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Editor's Introduction*

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This is the first in an annual series of the new *Political Data Yearbook*, which intends to offer comprehensive annual coverage and analysis of elections, governments, and key political and institutional developments in twenty-eight democracies, and which aims to provide a much more extensive and broad-ranging version of Thomas T. Mackie's annual reports of national elections in western nations, which have been published on an annual basis in the *European Journal of Political Research*.

Each edition of this *Yearbook* will include individually authored reports by established political scientists on developments in their country during the previous calendar year, beginning with developments from 1 January to 31 December 1991. Each country report is broken down into a number of sections. First, where relevant, each report includes details of all national elections in the country, whether parliamentary or presidential, documenting details of changes since the previous national election, as well as reporting on the policies and raison d'être of any new parties which have managed to win seats in parliament. In addition, each author will include a brief analysis of the election campaign and the outcome, and will assess its significance in the light of more general political developments. Where possible, the party codes (or numbers) adopted by the earlier Mackie reports, and in Thomas T. Mackie and Richard Rose, *The International Almanac of Electoral History* (Macmillan, 3rd ed., 1991) are also adopted by the national reports in this *Yearbook*.

Second, in what is perhaps one of the most important innovations, the *Yearbook* includes details of the cabinet composition in each country during the relevant year, providing information on the names, ages, gender and party affiliation of cabinet members, as well as details of any personnel changes which have occurred over the twelve-month period. In addition, if a new government is formed during this period – new governments being defined as taking office whenever there is a change of Prime Minister, and/or a general election, and/or change in the party composition of the cabinet – the relevant entry in the *Yearbook* will also provide details of the new

* In the course of preparing the outline and structure for this new *Political Data Yearbook* we have relied on the advice and help of a large number of friends and colleagues, and we would like in particular to thank Rudy Andeweg, Hans Daalder, Hans Keman, Michael Laver, and Tom Mackie.

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cabinet, and will include a brief analysis of why the change occurred, and of the process which led to the formation of the new government.

Third, where relevant, each country report also provides details of any national referenda, any changes in the composition of the upper house of parliament, and any changes in the institutional structure of the political system (for example, changes in the electoral law, changes in the system of local government, and so on) which have occurred during the relevant twelve-month period.

Finally, each of the reports also includes a succinct analysis of the key political issues which have arisen during the year, as well as a discussion of how the major political forces have dealt with these issues.

In general, as should be clear from the country reports, our intention is to provide an indispensible and ongoing source of reliable up-to-date information on political developments in contemporary democracies. In other words, if there have been any important political developments in any of these twenty-eight democracies during the relevant year – whether an election, a change of government, or a major institutional change – both the details of these developments and an assessment of their importance can be found in the subsequent volume of the *Yearbook*.

In preparing this first issue, a detailed outline of the headings under which material was to be gathered was provided to each of the authors of the country reports. This outline can be summarised as follows, and also indicates the general order of the topics covered by each report:

National election results
- Presidential elections (popular elections only)
- General elections to the Lower House of parliament
- Changes in the composition of the Upper House
- Analysis of the election(s)

Cabinets
- Cabinet composition
  - Party composition
  - Cabinet members
- Changes of the cabinet
  - Resignation, or end of cabinet
  - New cabinet
- Changes in the cabinet (personnel changes, reshuffles, etc)
- Analysis of cabinet changes

Results of national referenda

Institutional changes

Issues in national politics

It should be clear, however, that not all of the headings under which material might be presented will be relevant to every country in every year. In any

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one year, for example, it is likely that only a minority of countries will have held general elections, while an even smaller set of countries will be likely to have held national referenda or to have undergone major institutional changes. In the subsequent reports, therefore, the absence of a heading simply indicates the lack of relevance of that particular topic. On the other hand, there are some headings which are always relevant, and will always be included. Thus each of the reports concerning the individual countries includes details of the composition of the cabinet in that country, and each also presents an analysis, however brief, of the issues which have been of concern in national politics during the year. Finally, for ease of presentation, reports under some of the headings have been collapsed together, as, for instance, when the report of a general election also incorporates an analysis of the formation of a new government as well as a discussion of the issues in national politics.

As far as developments in 1991 are concerned, and, as noted above, all of the country reports include details of *cabinet composition* and of *issues in national politics*. Relevant data under the 'variable headings', on the other hand, that is, under those headings which are not necessarily relevant to each country, are reported in the following countries:

General elections to the Lower House of parliament:
(or elections to the parliament in systems with a unicameral parliament)
Belgium, Finland, Iceland, Poland, Portugal, Sweden, Switzerland

Presidential elections (*popular elections only*):
Portugal

Changes in the composition of the Upper House:
Austria, Belgium, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Spain, Switzerland, the United Kingdom

New cabinets:
Australia, Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, (Israel), Italy, Japan, Poland, Portugal, Sweden

Results of national referenda:
Italy, Switzerland

Institutional changes:
Austria, Belgium, Czechoslovakia, Finland, Iceland, Israel, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland

Finally, in Table 1 and Table 2 some comparative data are presented concerning the types of government and the age and gender of cabinet ministers in the various countries at the end of 1991.

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Table 1. Types of government at the end of 1991

Type of government	Countries	Total
Single-party majority	Australia, Canada, Greece, Japan, Malta, New Zealand, Portugal, Spain, United Kingdom	9
Single-party minority	Norway	1
Minimum winning coalition	Austria, Germany*, Iceland, Ireland, Luxemburg, Netherlands	6
Minority coalition	Denmark, France, Poland, Sweden	4
Oversized coalition	Belgium, Czechoslovakia, Finland, Hungary, Israel, Italy, Switzerland	7

* CDU/CSU treated as one party.

Table 2. Age and gender of the members of cabinets at the end of 1991 (rounded percentages)

Country	Total number of posts in cabinet*	Women in cabinet		Average age of: Women in cabinet	Men in cabinet	All cabinet members
		N	(%)			
Australia	18	0		–	47	47
Austria	17	2	(12)	51	49	49
Belgium	17	1	(6)	48	51	51
Canada	39	7	(18)	53	52	52
Czechoslovakia	16	1	(6)	51	50	50
Denmark	19	4	(21)	49	50	50
Finland	17	7	(41)	45	45	45
France	20	4	(20)	45	56	54
Germany	20	4	(20)	44	54	52
Greece	24	1	(4)	57	58	58
Hungary	20	1	(5)	50	55	54
Iceland	10	1	(10)	49	50	50
Ireland	15	1	(7)	54	53	53
Israel	19	0		–	54	54
Italy	30	2	(7)	54	59	59
Japan	22	0		–	61	61
Luxembourg	10	0		–	47	47
Malta	10	0		–	54	54
Netherlands	14	4	(21)	54	51	51
New Zealand	20	2	(10)	40	48	47
Norway	19	9	(47)	46	54	50
Poland	17	0		–	53	53
Portugal	19	1	(5)	46	45	45
Spain	19	2	(11)	43	48	47
Sweden	21	8	(38)	49	48	48
Switzerland	7	0		–	55	55
UK	22	0		–	53	53
USA	17	2	(11)	55	57	56

* Excludes posts vacant at the end of 1991.

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