weeks of winning a general election (Zussman, 2013, p. 130).

With these variations in mind, it goes without saying that the conception of transitions as an undertaking primarily occurring between an election and the swearing in of a new government is too limited. Indeed, modern transition planning now typically commences well before voting begins, with most parties holding a legitimate chance at victory engaging in transition exercises throughout the campaign. This is a disciplining task for prospective governments, allowing them to envision what it takes to govern and the demands they will need to prepare themselves for. Transition planning, in some cases, can even begin long before any election is on the horizon. As Cameron & White (2000) point out in their study of three separate transitions between three different parties (Liberals, NDP, and Progressive Conservatives) in Ontario between 1985-1995, transition discussions can take place long before a scheduled election (pp. 82-83). Following the surprise victory by the Ontario New Democrats in 1990, the Progressive Conservatives under newly selected leader Mike Harris sensed opportunity. They began transition planning for the 1995 election almost immediately, putting the party through full-scale 'corporate-style' exercises and addressing the party's deficiencies over a series of conferences from 1991-1994 (Cameron & White, 2000, pp. 79-80). When the Harris Conservatives eventually won power in 1995, they took power with a detailed blueprint for governing.

As we have established, transitions often begin well before the votes are cast. They can also last long after a new government officially takes office. As a result, several perspectives have emerged among political scientists regarding the question of when transitions truly end. Pffifner (1988), for instance, argues that a transition cannot be deemed complete until the new

government has taken control of its staff, cabinet, the executive bureaucracy, the public service, and the legislature (pp. 3-11). Others, such as Lindquist (1993), present a more limited definition, asserting that a transition lasts until a government holds its first cabinet meeting (pp. 33-34). In his in-depth study of transitions and successions, Brooks (2000) argues that after taking all criteria into consideration it can be said that even by the broadest of definitions, the majority of transitions are concluded by the time a government reaches six months in office (p. 16). Ultimately, given that each transfer of power is a unique occurrence it is difficult to imagine a single end point that can be applied universally to all transitions. What is clear, however, is that the conclusion of a transition involves far more than the simple act of taking office and these processes are likely to continue long after a government has been handed the reins of power.

In his study of transitions, David Zussman (2013), a former political adviser and head of the 1993, 1997, and 2000 transitions for the Liberal government of Prime Minister Jean Chrétien (p. xiii) made efforts to analyze the transition process. He noted four distinct phases that make up the majority of interparty transitions. These phases, sequentially, are: pre-election, election, post-election, and consolidation. The timeline of each phase is straight-forward, with ‘pre-election’ being all the transition planning done prior to the call of an election, ‘election’ the preparations during the campaign itself, ‘post-election’ the official transition work following a victory and prior to the swearing in, and ‘consolidation’ the efforts to actually begin to operate the levers of power and govern.

Of the four phases the consolidation and pre-election periods are, in their open-endedness, the most subjective and open to interpretation. Consolidation, for instance, could theoretically continue in perpetuity if a government finds itself unable to gain its footing and wield power effectively. The completion of the consolidation phase is also dependent on the priorities one ascribes to defining the conclusion of a transition. Some leaders, such as Australian

Labor PM Gough Whitlam (1972-1975), come to power with a detailed view of what they intend to accomplish, pursuing their plans relentlessly upon taking office (Walter, 2011, pp. 38-39). For those weighing government action and legislation passed as top priorities, this would mark a successful and expedient transition, despite the fact that Whitlam's doggedness and inflexibility ultimately spelled disaster for his government (Walter, 2011, p. 41). If the priority, however, is effective management of the tumult of the first months in office, a leadership style such as that of British Labour Prime Minister Tony Blair (1997-2007) would likely be highly valued. Noted for his willingness to embrace risk and uncertainty, (Zussman, 2013, p. 24), Blair's ability to adapt when faced with the challenges of the office would be pointed to as highly effective if one's top priority is to bring the transition to a close while ensuring the capacity of the government to move forward.

The pre-election period is also nebulous. With the election at times a long way off, the line separating a leader and her inner circle musing about what their government may one day look like can often become intertwined with tangible transition preparations. This uncertainty is enhanced by the prevailing norm that the pre-election phase is typically carried out in secret. In Canada, despite their status as 'government-in-waiting', fears have historically existed among strong opposition parties that advanced transition planning signals arrogance, regardless of how strong their chances of forming government appear (Zussman, 2013, p. 139). In 2006, Conservative opposition leader Stephen Harper waited until just six days prior to the election to place a call to Clerk of the Privy Council Alex Himelfarb to discuss a potential transition (Zussman, 2013, p. 139-140). This occurred in spite of the fact that the Conservatives were poised to, at the very least, win a minority government. Much of this reluctance to openly plan is due to the scrutiny transition operatives anticipate from the media. As Zussman (2013) argues,

while media do not have a direct role in transition planning, they inevitably have some impact on how the process is carried out (p. 35). This impact of the media on transitions is a facet that thus far has been substantially overlooked and one that this paper will delve deeper into in later sections. First, though, it is important to look towards the existing scholarship devoted to transitions, identifying key themes such as the crucial role played by the leader, the importance of clear and effective communication by the transition team, the difficulty faced in developing criteria surrounding what constitutes a ‘successful’ transition, and the role of the outgoing government in the transition process.

## **Chapter 3: Key Themes**

### **3.1. Primacy of the Leader**

In his study of government transitions in Australia, James Walter (2011) found that “the decisive factor in how transitions play out proves to be the personal style of the leader” (p. 51). At first glance, this finding may seem oversimplified or self-evident in its assertion that the leader is the defining feature around whom the majority of successful transitions revolve. After all, a turnover in government, particularly in the case of interparty transitions, involves far more moving parts than just a change at the top. Despite this, however, the ability of the new leader to communicate a clear vision and manage effectively has often proven critical to the efficiency (or lack thereof) of a transition. Labelling leaders as either ‘messiahs’ or ‘managers’, Walter (2011) found that managerial type leaders, those focusing on discipline and efficiency rather than soaring oratory and inspirational messaging were far better positioned to successfully seize the levers of power and govern effectively (p. 51). Pointing to Labor PM Bob Hawke (1983-1991) and Liberal PM John Howard (1996-2007), Walter demonstrated that this managerial style can manifest itself in a number of ways. Hawke, for instance, was a negotiator and broker in his approach, whereas Howard’s style more resembled the “strong-leader” archetype in his emphasis on personal authority (Walter, 2011, p. 51). Indeed, consistency in approach and the ability to shape one’s leadership style to that of an effective manager (Walter, 2011, pp. 51-52) have emerged as crucial traits towards establishing effective governance and positioning new leaders for longer tenures in office.

The success of leadership defined by sound management at the top can be observed throughout the Westminster nations. In Canada, effective management can be seen in the governments of Liberal PM Jean Chrétien (1993-2003), whose ability to wield power adeptly

was bolstered by a strict, systematic strategy regarding his approach to his cabinet. Empowering individual ministers rather than cabinet as a collective, Chrétien built a government where talented individuals were given wide autonomy yet everything was still run from the centre, allowing the prime minister to determine the key issues while still holding his ministers to account (White, 2005, pp. 69-70). While Chrétien came to power with a strong, managerial approach, other leaders evolve into managers over time. Such was the case in Britain for Tony Blair. Sweeping into office in 1997 as a charismatic, fresh-face at the helm of the 'New Labour' movement, Blair's early days as prime minister resembled the 'messiah' archetype much more closely than the 'manager' type. As Hennessey (2005) points out in his study of leadership styles in the United Kingdom, however, Blair's leadership style became more managerial over time, devolving power from cabinet ministers to smaller informal groups (p. 10), a style successfully utilized by Margaret Thatcher in the 1980s (Hennessey, 2005, pp. 10-11). Other leaders endeavour to continue as messiahs while internally practicing managerial leadership. U.S. President Barack Obama (2008-2016) represented such a strategy, carving out an administration where decision making was carefully centralized within the White House yet the president continued to rely on his charisma and speaking ability to communicate to the electorate (Genovese, Belt, & Lammers, 2014, pp. 224-226). This balancing act would prove difficult, as the legislation produced by this pragmatic, carefully managed approach often failed to meet the bold rhetoric espoused by Obama when communicating his goals to the public (Genovese, Belt, & Lammers, 2014, pp. 222-223). As we can see, developing a leadership style is a process that most leaders undergo upon entering office. That this process typically happens gradually speaks further to the notion that transitions continue long after a government formally takes office.

