

Partijen en partijsystemen

30 april 2020

Overzicht

- **Introductie**
 - **Partijen en partijsystemen**
 - ***Party on the ground: partijen en het publiek***
 - Partijidentificatie, -betrokkenheid en -trouw
 - Maatschappelijke inbedding van politieke partijen
 - Politieke partijen en kiescampagnes
 - ***Party central office: partijen en hun organisatie***
 - Morfologie van politieke partijen: structuur, leden en financiering
 - Rekrutering en kandidatenselectie in politieke partijen
 - Politieke partijen, ideologie, programma en issues
 - ***Party in public office: partijen en het bestuur***
 - Regeringsvorming en politieke partijen
 - Nieuwe politieke partijen
 - **Conclusie**
-

Inhoud

- **Regeringsvorming**

- Cruciaal in democratische sturing
- \approx coalitie van partijen (\neq meerderheid)

- **Kernvragen**

1. Welke partijen geraken in de regering en hoe wordt de coalitiesamenstelling beslist?
2. Hoe worden portefeuilles verdeeld tussen en binnen partijen?
3. Hoe wordt regeringsbeleid bepaald tijdens de formatie?
4. Wat kunnen we leren uit coalitiepuzzels?

- **Basisteksten**

- Dewinter & Dumont, 2006
- Andeweg, 2011

- **Vergelijkend onderzoek - Vlaanderen**



Coalitiesamenstelling

Office & Policy (I)

- Waarom **bepaalde coalities** gevormd?
- **Rationele keuze** → nut maximaliseren

Veronderstelling	<i>office versus policy</i>
Winning	Office
Minimal winning	Office
Minimum seats	Office
Minimum parties	Office
Minimal range	Office > policy
Minimal connected winning	Office > policy
Minimal policy distance	Office = policy
Median legislator	Policy
Divided opposition	Policy

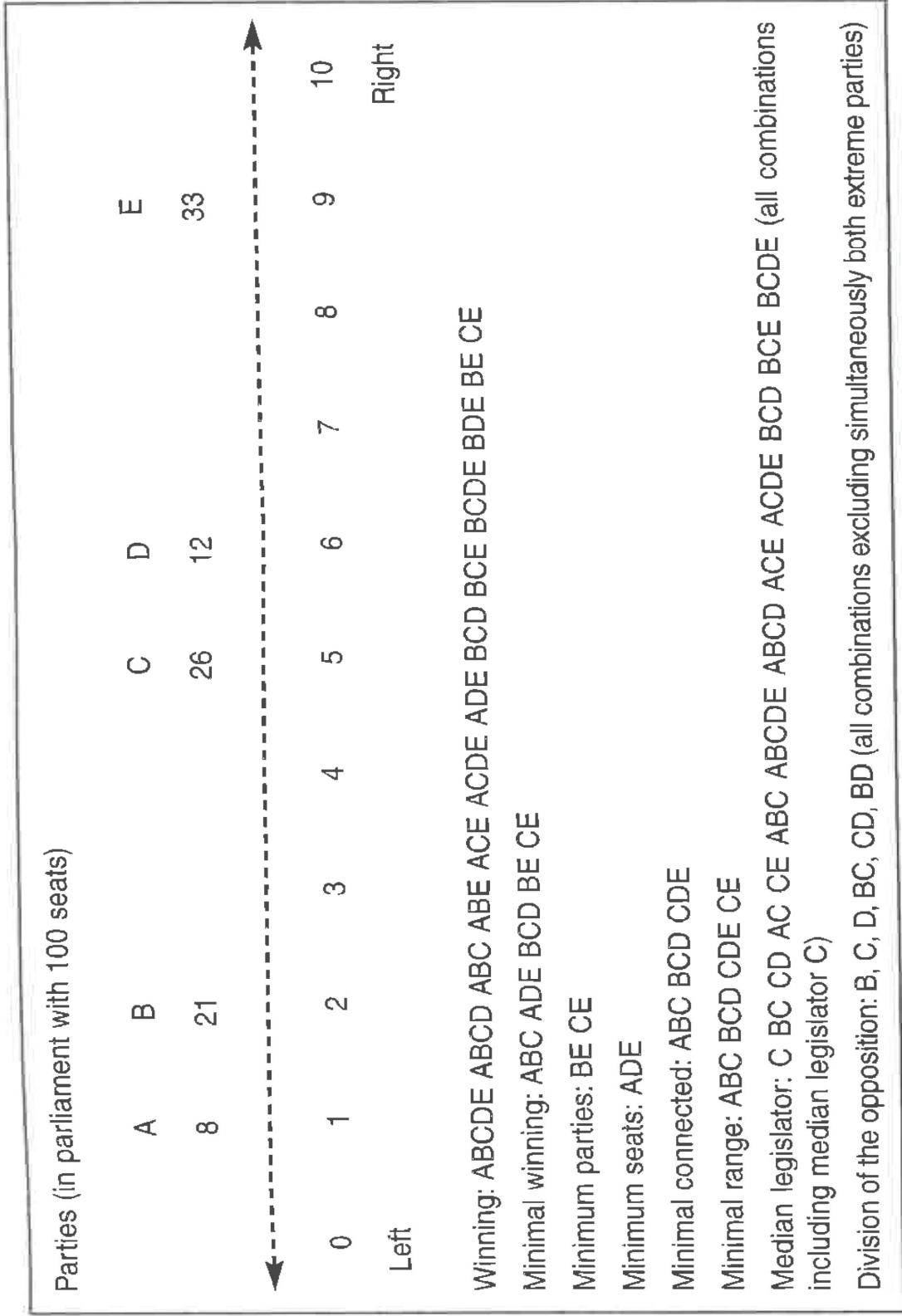


Figure 15.1 Cabinet coalitions predicted by unidimensional coalition theories for a hypothetical distribution of seats (adapted from Lijphart, 1999: 93)

Illustratie

2014 (I)

