

Appendix

The Institutional Terrain in the Analyzed Political Systems

The institutional factors outlined in Chapter 2 vary considerably across the UK, German, Swiss, and US political systems (see Table A1 for an overview). The different shapes and combinations of institutional factors across these systems should produce major differences in blame game interactions and, therefore, constitute ideal institutional settings for examining and comparing how democracies manage policy controversies. The UK system features a relatively consolidated opposition consisting of a maximum of two parties, a quite critical governing majority, in which ‘backbenchers’ frequently voice criticism against the government, restricted conventions of resignation for ministers, and generally low direct government involvement in policy issues. In the UK, blame generation by opponents should mainly focus on administrative actors and entities because ministers are hard to get hold of. Incumbents, in turn, should not have much of a problem with critical backbenchers because the overall blame directed at them should be low and because they should possess ample blame-deflection possibilities in policy sectors with low direct government involvement. Germany exhibits a fragmented opposition, a loyal governing majority, relatively extensive conventions of resignation, and generally high direct government involvement. In Germany, opponents, while being less consolidated than their UK peers, are likely to focus their blame-generation efforts on incumbent ministers. Although incumbents receive support from a loyal governing majority, they should have greater difficulty defending themselves during a blame game due to extensive resignation conventions and generally high direct government involvement. Switzerland has a consensus government that represents (almost) all parties. During a blame game, some of these parties constitute a fragmented and

Table A1 Institutional factors and their shape across political systems

	Political interaction structure	Institutionalized accountability structures	Institutional policy characteristics
	Organization of opposition; stance of governing majority	Conventions of resignation	Direct government involvement*
UK	Relatively consolidated opposition (max. two parties); critical/passive governing majority	Ministerial responsibility: ministers responsible for department but resignation only in case of personal fault → very restrictive conventions of resignation	Low government involvement (due to widespread agencification)
Germany	Fragmented opposition; loyal governing majority	Departmental principle: ministers are only accountable to chancellor, not to parliament → extensive conventions of resignation	High government involvement (due to limited agencification)
Switzerland	Issue-specific, very fragmented opposition; issue-specific, relatively loyal majority (due to consensus government)	Departmental principle: councilors responsible for preparation and implementation of collectively made decisions → almost absent conventions of resignation	High government involvement (due to limited agencification)
USA	Consolidated opposition (one party); critical/passive governing majority (due to low party discipline and the possibility of divided government)	Secretaries serve at the pleasure of the president → conventions of resignation generally rather extensive, but ultimately dependent on leadership style of the president	Low government involvement (due to widespread agencification)

Note: Direct government involvement is, strictly speaking, a policy-specific characteristic. Therefore, at the system level, only tendencies regarding the value of this factor can be formulated. Accordingly, the government's direct involvement should be less pronounced in the UK and the USA since these countries have embarked on agencification reforms more heavily than countries like Germany or Switzerland (Verhoest et al., 2012).

Table A2 *Keywords used to identify relevant media coverage*

Case	Keywords
CSA	Child Support Agency; CSA
METRONET	Metronet; tube lines; PFI
DOME	Millennium Dome; the dome; millennium exhibition
NSU	NSU; nationalsozialistischer Untergrund; national-sozialistischer Untergrund
BER	BER; Flughafen Berlin Brandenburg; BBI (Berlin Brandenburg International)
DRONE	Euro Hawk; Euro-Hawk; Drohnenaffäre
CARLOS	Carlos
TAX	Unternehmenssteuerreform
EXPO	Expo.01; Expo.02; Expo 01; Expo 02; Landesausstellung
HCT	Mid Staffs; Mid Staffordshire NHS; David Nicholson
NITROFEN	Nitrofen
MOB	Marsch auf Bern; Ausschreitungen; Krawalle
VHA	veterans affairs, veterans scandal
FLU	vaccine; flu
SOLYNDRA	Solyndra

issue-specific opposition, while the other parties act as an issue-specific, relatively loyal parliamentary ‘majority’. The Swiss parliament cannot bring federal councilors to resign outside of regular elections, and there is high direct government involvement in many policy sectors. In this institutional setting, opponents are unlikely to act cohesively and should not blame individual councilors. Incumbents, in response, are likely to have little difficulty staying out of a blame game. Finally, the US system features a consolidated opposition consisting of one party, a rather passive governing majority, rather extensive resignation conventions for secretaries, however this ultimately depends on the leadership style of the president, and generally low direct government involvement in many policy sectors.

Public Feedback and Blame Game Consequences

Table A3 Overview of public feedback intensity in the in-depth cases

	Intensity of coverage	Tone of coverage	Peculiarities	Feedback intensity
CSA	Intensive coverage across the board (coverage constantly increases until 2006)	Widespread emotional coverage that concentrates on shocking examples (the controversy is frequently referred to as the ‘Child Shambles Agency’; a ‘national tragedy’, or an ‘unmitigated nightmare’), although there is problem-centered coverage in quality outlets		Strong
METRONET	Consistent coverage in quality outlets and almost no coverage in tabloids	Quality coverage is mainly problem-centered (illuminating the opaque and complex nature of the controversy), although quality outlets also tie the controversy to Brown and cover the issue within the larger problem-context of public-private partnerships	Polls show that the controversy has no negative effect on Brown’s approval ratings	Weak
DOME	Intensive coverage, even in tabloids	Agitated, inflated coverage	Three reasons suggest that media coverage overestimates public feedback: (1) quite a large share of the coverage deals with artistic aspects and not so much with the controversy (this can also be	Weak

Table A3 (cont.)