### **3.2. Clear Communication**

While leaders are important, they are not the sole determinants of transitions. After all, the leader, especially in the pre-election and election phases, has far more on her plate than just the transition, namely campaigning and winning the election. With this in mind, the leader often selects a few key individuals from her inner circle to run the transition planning separate from the campaign itself. As the leader delegates this important responsibility, a key determinant of the transition's success will be how effectively the transition team is able to communicate a clear vision for their prospective government. Zussman (2013) argues that there are three key elements a leader must clearly communicate to their transition team in order for it to effectively construct a workable strategy. These elements are the leader's general philosophy about the role of government in society, the leader's preferred approach to workflow and problem solving, and a clear understanding of the leader's priorities both in the short and long term (pg. 50). While these concepts are abstract and may take the leader time to sufficiently articulate they are crucial if the transition team is to construct a plan that "fits" the leader. By effectively conveying her views about these issues, the leader aids their team in preparing a transition they will be able to readily navigate when the time comes.

The transition team must also be able to convey the leader's vision and objectives to the cabinet (once selected), caucus, and the public service. Throughout a transition, particularly in the post-election and consolidation phases, management of expectations is critical. For those selected for ministerial roles in cabinet, a leader must be clear on her expectations for her ministers and their accountability to her. Of perhaps equal importance, a leader must also manage the emotions of those not selected for cabinet positions, communicating with them and outlining the importance of their continued role in parliament and the party as a whole (Zussman,



2013, pp. 155-156). The leader and their team must also control the messaging to the voters that awarded them with their mandate in the first place. If voters expect too much right away, a new government may be seen as ineffective.

A new leader and her team must also be able to clearly lay out the new government's priorities for the public service, the permanent civil workforce whose cooperation is essential if the new government's policies are to succeed. An example of how to navigate this often delicate relationship effectively is found in the actions taken by incoming Alberta NDP Premier Rachel Notley, tasked in 2015 with the tall order of forming the province's first non-Progressive Conservative government in over four decades (Brownsey, 2019, p. 209). Anticipating a potentially fraught relationship with a civil service that had only known Conservative rule, Notley worked to reassure these public servants that they would be in safe hands, calling individual deputy ministers and, in a departure from previous governments, deciding to keep all existing deputies in their roles (Brownsey, 2019, pp. 220-221). This move by Notley, defended by her chief of staff Brian Topp as representing the new regime's intention "not to fiddle with government, but to govern", (Brownsey, 2019, p. 221) served to quickly establish a relationship of trust between the political and executive arms of her government.

It should be noted, in respect to the public service, that this communication does not have to be effusive or a guarantee of business as usual. Upon his ascension to office in 1984, Prime Minister Mulroney famously quipped that the public service would be receiving "pink slips and running shoes" (Peters & Savoie, 1994, p. 418), a signal of the Conservative's desire to overhaul the federal public service. Mulroney's stance toward the civil service was clear enough to provide public servants with an idea of what might be forthcoming, allowing them to adjust their expectations accordingly rather than leaving them in the dark. Indeed, the rockiest transitions, both from the perspective of the public service and the elected government, are typically those

where little preparation and communication have taken place. Examples of this can be seen in the unexpected wins in Ontario of the David Peterson Liberals (1985-90) and the Bob Rae NDP (1990-95), both instances in which the victorious party did little transition planning, thus leaving the public service unsure of what to expect and damaging the pivotal relationship between government and bureaucracy (Cameron & White, 2000, p. 149).

While negative rhetoric such as Mulroney's is justifiable, there are limits to the extent to which an incoming government can seek to impact the public service. Though the civil service works (in one sense) for the elected government, it is also meant to be a non-partisan institution, advising and executing on policy yet remaining detached from partisan politics. Despite this, attempts to 'politicize' the public service have become increasingly common in recent decades (Aucoin, 2012, p. 178). This issue is of great importance to our understanding of transitions and will be examined in detail in the latter half of this paper. Prior to this, however, we need to continue our examination of the existing scholarship on transitions, delving into the question of what makes for a successful transition and the criteria through which transitions have been judged and evaluated by scholars thus far.

### **3.3. Measuring Success**

The literature on transitions is characterized by ongoing debate about the standards and criteria we should utilize when evaluating these periods. While some argue that the mark of a successful new government is its ability to pass legislation, others contend that success is found in the new regime's ability to satisfy the electorate, measured through regular opinion polls. Still others hold that it is the ability of a government to effectively grasp the levers of power, managing its cabinet, caucus, and the public service while ensuring that government services continue uninterrupted as power changes hands. Ultimately, all of these criteria have merit and it

is difficult to justify an argument that emphasizes just one of these aspects while discarding the others.

With this in mind, Brooks (2000) argues that evaluating a transition's success is often a matter of perspective and a reflection of the role in which one serves (p. 25). A political strategist, for instance, will view transitions through a different lens than a deputy minister or a policy advisor. For the strategist, an ideal transition is one that sets the new government up to achieve its political goals and, perhaps more importantly, positions them for re-election when the time comes. For senior public servants, the chief aim is to provide the best service and advice possible to their departments and ministers (regardless of the political implications) and thus they likely favour a transition that keeps the wheels turning with little to no interruption. An effective transition team understands the competing perspectives at play, identifying the many opposing viewpoints at the table and to what degree they must be accommodated. Aligning with our finding of the primacy of the leader, Brooks (2000) argues that ultimately it is the "leader's responsibility to understand these diverse, often conflicting pressures, to prioritize them, and then find the most effective balance among them." (p. 32). It is this balancing act, setting priorities and striving to incorporate the various interests within the governance machine, that defines the character of each transition.

Balancing these parallel (and often competing) interests is difficult. This is further complicated in that new governments often enter into office with high expectations from the voting public and will inevitably be measured by their ability to deliver on promises made during the campaign. The Liberal government of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, for instance, ascending to power in late 2015, found itself burdened with 353 unique campaign promises. While in previous eras many of these promises may have fallen by the wayside due to the limitations of print and television media, in the digital age these pledges can be held to a far greater account.

Contemporary scholars, such as those at the University of Laval, have dedicated entire projects to tracking and evaluating promises made by aspiring leaders during their campaigns, presenting the government's record on this front for the entire electorate to see (University of Laval Polimètre, 2019). The difficulty here is that promises made during campaigns can become burdensome and may not align with the priorities of a government once it actually takes office. Illustrating the perils of this quandary are cases such as that of U.S. President George H.W. Bush who boldly told voters at the 1988 Republican National Convention to “read my lips, no new taxes” (Sencer, 1991, p. 428). Upon entering office, however, President Bush soon found himself faced with political realities necessitating a tax increase, a broken promise that would be held over his head throughout his unsuccessful campaign for re-election in 1992. Just as they evaluate which perspectives to prioritize, a transition team must also identify which campaign promises are most important to fulfill upon taking office. Failing to do so may lead to distrust amongst the voters, severely damaging a government's prospects of re-election.