	Kamer van Volksvertegenwoordigers	Vlaams Parlement
Aantal partijen	<p>12</p> <p>N-VA 33 PS 23 MR 20 CD&V 18 Open VLD 14 Sp.a 13 Ecolo-GROEN! 12 cdH 9 Vlaams Belang 3 PTB-GO! 2 FDF 2 PP 1</p>	<p>7</p> <p>N-VA 43 CD&V 27 Open VLD 19 Sp.a 18 GROEN! 10 Vlaams Belang 6 UF 1</p>
Aantal mogelijke coalities	4095	127
Meerderheid	76/150	63/124
Uiteindelijke coalitie	<p>N-VA MR CD&V Open VLD (85/150)</p>	<p>N-VA CD&V Open VLD (89/124)</p>

Illustratie

2014 (II)

	Kamer van Volksvertegenwoordigers	Vlaams Parlement
Minimal winning	<p>N-VA, CD&V, Open VLD, Sp.a</p> <p>N-VA, PS, Ecolo/groen, VI. Belang, PTB-GO, FDF, PP</p> <p>MR, CD&V, Open VLD, Ecolo/groen</p> <p>...</p>	<p>N-VA, CD&V</p> <p>N-VA, Sp.a, VI. Belang</p> <p>CD&V, Open VLD, Sp.a, Groen</p> <p>...</p>
Uiteindelijke coalitie	N-VA – MR – CD&V – Open VLD	N-VA – CD&V – Open VLD

Illustratie

2014 (III)

	Kamer van Volksvertegenwoordigers	Vlaams Parlement
Minimum seats	<p>N-VA, PS, Ecolo/groen, VI. Belang, PTB-GO, FDF, PP</p> <p>N-VA, PS, CD&V, FDF</p> <p>MR, CD&V, Sp.a, Ecolo/groen, CDH, VI. Belang, PP</p> <p>...</p>	<p>N-VA, Open VLD, UF</p> <p>CD&V, Open VLD, Groen, VI. Belang, UF</p>
Uiteindelijke coalitie	N-VA – MR – CD&V – Open VLD (85)	N-VA – CD&V – Open VLD (89)

Illustratie

2014 (IV)

	Kamers van Volksvertegenwoordigers	Vlaams Parlement
Minimum partijen	N-VA – PS – MR (!)	N-VA, CD&V (!)
Uiteindelijke coalitie	N-VA – MR – CD&V – Open VLD	N-VA – CD&V – Open VLD

Illustratie 2019 (Vlaanderen)



Jambon I

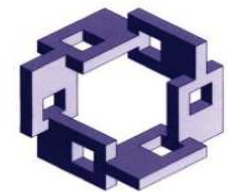
- *Winning*
- *Minimal winning*
- *Minimum parties*
- *Minimum seats*



Coalitiesamenstelling

Office & Policy (II)

- **Balans** → *office* en *policy*
 - Verbetert voorspellende waarde; eindresultaat blijft bescheiden
 - Hoe partijen plaatsen in ideologische ruimte?
 - Van één dimensie → cf. L/R
 - Naar meerdere dimensies → waarin *connected*?
 - Partijen → coalitie = *winning* + zo dicht mogelijk bij eigen ideale positie in ruimte met competitie in meerdere dimensies
 - Beperkingen
 1. Veel uitkomsten mogelijk
 2. Ideale positie bepalen ≠ coalitie voorspellen
 3. Partijposities bepalen
 4. Veronderstelt sterk geïnformeerde partijactoren



Michael Laver and Norman Schofield
with a New Preface
ANN ARBOR PAPERBACKS

Coalitiesamenstelling

Rol van instituties

- **Structureren uitkomsten formatieproces**
 - Beperken door (in)formele regels
 - Verdelen onderhandelingsmacht
- **Tijdens formatie** → onderhandelingsproces
 - Erkenningsregels → formateurpartij
 - Controle over timing → terugvaloptie
 - Investituurregels → *winning?*
 - Aard meerderheid
 - Voorgeschiedenis & voorakkoord
- **Na formatie** → regeringsbesluitvorming
 - Binnen de regering
 - T.a.v. het parlement



Illustratie

Institutes België

Erkenningsregels

17/06/2010	Informateur (De Wever)
8/07/2010	Preformateur (Di Rupo)
4/09/2010	Koninklijke bemiddelaars (Pieters en Flahaut)
8/10/2010	Koninklijk verduidelijker (De Wever)
21/10/2010	Koninklijk bemiddelaar (Vande Lanotte)
2/02/2011	Informateur (Reynders)
2/03/2011	Koninklijk onderhandelaar (Beke)
16/05/2011	Formateur (Di Rupo)
6/12/2011	Di Rupo I

Grootte van de meerderheid

Grondwet

Bijzondere meerderheid

Alarmbelprocedure

Coalitiesamenstelling

Tussenstand

- **Actorgerichte theorie**

- Strategische positie in onderhandelingspel
- Dominante spelers → relatieve stemmacht indiceren

- **Blijvende tekortkomingen theorie**

- Voorspellende en verklarende waarde feitelijke coalities
- Operationalisering en data
- Tussen én binnen partijen

Banzhaf Voting Power Index

$$B_i = \frac{c_i}{\sum_{k=1}^n c_k}$$

c_i = times voter i is critical

Government Formation in Parliamentary Democracies

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Research on government formation in parliamentary democracies is replete with theoretical arguments about why some coalitions form while others do not. Unfortunately, this theoretical richness has not led to the development of an empirical tradition that allows scholars to evaluate the relative importance of competing theories. We resolve this problem by applying an empirical framework that is appropriate for modeling coalition choice to evaluate several leading explanations of government formation. Our approach allows us to make conclusions about the relative importance of traditional variables relating to size and ideology and to assess the impact of recent neo-institutionalist theories on our ability to explain and predict government formation.

Which parties get into government in parliamentary democracies? This question has long attracted the attention of scholars interested in the relationship between electoral outcomes and the practice of parliamentary government, and finding the answer is "when all is said and done, simply one of the most important substantive projects in political science" (Laver and Schickel 1998: 89). For this reason, students of coalition politics, including game theorists, country experts, and contributors from several other subfields, have made the study of government formation one of the most theoretically active areas of research in the discipline.