	Intensity of coverage	Tone of coverage	Peculiarities	Feedback intensity
NSU	Intensive coverage across the board of this unprecedented and delicate investigation failure (given Germany's history)	Very emotionalized and scandalized coverage, even in quality outlets, however, also problem-centered coverage in quality outlets of single slip-ups and placement of the controversy in a larger problem-context (racism, antisemitism, right-wing terrorism)	gleaned from the high media interest prior to the controversy); (2) polls suggest that the media is much more critical toward the Dome than the general public; (3) the media treats the Dome as a symbolic issue that allows for the discussion of the New Labour phenomenon	Strong
BER	Consistent coverage in quality outlets, but also	Mainly problem-centered coverage in quality outlets (detailed reconstruction of problems, discussion of consequences for passengers,		Weak

significant coverage in tabloids

companies, etc.); only later is there more person-centered and cynical coverage (due to strong exposure of Wowerët); the local tabloid is only different in that it focuses more on Wowerët and frequently appeals to incumbents

DRONE

Quite intensive coverage, but mainly in quality outlets

Coverage at times scandalizing

Weak

Three reasons suggest that media coverage overestimates public feedback: (1) most of the coverage relates to the minister's personal involvement (did he lie?; what did he know?); while the actual controversy fades into the background; (2) due to upcoming elections, opponents invest more in blame generation than expected (and this is taken up by quality outlets); (3) polls show that the public never shows great interest in the controversy: While the minister's popularity temporarily suffers, there is never a majority that wants him to resign (even journalists acknowledge that this controversy is not very interesting for the wider public)

Table A3 (cont.)

	Intensity of coverage	Tone of coverage	Peculiarities	Feedback intensity
CARLOS	Intensive coverage across the board	Scandalizing and emotional coverage including reports on many delicate details about the therapy setting	Other evidence for strong mass feedback: Furious social media comments, <i>The Blick</i> 's 'most read' rankings, and journalists' own reporting about heavy public feedback to their coverage	Strong
TAX	Consistent coverage in quality outlets and only limited tabloid coverage	Mainly problem-centered and equilibrated coverage in quality outlets (numerical examples to explain complex controversy), but more 'biting' coverage can also be found		Weak
EXPO	Not much controversy-related coverage	Very problem-centered; throughout the controversy, media (also tabloids) exhibit a positive stance toward the project despite recurring cost overruns	A poll reveals that the wider public does not attach too much importance to the cost increases	Weak

Table A4 Overview of blame game consequences in the in-depth cases

	Reputational consequences	Policy consequences	Peculiarities	Extent of overall consequences
CSA	Only public managers resign	No bold policy change, only patch-ups		Limited
METRONET	No reputational consequences; not even politicians within the transport department come under pressure; no negative effect on Prime Minister Brown's approval ratings (despite exposure as 'architect' of PPPs)	Minor changes voluntarily implemented by the Department of Transport (following some commission recommendations), but no major policy change as the Labour government presses on to use PPPs	The 'nationalization' of Metronet and Tube Lines does not contradict this finding, since there is ample evidence that the government would have stuck to the private solution had they found a bidder for the partnerships	Limited
DOME	No consequences for politicians (Falconer's career continued unscathed), only public managers resign (but not framed as form of blame deflection); although media outlets and opponents do	Government pulls through instead of prematurely closing the Dome		Limited

Table A4 (cont.)

	Reputational consequences	Policy consequences	Peculiarities	Extent of overall consequences
	<p>their best to tarnish the Labour government's image by connecting it to the Dome, it suffers no losses in the upcoming 2001 general elections</p>			
NSU	<p>Five presidents of federal or national intelligence services resign or are fired; politicians – both at the state and federal level – do not resign</p>	<p>Extensive reform of information exchange between federal- and state-level administrative entities; anti-terror database; reorganization of the Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz</p>	<p>The fact that politicians do not resign is due to the very strong administrative focus' of the blame game (and thus an effect of institutional factors)</p>	<p>Extensive</p>
BER	<p>Several public managers have to resign; Wowerit semi-voluntarily steps down (it is unlikely that he could have stayed in office for much longer)</p>	<p>No bold policy change (in the form of far-reaching adaptations to the implementation structure or the termination of the project)</p>	<p>The idiosyncratic nature of the policy problem made it difficult for incumbents to do more to boldly address the problem; when the blame game started, it was already too late for incumbents to adapt or terminate the project;</p>	<p>Extensive</p>

three reasons suggest that the blame game caused extensive consequences: (1) several public managers had to resign; (2) controversy ultimately cost the mayor his political career; (3) evidence suggests that incumbents did everything in their power to open the airport as soon as possible

Extensive

Activism by the minister and measures adopted by his successor lead to significant changes in the procurement system (controlling and report system; transparency initiative); a considerable anchoring effect is observable

Organizational adaptations; cost control measures; changes to policy practice (due to a strong anchoring effect)

No resignations (although the minister's reputation temporarily suffers in the polls)

Youth advocate resigns, incumbent councilor voted out of office (cantonal peculiarity)

DRONE

CARLOS

Extensive

Table A4 (*cont.*)

	Reputational consequences	Policy consequences	Peculiarities	Extent of overall consequences
TAX	No reputational consequences (resignations at the federal level in Switzerland are very unlikely)	Despite no immediate policy change, a strong anchoring effect is observable (concessions to the left to avoid referendum; left profits from conflict anchoring in the next round of the policy struggle)		Extensive
EXPO	Personal changes at the 'Verein', no resignations at the political level	While the government boldly intervenes to change the leadership of the 'Verein', the government clearly holds its course during the blame game (does not terminate the Expo despite recurring cost overruns; does not change implementation structure)		Limited