Taken as a whole, this balancing act of satisfying the many political and bureaucratic interests at play while still managing to fulfill a multitude of campaign promises highlights the imperative of governments to create a blueprint detailing how their transitions will unfold. It also illustrates how difficult the concept of a “successful transition” is to pin down. As each turnover of government is a unique event there is no perfect measure which we can use to separate the great transitions from the average or catastrophic. This does not mean, however, that we should shy away from studying these important points in the political cycle. Rather, it is a reminder that in attempts to evaluate transitions, a researcher must be cognizant of the many perspectives at hand as well as their own biases when determining what truly makes for a strong transition.

### 3.4. The Outgoing Government

This thesis centres primarily on incoming leaders and governments. At the same time, it also examines outgoing governments as they exit power. Interestingly, many of the conventions that dictate the outgoing government's duties are set out by conventions rather than enshrined by law. As Salgo (2020) points out in his analysis of transition practices in Canada and the United States, Canadian transitions are almost entirely governed by unwritten conventions. Despite this, the existence of Elections Canada (the independent, non-partisan agency that administers federal elections) and the relatively quick pace of Canadian transitions (Salgo, 2020) provide outgoing governments with little room to disrupt a transition even if they felt so inclined.

While legislation exists in the form of the *Presidential Transition Act* of 1963, U.S. transitions are also largely dictated by conventions. This means that standard conventions such as an official concession from the loser and willing cooperation between outgoing officials and their incoming counterparts, while expected, are not mandated by law (Salgo, 2020). In contrast with Canada, however, the U.S. system provides considerably less protection in the event these conventions are deviated from. With a lengthy two and a half month transition period as well as a reliance on partisan entities such as state governments and members of Congress to certify the results (Congressional Research Service, 2020, pp. 1-3), additional opportunities exist for defeated incumbents to test the boundaries of their power and disrupt the transition.

The attempted insurrection in Washington, D.C. on January 6th, 2021 represents the consequences that can occur when an outgoing leader refuses to cooperate with the transition process. Launched with the aim of disrupting the certification of President Joe Biden's 2020 election victory over Donald Trump, the storming of Congress by Trump's supporters was emboldened by President Trump's frequent (and unfounded) assertions of electoral fraud after election day (Barry, McIntire, & Rosenberg, 2021). President Trump repudiated conventions by

insisting that he had actually won, by refusing to acknowledge the incoming government, and by denying transition teams necessary resources (Kaplan, 2020). Events like those of 6 January 2021 speak to the crucial role of departing governments and the serious democratic damages that can occur to the system if an outgoing government refuses to relinquish power.

While it can be argued that the Capitol riots were a one-off event, spurred on by a historically disruptive leader, the vulnerabilities they exposed should not be ignored. Indeed, in polarized systems in which holding onto power becomes the chief priority, an overreliance on conventions rather than legislation leaves the door open for additional incidents in the future. Equally, a refusal to cooperate in the process by outgoing governments, if frequent, could seriously erode the quality of a nation's democracy. If both sides of transitions can no longer be counted on to act in good faith, legislative oversight might be required. As they study the January 2021 riots in Washington, political scientists should consider the underlying forces at play and whether legislative remedies might be helpful.

### **3.5. Moving Forward**

In analyzing the literature on transitions, an important conclusion is that a “one size fits all” approach does not exist. Neither are there any panaceas for transition teams hoping to guarantee a smooth transfer of power. For political scientists aiming to have their research aid incoming governments in navigating these complex periods, this understanding is crucial towards avoiding the pitfalls that have previously befallen some transition teams. Indeed, what the literature teaches us is that each transition must be tailor-made for the leader and government assuming power. To do so, transition teams must answer the pivotal questions discussed earlier. These key questions include identifying the goals and management style of the leader, effectively communicating these matters to cabinet, caucus, and the electorate, and determining the internal standards by which the success of the transition will be measured. Transition teams who ignore

these key questions often find themselves mired in disorganization and indecision. A poorly executed transition can greatly hinder a new government's ability to wield power and begin governing.

While the literature provides a valuable foundation, it certainly does not provide a complete account of the transition process. The sections that follow highlight the major lines of research that remain underdeveloped, seeking to fill in some of the gaps that currently exist. In addition, these sections will propose research designs through which we, as political scientists, can bolster our knowledge of these important periods in the political cycle. Diving into questions surrounding intraparty transitions, the relationship between incoming governments and the public service, and the impact of media on new governments, the remainder of this paper seeks to shed light on the aspects of this topic that remain underlooked, providing a path forward for political scientists seeking to better understand this issue.

## Chapter 4: Intraparty Transitions

As noted, political scientists have imperfect understandings of intraparty transitions. This is in spite of the fact that these types of transitions are quite common. According to Massicotte's (1998) analysis of transitions in Westminster countries (including Canada and its provinces, Australia and its states, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom) between 1945-1998, an equal number of leaders (85) reached office by succeeding a leader within their own party as those who came to power via election (p. 99). In the two decades following Massicotte's study this trend has continued with prime ministers such as Paul Martin in Canada as well as Gordon Brown, Theresa May, and Boris Johnson in the United Kingdom all initially reaching office via appointment. In Australia, intraparty transitions are significant with four of the last five prime ministers: Labor's Julia Gillard and Kevin Rudd and the Liberal coalition's Malcolm Turnbull and Scott Morrison all assuming office by succession (Government of Australia, 2020). Indeed, in the 2010s, only Liberal Prime Minister Tony Abbott first came to power by the traditional means of a general election (Government of Australia, 2020).

Given the importance of intraparty transitions in Westminster countries, we must determine if leaders entering office via succession are inherently on a weaker footing than those who win by election. This question is an intuitive one. By virtue of taking over for their predecessor in the midst of a mandate, leaders attaining power in this fashion risk being seen as mere replacements. If they succeed a long-tenured leader who is still popular with voters, a new leader may be seen as a second-rate version of their predecessor, commanding little in the way of support from their party and the electorate alike. On the contrary, if taking over for a leader resigning due to scandal, party revolt, or dwindling polls, one may find themselves reckoning with the political baggage and stigma of the former leader, facing an uphill battle come election



time. In recent Canadian history, Prime Minister John Turner, replacing Pierre Trudeau in 1984 after almost fifteen years of uninterrupted rule (with the exception of the brief Joe Clark interregnum in 1979-80), is an example of the first scenario. Turner faced the challenge of replacing a leader who defined his party for the better part of two decades. Taking over under a poor economy for a highly unpopular prime minister in Brian Mulroney (Clarke & Kornberg, 1996, p. 463), Kim Campbell's 1993 rise to power reflects the second scenario. She had to assure voters that her government would be different despite the party's tired appearance. Both Turner and Campbell proved unable to overcome these challenges and would see their governments swiftly end in disappointment. Campbell would serve just over four months as prime minister while Turner would hold office for a mere 79 days (Library of the Canadian Parliament, 2020).

The key question here is whether leaders such as Campbell and Turner were inherently destined for electoral failure due to their party's larger circumstances or whether it was their individual weaknesses as politicians or, more likely, a combination of both. After all, not every leader who takes power via succession experiences a short-lived tenure in office. Ralph Klein, for instance, became premier of Alberta following the resignation of Don Getty (who himself came to power via succession), and would become a celebrated premier, winning four consecutive elections before retiring in 2006 (Government of Alberta, 2020). At the federal level, Pierre Trudeau came to power via appointment (taking over in 1968 for a retiring Lester B. Pearson) and went on to serve more time in the office than any individual in the post-war era (Library of the Canadian Parliament, 2020). It should be noted that the outgoing leaders in each of these cases left office voluntarily, and more importantly, peacefully, and Klein and Trudeau were aided by their predecessors rather than hindered by them, easing the transition considerably.