Unfortunately, this impressive theoretical productivity has not led to systematic progress in the explanation and prediction of real-world governments. Most scholars have employed rather limited empirical designs—such as detailed accounts of coalition bargaining across a number of countries (Lazear 1986; de Swaan 1973), uncontrolled comparisons of large samples of elections (Laver and Schickel 1995), or analyses of particularly prominent cases (Strom 1994)—to evaluate ever more complicated, and often quite different, theories of government formation. Researchers have yet to subject the various competing hypotheses in this literature to an appropriate multivariate statistical analysis, although this is exactly the type of procedure we must use to choose among them.

We do not suggest that other scholars have been unaware of the empirical shortcomings in this literature. Instead, we believe that the hesitations to attempt multivariate statistical work has come from limitations (only recently overcome) in the set of methodological tools available to most political scientists. Specifically, although most theories have formulated the basic problem as the selection of a single coalition from the set of all possible coalitions, none of the commonly used statistical models is able

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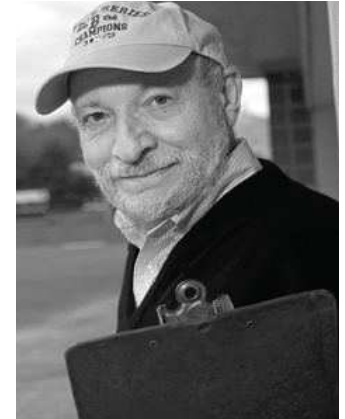
The authors thank Bing Booth, Brent Brantly, David Austen-Smith, Neal Beck, and seminar participants at the University of Rochester for their helpful comments on previous drafts, as well as Paul Spruell for sharing the data with us. We also thank Karl Pappas and Lisa Brown at the University Computing Center, University of Rochester, for their programming assistance. All results were obtained using Stata 9.0. The data and program code are available from the authors on request.

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Portefeuilleverdeling

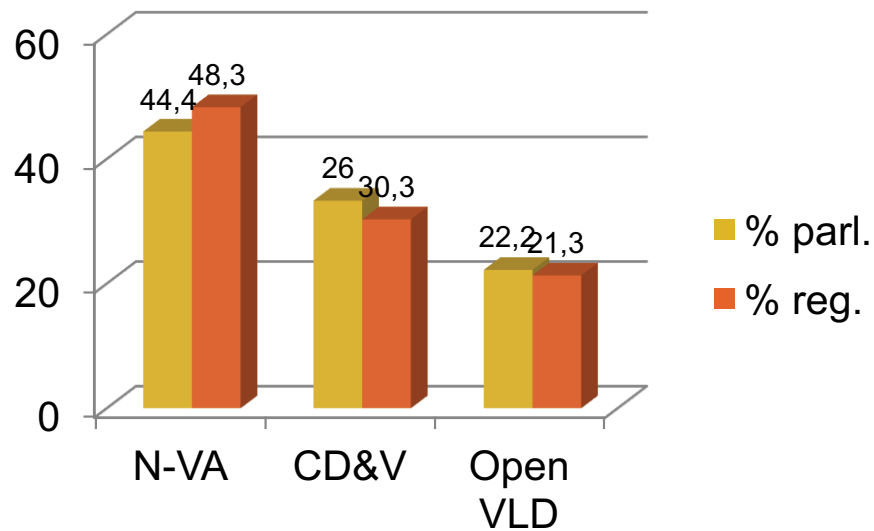
- **Wie krijgt wat?**
- **Kwantitatief**
 - Ijzeren wet van de proportionaliteit
 - Spelen met zetelgewicht → ondergrens aanvaarde herverdeling
 - Bonus voor kleinere partijen
 - Quid onderhandelingsmacht?
- **Kwalitatief**
 - Ideologisch profiel – portefeuillevoorkeur
 - Eerste ministerschap naar grootste partij
 - Partijinterne evenwichtsoefening
- **Verfijningen**
 - Link coalitiesamenstelling; portefeuilles verbreden/wegen & timing verdeling



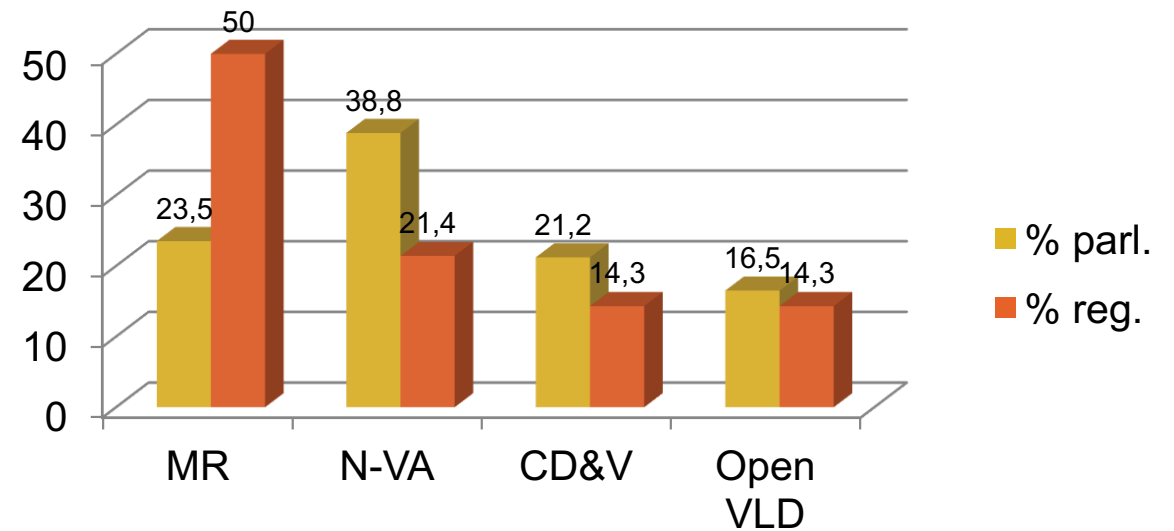
Illustratie

2014 (I)