This brings us to a second question: does the manner in which the former leader departs influence the prospects of an intraparty transition's success? Intuitively, one would presume this component plays at least a partial role in dictating how these events play out. For instance, a beloved leader retiring at the end of a storied career and imparting her endorsement on her successor would probably have a different impact than an embattled leader forced out of office amidst a cloud of controversy. In their study of succession planning and the relationship between new leaders and their predecessors, Laing and t'Hart (2011) asserted that incumbents departing of their own accord who have retained considerable authority within the party would likely exert considerable authority over the selection process of their successors (p. 122). Building on this, they found that those deemed as 'loyalists', supportive of the outgoing leader and the existing party platform, were more likely to be selected for leadership (Laing & t'Hart, 2011, p. 128). Interestingly, however, their results indicate that new leaders with clear reform agendas (if they can make it through the selection process) prove to be the most successful when it comes to longevity in office and subsequent electoral performance (Laing & t'Hart, 2011, p. 128). What this tells us is that the qualities for leadership deemed most palatable by those within the party do not always translate to popularity with the voters at large, and that the endorsement of a departing leader may not be as valuable in ensuring a smooth transition as one would otherwise expect.

While Laing & t'Hart provide insight into the interpersonal dynamics and party politics that comprise a major component of intraparty transitions, their research has limitations. Though we learn much about the electoral performance of leaders in their first election following their takeover, there is little in their findings to separate those leaders who held a legitimate chance of winning from those whose transition only came about as the result of a doomed leader fleeing office in a seriously weakening party. For such leaders, regardless of the strength of their

transition or leadership style, the situation they inherit may well be insurmountable. Such context is necessary if we are to understand and evaluate these transitions. A second limitation is that their findings are derived from a relatively broad pool, encompassing not just transitions of parties holding power, but those in opposition as well. For our purposes of better understanding how power changes hands, the inclusion of these additional leadership transitions calls into question the broader conclusions their research arrives at regarding intraparty successions. After all, the calculus of a party selecting a new prime minister is undeniably different than that of an opposing party selecting a new face to hopefully spur the party towards electoral success in the future. A final limitation, noted by Laing and t'Hart (2011), is that their research does not fully take into account macro-level variables (such as the electoral and party systems of their respective countries) or the specific party-level rules and traditions of succession (p. 129), all of which play a role in determining how these transitions play out.

This last limitation highlights a crucial question: how do variations in national law and traditions influence the prospects of successful intraparty transitions and longevity in office? Even amongst the Westminster countries there is considerable variation in how intraparty transitions can be initiated, particularly in the cases of embattled leaders reluctant to step down from office. In Australia, for instance, leaders of all parties face fixed-term leadership reviews every three years (tied to the electoral cycle). Equally, they are subject to spontaneous reviews from their parliamentary caucus at any time (Cross & Blais, 2011, p. 139). As previously noted, Australians often witness instability at the prime ministerial level. From 2010 to 2018 four sitting Australian prime ministers (Kevin Rudd, Julia Gillard, Tony Abbott, and Malcolm Turnbull) were removed by their own parties in events known as 'leadership spills', where a simple majority from among the caucus can bring about a leadership change (Brown, 2018). Canadian politics are quite different. Not all leaders face fixed-term intraparty reviews and the

parliamentary caucus is not empowered with the capacity to remove the party leader while in power (Cross & Blais, 2011, p. 143). Indeed, for the Liberal and Conservative parties (the only two parties to ever form government in Canada), there exists no formal mechanism to remove a party leader while they are serving as prime minister (Cross & Blais, 2011, p. 136). This feature of the Canadian system is important as it potentially provides embattled leaders with additional latitude to dictate the terms of their own departure. While Canadian leaders can certainly still face pressure from within their party to step down, the lack of a simple process through which they can be removed places them in a far stronger position than their Australian counterparts.

Such differences between Australia and Canada suggest that intraparty transitions can be brought about in different ways depending on the system under which one finds themselves. In fact, each Westminster country has its own procedures and politics about the selection and extrication of leaders, often varying even down to the level of the individual parties. We have already seen how the existing laws and conventions of these nations matter greatly when it comes to evaluating intraparty transitions. To treat instances of succession across these countries as more or less the same is to ignore these fundamental differences, calling into question any wider trends researchers hope to uncover. With this in mind, it is imperative to take the national context into account in addition to the circumstances of the individual transition.

#### **4.1. Suggested Research Design - Intraparty Transitions**

Political scientists need to devote further research to intraparty transitions for several reasons. First and foremost, leaders ascending to office via these events can have an instant impact, taking over the top job overnight and finding themselves immediately responsible for the course of national or subnational policy. By not fully understanding how and why these leaders attain office, we limit our ability to study and draw conclusions about their subsequent actions as

prime minister or premier. A deeper knowledge of these events also has important ramifications for how intraparty transitions may be deployed going forward. In understanding whether certain conditions increase or decrease the likelihood of success of these transitions, ruling parties may be more cognizant of when to seek a leadership change. As Massicotte (1998) argues, if it is discovered that under certain circumstances the rate of success for intraparty transitions is high, ruling parties suffering from factionalism may be more inclined to make a change at the top than they would if the evidence indicated appointed leaders were more likely to suffer disappointment at the polls (p. 98).

Our primary research question for this study asks whether leaders attaining office via intraparty transitions are less likely to enjoy subsequent electoral success than their interparty counterparts? In addition, we also seek to ascertain whether there are certain conditions (such as the manner of the previous leader's departure or the country in which the transfer of power is occurring) under which intraparty transitions tend to experience a greater likelihood of success. Our hypothesis asserts that intraparty transitions will tend to yield less successful governments on average and that such results are exacerbated in systems such as Australia where it is easier to oust sitting leaders from office.

In designing an effective study of intraparty transitions, the criteria for evaluating their performance must be clear. Fortunately, in the case of intraparty turnovers, a useful measurement is readily available: the leader's performance in her first election following appointment. This criterion, of course, must be accompanied by the caveat that certain elections are unwinnable no matter who is at the helm of the party, and this context must be accounted for. For example, if a party is trending sharply downward, such as the Mulroney Progressive Conservatives in the early 1990s, it is not fair to lay the party's collapse at Kim Campbell's doorstep, regardless of the fact that she had succeeded Mulroney as prime minister by the time Canadians went to the polls. As a

starting point, however, these initial election results following the appointment of new leaders provide useful baseline data through which we can measure the success of these intraparty transitions before expanding our analysis to take additional factors into account.

In addition to establishing baselines it is also crucial to determine which nations to include in our dataset. Intraparty transitions, after all, are possible in all types of political systems. Even in the United States, where the constitution firmly holds the presidency to four-year terms, sitting presidents can and have left office early. An example of this can be found in the presidency of Gerald Ford, who, after resignations by Vice President Spiro Agnew in 1973 and President Richard Nixon in 1974, was appointed as vice president and, later, president without a single vote being cast in his name (United States Senate, 2020). Despite the possibility of intraparty transitions in democracies such as the U.S., however, the larger differences between the American and Westminster systems are too substantial for useful comparison. One major difference can be found in that in Westminster nations successors are chosen by the governing party whereas in the United States there is a strict line of succession, with the vice president next in line in the event a president leaves office prematurely. As a result, the calculus of choosing a new leader (a major facet of Westminster systems) is completely absent from American intraparty transitions. Therefore, my judgement is to examine Canada, the United Kingdom, the Republic of Ireland, Australia, and New Zealand. To expand upon this available data, it is also beneficial to take a cue from previous studies such as those by Massicotte (1998, p. 101) and include the 10 Canadian provinces and 3 territories as well as the 6 Australian states. As an aside, researchers should note that the Canadian Northwest Territories and Nunavut both utilize a consensus form of government rather than one centered around political parties (Government of Nunavut, 2020). As a result, data from these two territories, while useful, may not lend itself for straightforward comparison.

In a departure from previous studies, notably by Cross & Blais (2011, p. 139), the study I propose here should only include successions that involve a change in leadership among parties in power, rather than including those in the opposition as well. While opposition party leadership changes can have important future ramifications, the focus here is more on transfers of power in the immediate sense. As intraparty transitions of ruling parties directly determine the next prime minister (or premier) and take place with immediate effect, the stakes involved differ greatly than those of opposition leadership transitions and thus researchers should refrain from comparing the two in a straight-across manner.

The ideal timeframe for this study must also be considered. While it is possible to stretch our data back to the founding of each respective country (and their provinces/states), identifying each instance in which a prime minister or premier came to power via appointment rather than election, if our objective is to better understand transitions through a contemporary lens it is perhaps more prudent to focus on the narrower timeframe of the post-war era. Though successions certainly occurred prior to the Second World War, with the advent of television and later the internet, leaders have become more visible in the post-war era, allowing for greater coverage and scrutiny of these transition events as a result. With this in mind, 1945 should be our start point.

With our timeframe established, we can then examine how each leader fared in her first election after coming to power. This can be done by looking at both the percentage of the popular vote the party received as well as the number of seats gained or lost. For the purposes of cross-national comparison the former is likely the more useful measure of the two. With this data, we can then identify whether those leaders who came to power through intraparty transitions fare better or worse than their predecessors and identify which trends, if any, exist

that can inform us as to whether these exchanges of power produce viable governments or mere caretakers destined for disappointment.

Once we have established our baseline data regarding new leader's performances in their first election, we can begin to take a look at other important issues. First, in order to evaluate performance, we must determine whether the election was in fact winnable for the new leader or whether she was in an impossible position due to, for example, her party's faltering condition. Though such determinations are subjective, there are ways in which we can establish if the leader herself influenced her party's performance or whether declining public support was so substantial the election was a foregone conclusion regardless of which leader was in power. One method through which we can make such a determination is to look to past polling data. If a ruling party was experiencing falling support both prior to and after a new leader's succession, it can be said with some confidence that a poorer result than the previous election was inevitable. Likewise, if polling numbers remained relatively steady both prior to and following the appointment of a new leader, it can be argued that the leadership change did little to alter the party's prospects. With this in mind, when evaluating intraparty transitions, we can look deeper at cases where a leadership change witnessed either a positive or negative change in support amongst the electorate. Doing so will allow us to better understand the circumstances in which an intraparty leadership transition had a tangible effect on a party's success or decline in the subsequent election. To obtain this data, we can look to polling firms such as Gallup Canada (Scholars Portal Dataverse, 2020) who have been conducting opinion polls in Canada since the early 1940s.

We can also analyze whether the manner in which the previous leader departed had an impact on the success of the new leader. To determine this, we must create a system through which we can categorize the many ways in which leaders can depart office before the end of



their mandate. Laing and t'Hart's (2011) study on the dynamics of intraparty transitions utilized a five factor categorization system composed of: force majeure (death/illness), personal (i.e. voluntary retirement), electoral collapse (diminishing polls/electoral support), mistake (political scandal), and party/political (movement within the party for a new leader) (p. 126). These classifications are useful and translate effectively to the analysis I am proposing here. Using these five categories we can systematically examine each transition and determine its principal driving force. Though at times this will likely be difficult to discern, as multiple variables can contribute to a leader's decision to step down, through media reports, government statements, and first-hand accounts such as memoirs, researchers should be able to glean the motivation behind each departure with relative confidence. With this information at hand, researchers can determine which precipitating circumstances are most common and also whether any relationship exists between the nature of the outgoing leader's departure and the ultimate success of the transition and the new leader.

A further use for our baseline data is to study the impact of country specific differences on the likelihood of a successful intraparty transition. Separating our cases into categories based on country, we can determine whether any particular nation is more prone to intraparty transitions as well as the specific circumstances precipitating these events (i.e. Australia being more prone to 'leadership spills' due to its unique national rules). Furthermore, we can also determine whether intraparty transitions are more likely to be successful depending on the country in which they occur. Such data would be valuable to political scientists, both in explaining past transitions as well as the ability to better evaluate the prospects of success for intraparty transitions as they occur in the present. An additional analysis could be done at the provincial and state level in Canada and Australia where an understanding of the outcomes of

intraparty transitions could yield interesting conclusions regarding the unique political cultures within large federations.

By conducting this core research we can analyze why these transitions happen and whether certain circumstances are more likely to yield a successful new government than others. In Westminster systems, timing elections and leadership changes are often delicate balancing acts. For leaders and party officials, additional research may prove invaluable towards informing their decisions of when to initiate successions, as well as possibly pointing to actions that might be undertaken to better position the government for longer term success.

## **Chapter 5: Transitions and the Public Service**

Transitions can exert major impacts on the public service. As power changes hands, the public service provides a source of stability, assuring citizens that their government will continue to serve them effectively, even in times of flux. The public service is expected to function neutrally regardless of which party holds power, providing impartial advice and executing the government's policy directives. For some incoming governments, however, the civil service may appear as a major obstacle, rather than a bastion of support in times of political change. The fear is that the civil service has been "politicized". What we mean is that rather than acting as a neutral bureaucracy, public servants are themselves operating in a partisan manner, ideologically aligning themselves with one side or the other. For a new government, this perceived opposition from their own public service can be cause for great concern.

In his study on public service politicization in Westminster systems, Peter Aucoin (2012) lays out four developments that may indicate a nation's public service is politicized or becoming politicized. These are the staffing of public service roles with political cronies, awarding government contracts on the basis of political patronage, politicizing the content of government communications, and commenting positively or negatively on government matters in a manner going beyond evaluation (pp. 179-180). Each of these indicators of politicization can be discussed in turn.

The first, staffing public service positions with political allies, harkens back to the 'spoils system' under which it was standard practice for the ruling party to reward allies and supporters with key positions within the bureaucracy. While this system was the norm for much of Canada's early history, it was increasingly criticized as it became clear that an effective civil service required staffing through independent, objective competitions which provided all citizens with

the opportunity to be public servants (Savoie, 2004, p. 140). These views ultimately led to the passing of the Canadian *Civil Service Act, 1918* which placed the powers of appointments, promotion, transfers, and discipline in the hands of a Civil Service Commission (known today as the Public Service Commission) and established the foundation for a permanent public service based on independence and professionalism (Government of Canada, 2008). Though these laws provide protection against cronyism, governments may still continue to push to appoint as many allies as possible. As a result, upholding this first criteria remains crucial to the ongoing integrity of the public service.

The second criteria, awarding government contracts and projects to friends and allies of the ruling party, evokes the same concerns as the spoils system, in that it represents ruling governments focused more on rewarding supporters than practicing good government. While political norms and long standing legislation such as the *Financial Administration Act* serve to protect against such actions, concerns over this sort of patronage remain relevant in Canada. For example, in what would become known as the Sponsorship Scandal, Liberal Prime Minister Paul Martin and his predecessor Jean Chrétien found themselves (and their party) under heavy criticism from both political opponents and voters alike, accused of awarding millions in government funding in the late 1990s and early 2000s to party associated firms and organizations. The negative animus resulting from this controversy towards the Liberals would ultimately lead to the downfall of the Martin government in 2006 (Free & Radcliffe, 2009, p. 193). Even as recently as 2020, the Liberal government of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau came under fire for not following proper procedures in the decision to award a \$900 million contract to WE Charity, an organization with ongoing ties to the Trudeau family (CBC News, 2020). Even as laws remain in place to ward off political patronage, instances such as the above highlight the

importance for politicians and public servants alike to remain vigilant to ensure public funds are not misappropriated for political gain.