Vlaamse regering



Federale regering



Illustratie

2014 (II)

Werk, economie en
consumenten,
buitenlandse handel,
justitie

Buitenlandse zaken,
begroting,
pensioenen,
middenstand,
landbouw,
maatschappelijke
integratie, energie,
leefmilieu, mobiliteit

Veiligheid en
binnenlandse zaken,
grote steden, regie
der gebouwen,
financiën, defensie,
ambtenarenzaken



Ontwikkelingssamen
werking, digitale
agenda,
telecommunicatie en
post, sociale zaken,
volksgezondheid

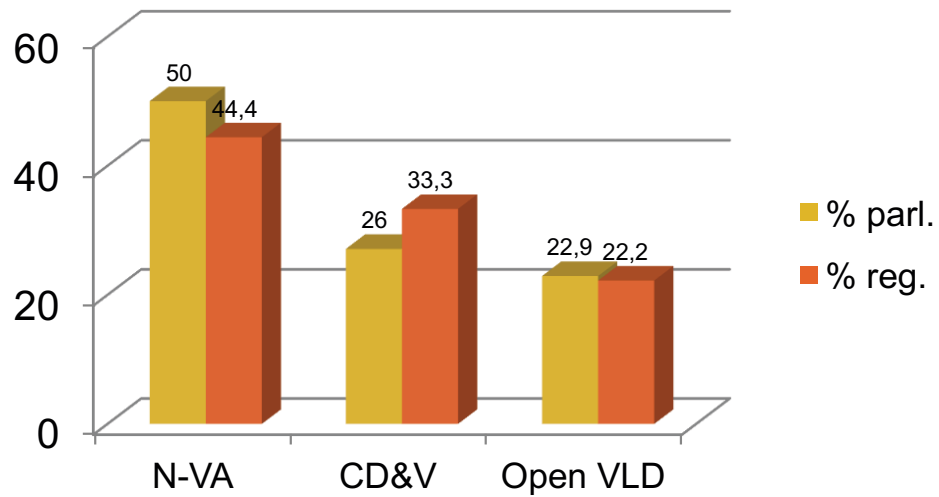
Illustratie

2014 (III)

Staatssecretarissen	Toegevoegd aan
Buitenlandse handel (CD&V)	Minister buitenlandse handel (CD&V)
Bestrijding sociale fraude, privacy en Noordzee (Open VLD)	Sociale zaken en volksgezondheid (Open VLD)
Armoedebestrijding, gelijke kansen, personen met een beperking, bestrijding fiscale fraude, wetenschapsbeleid (N-VA)	Financiën (N-VA)
Asiel en migratie, administratieve vereenvoudiging (N-VA)	Veiligheid en binnenlandse zaken (N-VA)

Illustratie

2019 (Vlaanderen)



DOSSIER REGERING-JAMBON



<https://www.vlaanderen.be/vlaamse-regering/>

Beleid formuleren

- **Onderhandelingen beleidsrelevant?**

- Theorie

- Positieve versus negatieve visie

- Empirie

- Beleidsonderhandelingen → belangrijkste onderwerp coalitievorming

- Regeerakkoord

- Proces → aanwezig, tijdsbeslag, breekpunt & uitwerking
- Uitkomst → beleidsbeloften, partijinvestituur, publiciteit & implementatie
- Impact → instrument beleidsvoering & samenlevingscontract



Still many puzzles?

- **Rijp veld** → (te) weinig verklarend of voorspellende kracht
- **Tekortkomingen**
 - Theoretische incoherentie
 - Operationalisering kernvariabelen
 - Selectievertekening
 - Verwaarloosde aspecten → falen & onderhandelaars
- **Vooruitgang**
 - Gevalstudies → *thick description* & actor-gericht
 - Gemengde methoden → Andeweg, 2011



From puzzles to prospects?

Lessen uit afwijkende gevallen

Kwantitatief vooronderzoek (N = 176)

- Minimal winning (39%)
 - Undersized (38%) versus oversized (23%)
- Minimal winning connected (23%)
 - Excluding median legislator (24%)



Table 10.1 Cases and coalition puzzles: an overview

<i>Country/government</i>	<i>Coalition puzzle</i>				
	<i>Undersized</i>	<i>Oversized</i>	<i>Ideologically unconnected</i>	<i>Lacking median party</i>	<i>Disproportional allocation of portfolios</i>
Austria/Kreisky I, 1970	X				
Belgium/Verhofstadt II, 1999		X	X	X	
Finland/Lipponen I, 1995		X	X		
The Netherlands/Kok I, 1994; Kok II, 1998		X	XX		
Norway/Bondevik II, 2001	X				X
Spain/Gonzales IV, 1993; Aznar I, 1996; Zapatero I, 2004, Zapatero II, 2008	XXXX				
Sweden/Persson II, 1998; Persson III, 2002	XX			X	

Prospects

Synthese

Andeweg, 2011: 203 (*)

In conclusion: yes, some of the failures of coalition theory can be put down to ‘noise’: to exceptional circumstances, human (lack of) talent for politics, and personal relations. Other failures can be attributed to the often extreme parsimony of coalition theories: the categories are too broad (e.g. ‘minority government’), the different positions of parties are insufficiently incorporated (as in multi-level government), too little attention is paid to the costs compared with the benefits of assuming government responsibility. Even then, a few puzzles remain that can only be solved by relaxing the assumption of utility maximization: where a mixture of normative concerns and psychological drives are involved, where a ‘logic of appropriateness’ seems to outweigh the ‘logic of consequentiality’. Both improving coalition theory within the dominant paradigm and developing alternatives to it form an exciting agenda for future coalition studies.





VAKGROEP POLITIEKE WETENSCHAPPEN

PARTIJEN EN PARTIJSYSTEMEN

ACADEMIEJAAR 2019-2020

Prof. Dr. Kristof Steyvers

Partijen en partijsystemen

Do, 8u45-11u15, Auditorium A, Universiteitstraat 4

Inhoud

1. Introductie

2. Partijen en partijsystemen

3. *Party on the ground*: partijen en het publiek

3.1. Partijidentificatie, -betrokkenheid en -trouw

3.2. Maatschappelijke inbedding van politieke partijen

3.3. Politieke partijen en kiescampagnes

4. *Party central office*: partijen en hun organisatie

4.1. Morfologie van politieke partijen: leden, bestuur en financiering

4.2. Rekrutering en kandidatenselectie in politieke partijen

4.3. Politieke partijen, programma's en issues

5. *Party in public office*: partijen en het bestuur

5.1. Regeringsvorming en politieke partijen

5.2. Nieuwe politieke partijen

6. Conclusie

Agenda

13 februari	Introductie
20 februari	Partijen en partijsystemen
27 februari	Geen college (voorbereiding discussieteksten)
5 maart	Partijidentificatie, -betrokkenheid en -trouw
12 maart	Maatschappelijke inbedding van politieke partijen
19 maart	Politieke partijen en kiescampagnes
26 maart	Morfologie van politieke partijen: leden, bestuur en financiering
2 april	Rekrutering en kandidatenselectie in politieke partijen
23 april	Politieke partijen, programma's en issues
30 april	Regeringsvorming en politieke partijen
7 mei	Nieuwe politieke partijen
14 mei	Conclusie
	Toelichting bij het examen

Reader

1. Introductie

2. Partijen en partijsystemen

- Katz, R. (2017). Political parties. In D. Caramani (Ed.), *Comparative Politics* (pp. 207-223). Oxford: Oxford University Press [basistekst].
- Wolinetz, S. (2006). Party systems and party system types. In R. Katz & W. Crotty (Eds.), *Handbook of party politics* (pp. 51-62). Thousand Oaks: Sage [basistekst].
- Caramani, D. (2017). Party systems. In D. Caramani (Ed.), *Comparative Politics* (pp. 224-244). Oxford: Oxford University Press [basistekst].

3. Party on the ground: partijen en het publiek

3.1. Partijidentificatie, -betrokkenheid en –trouw

- Dalton, R. (2014). *Citizen Politics. Public Opinion and Political Parties in Advanced Industrial Democracies* (Sixth Edition) (pp. 183-206). Thousand Oaks: CQ Press [basistekst].
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3.2. Maatschappelijke inbedding van politieke partijen

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- Schamp, T. (2017). V, de kracht van verankering! *Samenleving en Politiek*, 24(8), 60-67[discussietekst].

3.3. Politieke partijen en kiescampagnes

- Farrell, D. (2006). Political Parties in a Changing Campaign Environment. In R. Katz & W. Crotty (Eds.), *Handbook of party politics* (pp. 122-133). Thousand Oaks: Sage [basistekst].
- Pettitt, R. (2014). *Contemporary Party Politics* (pp. 142-160). London: Routledge [basistekst].
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4. Party in central office: partijen en hun organisatie

4.1. Morfologie van politieke partijen: leden, bestuur en financiering

- Katz, R. (2005). The Internal Life of Parties. In K.R. Luther & F. Müller-Rommel (Eds.), *Political Parties in the New Europe* (pp. 87-118). Oxford: Oxford University Press [basistekst].
- Poguntke, T., Scarrow, S. & Webb, P. with others (2016). Party Rules, Party Resources and the Politics of Parliamentary Democracies. How Parties Organize in the 21st Century. *Party Politics*, 22(6), 661-678 [basistekst].
- Van de Voorde, N. & Moens, P. (2017). Voorzittersverkiezingen: climax of ritueel? In B. Wauters (Red.), *Wie is nog van de partij? Crisis en toekomst van partijleden in Vlaanderen* (pp. 145-165). Leuven: Acco [discussietekst].

4.2. Rekrutering en kandidatenselectie in politieke partijen

- Hazan, R. & Rahat, G. (2006). Candidate selection: methods and consequences. In R. Katz & W. Crotty (Eds.), *Handbook of party politics* (pp. 109-121). Thousand Oaks: Sage [basistekst].
- Pettitt, R. (2014). *Contemporary Party Politics* (pp. 103-123). London: Routledge [basistekst].
- Vandeleene, A., Dodeigne, J. & Dewinter, L. (2016). What Do Selectorates Seek? A Comparative Analysis of Belgian Federal and Regional Candidate Selection Processes in 2014. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 60(7), 889-908 [discussietekst].

4.3. Politieke partijen, programma's en issues

- Volkens, A. & Klingemann, H.D. (2005). Parties, Ideologies, and Issues: Stability and Change in Fifteen European Party Systems 1945-1998. In K.R. Luther & F. Müller-Rommel (Eds.), *Political Parties in the New Europe* (pp. 143-168). Oxford: Oxford University Press [basistekst].
- Dalton, R. & McAllister, I. (2015). Random Walk or Planned Excursion? Continuity and Change in the Left-Right Positions of Political Parties. *Comparative Political Studies*, 48(6), 759-787 [basistekst].
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5. Party in government: partijen en het bestuur

5.1. Regeringsvorming en politieke partijen

- De Winter, L. & Dumont, P. (2006). Parties into Government. Still Many Puzzles. In R. Katz & W. Crotty (Eds.), *Handbook of party politics* (pp. 175-188). Thousand Oaks: Sage [basistekst].
- Andeweg, R. (2011). From Puzzles to Prospects for Coalition Theory. In R. Andeweg, L. De Winter & P. Dumont (Eds.), *Puzzles of Government Formation. Coalition Theory and Deviant Cases* (pp. 190-203). London: Routledge.
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5.2. Nieuwe politieke partijen

- Deschouwer, K. (2017). New Parties and the Crisis of Representation. Between Indicator and Solution. In P. Harfst, I. Kubbe & T. Poguntke (Eds.), *Parties, Governments and Elites. The Comparative Study of Democracy* (pp. 73-85). Wiesbaden: Springer VS [basistekst].
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6. Conclusie: een toekomst voor politieke partijen?