The final two criteria, ensuring the neutrality of government communications and the practice of refraining from commenting beyond evaluation on any policy initiatives, go hand in hand. While it may seem intuitive that a ruling government may seek to promote itself and its accomplishments, the government must represent all citizens, not simply partisans. In recent years, Canadian governments have encroached upon these norms of maintaining neutrality in official communications. In the autumn of 2010, for instance, the Harper Conservative government put forward a directive to refer to all federal communications as coming from the “Harper Government” rather than the “Government of Canada” (Jeffrey, 2011, pp. 6-7). Such actions represent a clear attempt to utilize the government apparatus to score political points, essentially politicizing every action the Harper government and the federal civil service would take while in office. This sort of partisan behaviour also endangers our final criteria for politicization, in that it encourages public servants to toe partisan lines, commenting on government successes as Harper victories rather than Canadian ones. While the example above is a rather overt case of partisan behaviour by a ruling government, it stands as a reminder of why politicization continues to remain such a compelling issue for new governments as they enter office and inherit a bureaucracy that may no longer hold to its non-partisan design.

In Canada, these fears have routinely been vocalized at the federal level, with both Liberal and Conservative politicians expressing doubt about the neutrality of senior civil servants (Savoie, 2004, p. 142). Historically these concerns have manifested in different ways. For Prime Minister Chrétien, it led to an insistence in holding the power to make top-level bureaucratic appointments, lest the “elected government not be in charge of running anything” (Aucoin, 2012, p.188). For Paul Martin, as Chrétien’s Minister of Finance and later as prime minister in his own

right, this skepticism contributed to a tendency to look outside the public service, making use of the private sector for consultation and expertise (Savoie, 2004, pp. 148-149). As previously noted, Conservative Prime Minister Brian Mulroney, who took over after a long period of Liberal government, initially asserted that a complete overhaul was necessary due to the many years of Liberal influence over the bureaucracy. At the provincial level, where parties can govern for decades, such as the Progressive Conservatives in Alberta (1971-2015) and Ontario (1943-1985), as well as the Liberals in Nova Scotia (1933-1956), such fears are further amplified as governments can inherit bureaucracies that have only ever known leadership under a single party.

Ultimately, the degree to which Canadian public servants engage in ‘political’ activities will vary depending on the pressure of their political masters. In an increasingly polarized atmosphere, the danger of civil servants operating under partisan constraints is further heightened, with each side seeking to maintain their grasp on power. Regardless of its existence, the fear of politicization in and of itself may also motivate the rhetoric and approach of incoming governments towards the public service. With this in mind, our aim is to further discuss the tangible impact this specter of politicization has on the ways in which governments in transition approach the public service. In addition, it is also important to analyze whether the length of tenure of the previous regime impacts the tendency for new leaders to seek public service changes upon taking office. By gaining a better understanding of this aspect of the transition process, we can more confidently predict how a new government and bureaucracy may interact with one another as well as impart this knowledge to those involved in the process itself, paving the way for more effective transitions in the future.

The stakes here are important. Anti-civil service rhetoric by incoming governments runs the risk of a loss of public confidence in the civil service, a decline in job satisfaction among

civil servants, and diminished bureaucratic performance overall (Haque, 1998, pp. 19-20). This phenomenon was witnessed throughout western democracies during the 1980s with public criticisms of the bureaucracy by leaders such as Mulroney (Canada), Thatcher (U.K.), and Presidents Carter and Reagan (U.S.) seriously eroding public confidence in the public service (Haque, 1998, pp. 15-16). More recently this trend has repeated itself, with leaders such as U.S. President Donald Trump going after the civil service as a part of his war on the ‘deep state’ (Osnos, 2018). Perceiving the permanent bureaucracy as a threat to his political aims, Trump’s administration set out to purge civil servants seen as “obstructionists”, with the immediate effect of depriving various agencies of the knowledge and expertise possessed by these individuals (Osnos, 2018).

Public service neutrality is at the core of the public service’s mandate and is important to its ability to serve citizens. If the public service becomes politicized it threatens the likelihood that all citizens, regardless of their support for the government of the day, will be treated equally by their government. Furthermore, even the suspicion of politicization, if it leads to purges of civil servants by a new governing party, can damage the public administration, with the loss of institutional memory and continuity in government during the transition. With this in mind, we will now delve into methods to determine just how large a threat the fear of politicization presents to the public service and how common bureaucratic overhaul is upon the arrival of a new government.

### **5.1. Suggested Research Design – Transitions and the Public Service**

Politicization is admittedly a subjective term. While bureaucratic neutrality is a reasonable and necessary standard to hold the public service to, it is inevitable that public servants will have political views. The image of a civil servant as a blank slate solely focused on keeping the wheels of government turning is incompatible with the reality of modern public

service which has considerable autonomy in dealing with governments. In addition, even if civil servants are “politicized”, it is often difficult to discern which of their actions are based in partisanship and which stem from their desire to be a responsive bureaucracy to the government of the day.

With this in mind our primary research question asks whether these fears of politicization lead to tangible impacts upon the public service during transitions? More specifically, we seek to understand whether a relationship exists between new governments and turnover at the top levels of the public service and, if so, whether this relationship is more pronounced following interparty transfers of power compared to successions? Our hypothesis is that while it is unlikely bureaucratic purges routinely take place under new governments due to the instability this would create, it is likely that interparty transitions will yield a higher level of turnover in this regard as new party regimes seek to implement their legislative and political agendas. By looking at hard numbers such as turnover rates at the deputy minister level we can work to determine whether bureaucratic purges do in fact take place as new governments seek to establish a public service more aligned to their partisan leanings.

High turnover at the top levels of the public service, or ‘deputy churn’ as it has been labelled (Mitchell & Conway, 2011), is an issue of growing concern in Ottawa. Recent examinations of the tenure of deputy ministers found that, in spite of the unique and highly specialized nature of these positions, turnover among deputies occurs at a far higher rate than is seen in positions of a similar magnitude outside of government such as CEOs and university presidents (Mitchell & Conway, 2011). In their examination of deputy turnover at the federal level, Mitchell & Conway (2011) assert that conventionally it takes up to two years for a new deputy to fully grasp the specialized and large-scale nature of the departments under their purview. Disconcertingly, however, recent analysis by the Public Policy Forum places the



average tenure of deputies at the federal level at 19.4 months (Mitchell & Conway, 2011), a noticeably lower average than this two-year mark, which stands as the minimum expected time for a new deputy to become proficient. In addition to the concerns regarding decreased institutional memory and continuity of government, such findings suggest that despite the important responsibilities of these positions, deputy ministers rarely have enough time to master their position before being shuffled elsewhere in the large federal system. The question for us, then, is whether a relationship exists that connects this trend to increasing fears of politicization and a desire by transitioning governments to replace existing deputy ministers (as well as those at the associate and assistant deputy minister level) with those more amenable to their partisan aims.

In designing this research path, we must first determine how to measure the tenure of deputy ministers. The chief difficulty is that deputies do not serve fixed terms. Serving at the pleasure of the prime minister or premier, the term of a deputy minister is indefinite (Bourgeault, 2006, p. 256). With each deputy minister having a unique appointment, across the board comparisons are difficult. Additionally, for those currently in their positions, the end of their tenure is not yet known and as a result is impossible to measure. To get around this problem, studies such as those by Mitchell & Conway (2011), have instead taken a snapshot at a specific cut-off date of the months of service for every current deputy minister, averaging it out to determine the mean tenure for the group. For our purposes, particularly in our focus on transitions, this method is useful as it illustrates if a new government contributes to a noticeable drop in the months in service for the cadre of deputy ministers as old deputies are shuffled out and more agreeable individuals are brought in.