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PARTIES INTO GOVERNMENT: STILL MANY PUZZLES

Lieven De Winter and Patrick Dumont

INTRODUCTION

The process of government formation constitutes a crucial phase and arena in democratic governance: it concerns the translation of electoral and parliamentary power into executive power, and the possibility of implementing policies that have been democratically endorsed and legitimated by the electorate. As an increasing number of Western European governments are based on a coalition of political parties,¹ studying the process of coalition formation has never been as relevant for the understanding of parliamentary democracies.

This chapter focuses on the executive office- and policy-seeking behavior of parties and on the institutional mechanisms and contexts that make possible or impede responsible party government, especially in the case of government coalitions. The following questions will be addressed:

1. Which parties get into government, and how is coalition composition decided?
2. How are portfolios allocated between and within parties?
3. How are governmental policies defined during government formation?

COALITION COMPOSITION

The most substantive research question studied in recent decades concerning parties and governments has undoubtedly been 'Which parties get in?'. This is most relevant in 'minority situations', that is, when election outcomes

do not fully decide this question by awarding one party a majority of seats in parliament. With the increasing fragmentation of European party systems (Lane and Ersson, 1999: 142), minority situations and executive power sharing are more and more the normal outcome of elections. Hence, the process of bargaining over who will share power, and under what terms and with what policy content, is a core moment of European politics, and in many countries central to defining public policies.

Given this substantive importance, the theoretical literature on government coalition formation is one of the most active areas of research in the discipline, and, as a result, the literature is now replete with theories, hypotheses, and empirical tests regarding why some coalitions form while others do not, produced by scholars from different disciplines using ever more sophisticated statistical methods and increasingly rich data sets. However, this high level of scientific endeavor has hardly resulted in significant comprehensive progress in explaining and predicting real-world government compositions.

Office and policy

The first school of coalition theory was strongly inspired by game theory (Von Neumann and Morgenstern, 1953; Riker, 1962) and spatial theories of party and electoral competition (Downs, 1957; Black, 1958). Political parties and their leaders are conceived as rational actors, searching to maximize their utility by gaining office.

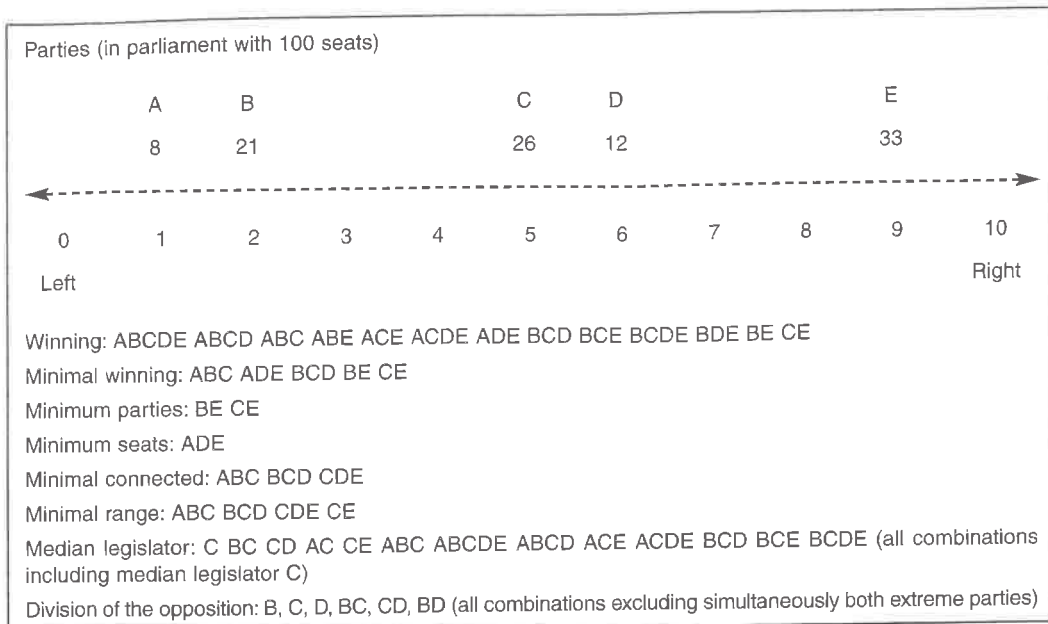


Figure 15.1 Cabinet coalitions predicted by unidimensional coalition theories for a hypothetical distribution of seats (adapted from Lijphart, 1999: 93)

The 'size school' (also referred to as office-seeking or policy-blind theories) has formulated several 'classic' propositions or rules:

- 1 The 'winning' proposition stipulates that only majority governments will form, as the core feature of parliamentary government is that a government can only survive if it is supported by a majority in parliament. A minority cabinet reaping all the benefits of office would not be tolerated by a majority opposition consisting of pure office-seeking actors.
- 2 The 'minimal winning coalition' (Von Neumann and Morgenstern, 1953; Riker, 1962) proposition stipulates that coalitions should not contain any 'surplus' members (i.e., parties whose omission would not make the coalition lose its parliamentary majority). As the pay-offs (the number of ministerial offices) of coalition are fixed, the inclusion of a surplus party would force coalition partners to share 'unnecessarily' the spoils of office with the surplus member(s) in such a constant-sum game.
- 3 The 'minimum seats' proposition states that in the case of different minimal winning solutions, the minimal winning coalition that controls the minimum number of seats will form (Riker, 1962). If in forming a minimal winning coalition a party can choose between a larger or smaller partner, it will opt for the smaller, assuming that each partner will receive ministerial offices in proportional to its weight in terms of parliamentary seats in the coalition (Gamson, 1961).
- 4 The 'minimum parties' proposition – also called the 'bargaining proposition' (Leiserson, 1966) – stipulates that when different minimal winning solutions exist, the minimal winning coalition that includes the smallest number of parties will form. Here, the argument is not based on the size of the rewards, but on 'bargaining facility'. The smaller the number of partners at the negotiation table, the more smoothly the bargaining is supposed to go, the easier it is to reach an agreement, the more rapidly office

These two propositions predicted an often high number of equiprobable 'rational' outcomes (see Figure 15.1), and at the same time

rewards can be reaped, and the more durable these rewards will be (increasing the number of partners would raise the probability of conflicts between cabinet parties and would thus endanger the coalition's stability).

Although these propositions greatly reduced the set of rational outcomes, they often still allowed for multiple predictions. Moreover, the reduction of the prediction set was accompanied by a decrease of the success rate in predicting the actual governments (Browne, 1973: 28). In order to improve the predictive power of rational office-seeking theories, policy proximity was introduced as an additional constraint on the 'size and number'-based propositions:

- 5 The 'minimal range' proposition (Leiserson, 1966) stipulates that parties wish to be part of a minimal winning coalition with minimal ideological diversity. Hence, of the minimal winning coalitions, the coalition with the smallest ideological range, defined as the distance (on the main dimension of competition) between the two most extreme members, will be formed.
- 6 The 'minimal connected winning' proposition (Axelrod, 1970) also concerns policy proximity, stipulating that, amongst the minimal winning coalitions, a coalition whose members are ideologically 'adjacent' will form. Removing any of the partners would render the coalition either non-connected or non-winning. Hence, contrary to the previous proposition, no 'gaps' are permitted in the ordinal scaling of coalition parties on the main policy dimension of party competition, which sometimes necessitates the inclusion of a small surplus party ideologically situated between two otherwise unconnected partners.

While both scholars only added policy as an additional concern of office-seeking political parties, De Swaan (1973) shifted the emphasis towards policy, arguing that parties first try to maximize 'policy coherence' (expressed in terms of a minimal distance between coalition policies and the party's own most preferred policy). Hence, he formulated:

- 7 The 'minimal policy distance' proposition, predicting that of the winning coalitions a coalition for which the member parties expect that the coalition will adopt a policy that is as close as possible to their own most preferred policy will be formed.

Some extreme versions of the policy-seeking approach have abandoned office motivations altogether.

- 8 The 'median legislator' proposition is drawn from majority-rule spatial voting models. The median legislator is the member of parliament who occupies the median position on the relevant policy dimension. Formal theory shows that when parties compete along a single policy dimension, the party controlling the median legislator can act as a 'policy dictator', as it cannot be defeated by a majority of parties on its left or on its right and one can therefore predict that this policy dictator party will always get into the government (Laver and Schofield, 1990: 111).³ While this theory does not predict full coalition composition outcomes, it does theoretically help to solve another of the main real-world paradoxes of the game-theoretic approach, namely the frequent occurrence of minority governments that obviously violate the basic 'winning' proposition.

Laver and Schofield (1990: 88) argued that minority governments may occur because of policy divisions amongst opposition parties, so that they cannot combine and agree on a viable policy alternative. Minority governments exploit these divisions by forming majorities on an issue-by-issue basis. Strøm (1990) devised the following testable proposition:

- 9 The 'division of the opposition' proposition: the more ideologically divided an opposition controlling a majority of parliamentary seats, the higher the chances that a minority cabinet will form. For an ideologically extreme party, sustaining a minority solution can represent a good solution, as participating in a coalition could cause electoral damage due to the policy compromises it would trigger, while bringing down a minority government could result in the subsequent formation of a majority coalition ideologically more distant from the extreme party than is the current minority government.⁴

Generally, adding policy to the propositions has improved the predictive value of the early pure office-seeking theories.⁵ Still, the empirical results remain modest.⁶ While obviously richer in theoretical terms, policy-driven coalition theories require parties to be placed in an ideological space (which can be one- or multidimensional) before they can be tested empirically.

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Whatever the placement method chosen (manifesto content analysis, survey analysis of electorates' or elites' policy positions, expert surveys), measuring party positions remains a difficult exercise. It is all the more so for multidimensional models of coalition formation, to which we now turn.

Most early policy-driven theories were unidimensional, although the policy space in some of the countries on which the theories were tested were recognized to be multicaveage politics (Lipset and Rokkan, 1967; Lijphart, 1984: 130). Hence, by only focusing on the left-right dimension, researchers may miss an important part of the real-world picture of party policy competition. Especially in multidimensional fragmented party systems, there is a wide range of smaller parties that may seek to realize their policy preferences elsewhere than on the left-right divide (centre-periphery, postmaterialism, etc.). Hence, including such parties may produce a coalition that appears to be unconnected, simply because one is looking at the wrong policy dimension, while the coalition may be perfectly connected on other policy dimensions more relevant to those parties. Hence, a single-minded focus on the left-right divide may well obscure rational policy-seeking behavior on other dimensions. The incorporation of multiple dimensions is increasingly warranted, given the emergence of new cleavages, the shift from social-structural voting to issue voting (Dalton, 1996) and increasing party system fragmentation.

A large number of multidimensional coalition formation theories have been formulated⁷. They all share the assumption that parties want to be members of a winning coalition that is as close as possible to their own ideal position in the multidimensional space. The theories differ strongly, however, in their definitions of which coalition produces the highest utility, that is, satisfies best the smallest distance assumption (De Vries, 1999: 16–17).