In gathering data a number of sources are helpful. The Government of Canada's open information archive (Government of Canada, 2020) provides detailed data regarding the tenure

of public service employees, including deputy ministers. For additional detail, particularly regarding the specific individuals who have served as deputies, the websites of the individual ministries often provide a full list of the women and men who have served as deputies. Past press releases and news stories shed further light on the process through which these individuals reached these high level positions. With this data at hand we can utilize both the hard numbers as well as the additional context to see what conclusions can be drawn regarding the relationship between new governments and the public service.

Once the data have been obtained we can then work on uncovering underlying trends. Selecting a specific cut-off date for each year (i.e. June 30 or December 31) provides a snapshot of the average length of tenure for the deputies serving at that time. With this data in hand, we can then look to each year in which an election occurred within the previous 12 months and determine whether post-election years witness a decrease in the average deputy tenure as well as whether this decrease is more pronounced following a transition, particularly those of an interparty nature. Through this research, we can better understand the transition process in terms of how the civil service is handled by new leaders and whether long-tenured deputies serving under previous governments are viewed as an asset or a threat to the partisan ambitions of the new government.

Our findings may have important implications. If a relationship is revealed depicting the senior levels of public service being shuffled with each interparty transition some measure of reform is likely needed if we want a civil service led by qualified, experienced individuals rather than those who are the most politically useful. New Zealand, for example, has already implemented protections in this regard, creating a system of independent staffing for their top public service roles that aims to remove politics from the process (Aucoin, 2012, pp. 191-192). On the other hand, however, if research yields no link between new governments and turnover at

the deputy level we will more confidently be able to conclude that while concerns of a politicized civil service may exist for new leaders, they do not appear to manifest themselves in any tangible action towards bureaucrats who have served under previous regimes.

A country's civil service is crucial to its ability to provide services to its citizens. As concerns grow surrounding the politicization of senior officials, it is important to determine whether reforms are needed to restore the neutrality of the public service and allow governments to have the confidence that the public service will be responsive to the policy decisions they are asked to execute. As polarization continues to rise, this tension between bureaucratic responsiveness and neutrality is likely to grow in turn. For instance, what is to be done when public servants, sworn to neutrality, are directed by their government to carry out highly partisan actions? In such an event, does neutrality or responsiveness take precedent? Through further research, we provide ourselves with the ability to better understand the perspectives of both sides of this complicated equation. If it is indeed found that such tensions are having a negative impact on the relationship between the elected and non-partisan arms of our government, further legislative reform may be necessary to preserve the neutrality of our public servants going forward.

## **Chapter 6: Transitions and the Media**

Amidst the campaigning, post-election aftermath, and rapid efforts by the victors to carry out an effective transition, the media play a vital role in conveying to the electorate what to expect from transitions. More importantly, at least to political operatives, media also provide the narrative through which the transition will be received by the public at large. Though we have determined that success remains a subjective concept when it comes to transfers of power and is dependent on the criteria one subscribes to, the media's power to frame transitions as efficient, mediocre, or disastrous remains important. While nuance exists within every transition, it is rarely conveyed through headlines. This is important as the lens presented by the media is likely the one the public will latch on to as their new government finds its footing. With this in mind, our aim is to examine a key question: what impact does media have on transitions and how does it influence a new government's prospects of success?

The press plays a key role in shaping voter's opinions of their government. Historically, as power has been transferred, the relationship between the media and the transition team has often been overshadowed by concerns of how a new government's post-election activity will be characterized. Such fears have led to much of the important transition work being carried out confidentially (Zussman, 2013, p. 37). The 2006 transition of Stephen Harper's minority Conservative government, for instance, was highly secretive. Derek Burney who led the 2006 transition, described the transfer of power as being implemented under a "cone of silence" with even those being considered for Cabinet positions being informed their offers would be revoked if any leaks to the press were discovered (Zussman, 2013, pp. 156-157). Such discretion, particularly in the aftermath of victory, is illustrative of the cautious relationship transition staff have with the media.

While many transitions are secretive, some governments strive to chart a different course. Focusing on transparency and openness, these governments court the press in their attempts to demonstrate a vigorous approach to the takeover. Eager to establish themselves as capable after the long-standing Chrétien government, Paul Martin's team followed such a strategy, even going so far as to invite the press to attend a transition meeting. While well-meaning, this move ultimately backfired as the media went on to highlight the many prominent lobbyists who had been hired by the transition team rather than any substantive plans that had been laid out during the meeting (Zussman, 2013, p. 128). This narrative, bolstered by the previously mentioned sponsorship scandal, endured throughout the Martin government's time in office and severely hindered Liberal chances for re-election (Nanos, 2005).

It is obviously difficult to blame a government's electoral failure entirely or even primarily on media coverage received during transition. Despite this, many short-lived governments have pointed to the media as a problem as they tried to find their footing. The Campbell Progressive Conservatives are one such example. Taking over at a low point for the party following the departure of Prime Minister Mulroney, the relationship between Campbell and the media was antagonistic from the start. Upon her selection as party leader (and by virtue of the party's position, the new prime minister) publications such as French-language *Le Soleil* argued that with Campbell's ascension "Conservative Party members chose the next prime minister: Jean Chrétien" (Dornan, 1994, p. 81). In the campaign that followed only months after her appointment, Campbell accused the media of spinning her words against her, "misrepresenting" her pessimistic statements about the poor economic situation at the time and "not understanding" her plans to lead the country back towards prosperity (Dornan, 1994, p. 83). Looking back on the subsequent demise of the Campbell government, it is difficult to argue that the media was the deciding factor (or even a major influence) for her defeat at the polls. That

said, it is also unlikely that a successful transition could have occurred amidst such negative coverage. The question here is whether this negative coverage is normal or is the relationship between leaders such as Campbell and the media an outlier?

While Campbell's experience may speak to a poor relationship between media and new leaders, conventional wisdom argues the opposite is likely closer to the truth. Rather than facing a barrage of negative reporting, the majority of new leaders in Canada and in fellow western democracies experience a 'honeymoon' in which the coverage of the new government is typically more forgiving as the new leader and their staff find their footing (Brazier, 2020, p.140). This is particularly true for charismatic new leaders sweeping into office upon a wave of personal popularity and enthusiasm. In recent years, leaders fitting this mold such as U.S. President Barack Obama (Jones, 2009) and Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau (Fournier, 2019) have experienced prolonged honeymoon periods in which they enjoyed favourable treatment from the press and voters alike. Such findings are important in our discussion of transitions. If new leaders receive a prolonged period of positive coverage and forgiveness for missteps, it may be that the press bolsters, rather than weakens, new governments as they navigate their transitions.

The remainder of our discussion will focus on a key question: do most new governments experience a "honeymoon"? If so, we must understand how long these periods typically last and whether certain types of transitions are more likely to yield positive coverage than others. The implications here are important. While interparty transitions present opportunities for change, intraparty transitions are often seen as a continuation of the current regime. If the honeymoon period is found to exist more prominently for leaders attaining power via an election rather than succession it would speak further to the disadvantage of appointed leaders when it comes to navigating successful transitions and standing as legitimized leaders in the eyes of the electorate.

On the other hand, if all new leaders receive generally similar treatment from the media regardless of how they attain office, criticisms by past prime ministers such as Campbell regarding their coverage might well be outliers. Ultimately, by gaining a better understanding of the honeymoon period, we place ourselves in a stronger position to study the connection between the media and transfers of power and determine what tangible influence, if any, the press has on the prospects of success for incoming governments.

### **6.1. Suggested Research Design – Transitions and the Media**

Our key research question for this study asks the simple, yet important, question of whether new governments tend to experience a ‘honeymoon period’ upon entering office? In addition, we seek to understand whether the type of transition (interparty or intraparty) serves to either decrease or heighten this effect? With this in mind, our primary hypothesis asserts that while new governments tend to enjoy a noticeable honeymoon period upon entering office, this effect is likely less prominent during intraparty transitions. This is due to the fact that the ruling party remains the same during these transitions and thus presents less of a narrative of change for the media to convey to the electorate.

Measuring and evaluating media coverage of new governments is a subjective process. In seeking to establish whether honeymoons exist as well as better understanding their duration and whether they are enjoyed by most new governments or only those of a certain type, we must first outline a continuum of negative to positive coverage. Researchers will have to devise a system through which they can categorize the coverage a new government receives, while still accounting for the inevitable variations they encounter. One such way this can be accomplished is by creating a five point system: Positive, Mostly Positive, Neutral, Mostly Negative, and Negative when evaluating the articles, capturing a wider spectrum than just “good” or “bad” coverage and allowing for more specific measurements as we dive deeper into this issue.

Another obstacle is deciding which media outlets to include in our measurements. Our primary goal is to select publications with a long track record of unbiased coverage. Track record is important as it establishes legitimacy as well as allows us to delve into past eras when conducting this research, providing a wider scope through which we can evaluate this phenomenon. The importance of our second ingredient, a lack of bias, goes without saying. For some outlets, if positioned significantly to the left or right, a honeymoon period for an ideologically opposed government is quite unlikely, regardless of how smoothly the transition is going. With this in mind, it is best to select publications such as *The Globe and Mail*, long seen as Canada's paper of record, and one that aims to remove bias from its reporting. If it is determined by the researcher that a single publication does not provide adequate coverage, outlets such as *The National Post* and *CBC News* can be useful in providing supplemental context. Due to the slight bias of each (centre-right and centre-left respectively), however, if one is included, the other should accompany it as a counter-balance. In analyzing transitions that have taken place in the internet age, we also face a unique issue in the sheer magnitude of articles that are posted each day. To mitigate this, it would be useful for researchers to turn their focus primarily to digital editorials posted by these outlets, articles typically representing the opinions of their respective editorial boards. Taken as a whole, these mainstream publications should provide an accurate encapsulation of how each new government in our study was handled by the media at the time.

Any analysis of contemporary media must also take new media such as the internet and social media into account. Though only reaching prevalence amongst the masses since the early 2010s, platforms such as Facebook and Twitter play a massive role in present-day politics. While the frenetic nature of these platforms makes them difficult to utilize for traditional analysis, there are ways in which we can incorporate them into our study of the honeymoon effect. Outlets such



as the Globe and Mail, National Post, and CBC all have substantial online presences, and it is a relatively straight-forward process for researchers to search for and track the number of positive (or negative) stories posted to these platforms in the months following a new leader's ascension to office. Going beyond traditional news outlets, it is also possible to understand public opinion more broadly through social media platforms, though researchers must be careful in this respect. While useful, the anonymity of many social media platforms as well as the lack of verifiable demographics and the potential for fake accounts (bots) make conclusions difficult to draw regarding true public opinion of any leader or given issue (Klašnja et al., 2016, pp. 9-10 ). The emergence of 'echo chambers', in which users only follow and interact with those who already share their beliefs, presents additional difficulties. In only taking in perspectives they already support, those participating in these echo chambers are likely to have their beliefs reinforced and pushed towards further extremes, serving to obscure any conclusions researchers may hope to draw regarding public opinion at large. Despite this, however, for researchers cognizant of these pitfalls social media can provide valuable insight into how new leaders are presented online as well as the general public sentiment towards them. With this in mind, these platforms can provide valuable information for those looking to explore the question of the honeymoon period in the digital age.

A final determination we must address is how far back we should go when deciding which transitions to include in our analysis. As in previous research designs, the post-war era beginning in 1945 serves as an ideal starting point. Dating back to 1936, *The Globe and Mail's* archives allow us to form a relatively fleshed-out picture of the media coverage at the time. With this in mind, the first transition that we would include in this study would be the 1948 intraparty transition of Liberal Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King to his successor Louis St. Laurent (Library of the Canadian Parliament, 2020). It should also be noted that an alternate

version of this study, comparing the coverage received by governments in the pre and post internet eras, with the 2003 Chrétien to Martin transition serving as the divider, could provide valuable insight into how coverage has changed with the introduction of readily accessible digital media.

Once the baseline research is finished and the first year coverage of each new government has been catalogued based upon our five point system, analysts can probe the data. The first goal is to determine whether there is a honeymoon period. If a government receives notably favourable coverage in its first six months followed by a levelling off or negative turn, a honeymoon might be at work. We can then return to the question of whether interparty and intraparty transitions are handled differently by journalists and whether intraparty successors are disadvantaged by not receiving a honeymoon period akin to those leaders who attain office through democratic election. Such a conclusion would provide us with a valuable understanding of the inherent challenges successors face and why these new governments so often end prematurely.

A number of other questions arise. For instance, in intraparty cases, does the previous leader's reason for departure influence the new leader's media coverage? It is not hard to argue a leader who takes over from a much loved former prime minister might well be treated differently than one who leaves office due to scandal or some other personal failing. Another question is whether one's political party at all influences how their government is treated? As only two parties, the Liberals and Conservatives (in various incarnations) have formed a federal government such contrasts would not be difficult to spot. Heralded by many as Canada's natural governing party (Carty, 2010, p. 142) a difference in the treatment of the Liberals compared to their opponents would speak volumes about how national media shapes the lens through which Canadians view politics. Finally, it is also important to take into account extenuating

circumstances that may play into how the media covers a specific transition. For instance, transfers of power that occur during an economic recession or a pandemic will likely be covered in a different manner than a typical transition, a reality that must be taken into account before any conclusions are reached.

For many Canadians, the press largely dictate the information they receive and form a framework regarding how ‘information’ is presented. For fledgling governments, particularly those lacking a clear mandate or strong electoral support, media coverage is a major determinant of public opinion. In determining whether a honeymoon is the norm for new governments, political scientists and politically engaged people can develop strategies that leverage media to their advantage. From the media’s perspective, such knowledge is also useful in exposing bias and ideally, leading journalists to re-evaluate the ways they cover new governments.

## Chapter 7: Conclusion

Free and fair elections are the cornerstones of a democracy. Equally, the peaceful transfer of power after the votes have been counted ensures a democracy's continued vitality. The willingness of defeated governments to relinquish power guarantees the important democratic ideal that governments can be replaced if they fail to maintain popular support. Despite this political importance, however, transitions remain under-examined by political scientists. If we are to understand the mechanisms behind how governments enter and depart from office, a deeper understanding of transitions is important to political scientists and citizens alike.

Three areas are particularly in need of further study: intraparty transitions, the impact of transitions on the public service, and the influence of the media on transitions. Additionally, as the public service and media, two pillars of a nation's political landscape, play increasingly larger roles in determining how governments operate, this increased knowledge base is crucial if we are to understand how media and public services interact with sitting and incoming governments. With this in mind, political scientists must continue to expand their knowledge of key actors and their activities during these crucial moments in the political cycle.

In this vein, the three research designs proposed in this paper provide roadmaps through which we can increase our knowledge of political transitions and governance as a whole. As modern democratic politics become further polarized in many countries, transfers of power will likely become increasingly delicate events in the future. As political scientists, a deeper study of transitions provides an opportunity to strengthen our knowledge base, allowing our findings to better inform the actors engaging in these transitions and playing a crucial role in the maintenance of democracy going forward.

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