Multidimensional models also share several theoretical and practical problems. First, most of them generally do not predict a single or limited number of outcomes unless rather unlikely conditions are fulfilled. Second, most spatial theories are not designed to predict coalitions but to search for an 'undominated policy point' in the space. Additional inferences are thus needed to identify which parties stand a better chance of being included in the coalition. Third, they require metric data on party positions on the relevant dimensions. Because dimensions other than left-right are dealt with in party manifestoes, most authors

use the Manifesto Research Group data. However, these data were collected to measure the salience of issues and not parties' policy positions. It may thus require a heroic leap to infer party positions from such a data set. On the other hand, expert surveys are only snapshots and may be subject to other sources of errors such as the contamination of experts' placement of parties by their knowledge of prior coalition government experiences. Most often, different data sets produce different party positions (De Vries, 1999: 240), and the need for measurement on multiple dimensions increases the risks of such discrepancies, which in turn generate different predictions for the same models. Although multidimensional models aim to be more realistic, they are quite unstable, and empirical results are unimpressive.⁸ Finally, multidimensional models assume that party leaders are aware of their exact policy positions, and those of all the other parties represented in parliament, on a number of relevant dimensions of competition, and are, moreover, sophisticated enough to carry out quite complicated calculations to determine the coalition that will be closest to their preferred policy positions.

The role of institutions in coalition formation

New institutionalism emerged in the early 1980s as a major alternative to the traditional institution-free approaches by emphasizing the role of different types of institutions in structuring the outcomes of the coalition formation process. The new institutionalist approaches do not reject office- and policy-seeking rationales, but add constraints imposed by institutional rules. Institutions are defined as any restriction on the set of feasible cabinet coalitions that is beyond the short-term control of the players (Strøm *et al.*, 1994). Hence, differences in coalition outcomes (especially relevant for cross-country comparisons) are predicted on the basis of institutional differences with regard to coalition bargaining rules and norms that allocate power differently between (party) actors in the bargaining process.

One can distinguish neo-institutional theories based on the rules and norms governing the process of government formation itself, from the (more recent) theories that focus on the rules that structure cabinet decision-making and inter-party bargaining in the post-formation phase.

Institutions structuring the formation bargaining process

The first group of institutions (for inventories, see Strøm *et al.*, 1994; Laver and Schofield, 1990; Mershon, 1994) includes the following:

- 1 'Recognition rules' that stipulate which party or parties will be asked to form a government, and in what order. This recognition may be enshrined in formal and even constitutional rules, or invested in other actors such as the head of state (Bogdanor, 1984). Recognition invests a formateur (and his party) with the power to propose the coalition alternatives over which bargaining will take place. Potential partners must accept or reject the proposals brought forward by this formateur before bargaining over other proposals can proceed. Hence, a formateur party should be able to guarantee its own entry into the government as well as to propose and have accepted coalitions composed of parties that it finds to be most compatible with its own policy preferences. As formal recognition rules are quite rare, in the real world the largest party generally tends to become the formateur party (Diermeier and Merlo, 2004), while according to Morelli (1999) it is the median party in systems where the head of state has discretionary power over the selection of formateurs.
- 2 The power to control the timing of the bargaining over a new cabinet, especially by incumbent prime ministers. Strøm *et al.* (1994) argue that an incumbent cabinet that manages to stay in office during the (usually post-electoral) formation bargaining over its successor, enjoys an advantage in the coalition negotiations, as it constitutes the fall-back or 'reversion outcome' if bargaining goes on endlessly or breaks down. Thus, parties whose most preferred outcome coincides with this reversion outcome enjoy a particular advantage, as they have an interest in boycotting or sabotaging any other alternative coalition formation attempt to which they are invited.⁹
- 3 Investiture rules stipulating whether a new government must pass a formal vote in the legislature, and with what kind of majority. Theoretically and empirically, minority governments are more likely to form in the absence of an investiture rule, since their general policy program need not be subjected to a formal parliamentary go-ahead at the cabinet's initiation. In countries with such 'negative investiture' rules, minority governments can avoid instant 'political death sentences' expressed by a motion of defiance from majority opposition by skillfully manipulating the legislative agenda and building *ad hoc* majorities on each separate issue the government submits to a vote in the legislature (Bergman, 1995).
- 4 Rules constraining the party composition of a government (such as the Belgian constitutional rule that requires an equal number of French- and Dutch-speaking ministers) or the size of a 'winning' majority, which has for too long been narrowed down to controlling a simple majority. In certain systems, controlling a majority of seats in the parliament is just not enough to implement an 'ordinary' policy agenda. First, there are policies that require constitutional reform, for which in many countries a special threshold (of two-thirds or more) has to be attained, sometimes spanning two legislatures (Lijphart, 1999: 217–23). Also, in many countries particular policy sectors require special majorities (Müller, 2000: 91). Recently, scholars set out to explore the consequences of bicameralism for government formation. Parties seem to anticipate the potential instability induced by the presence of a second legislative chamber and decide to form larger coalitions in the lower house (Diermeier *et al.*, 2002, forthcoming) or, minority coalitions if they rely on a majority in the upper house (Druckman *et al.*, forthcoming).¹⁰

Some behavioral rules, not enshrined in formal institutions, also affect the bargaining process and outcome. The most prominent is the respect of pre-electoral commitments between parties to form the next government, election results permitting. This can either take the form of a positive statement that commits a party to form a government with another party (thereby implicitly excluding other parties that did not sign the pact), or negatively, as an 'anti-pact' in which parties declare that they will not coalesce, for instance by ruling out either any coalition that includes a particular 'pariah party', or the party's participation in a specific coalition or any coalition. Given the general moral principle of *pacta sunt servanda* and credibility as a central ingredient for successful coalition building, public pre-formation commitments to rule or not to rule with some other parties constitute very powerful real-world constraints on coalition bargaining (Martin and Stevenson, 2001; Golder, 2004).

Most existing theories are 'history blind' in another way, by assuming that the formation of

a particular government will not be influenced by the formation of preceding governments. Some authors introduced parties' past histories in the form of mutual satisfaction based on past gains. In particular, 'familiarity' between parties that governed together in the past enhances the probability of governing together in the future, thereby showing that governments are not formed *ab nihilo* (Franklin and Mackie, 1983).

Institutions structuring post-formation government decision-making

Other recent theories explore the constraints on coalition composition of rules that structure government decision-making once a new government is in place, thus effectively ruling out certain combinations and making others more likely by anticipation. These include cabinet operational rules (e.g., the balance between collective cabinet and individual ministerial policy jurisdiction (Laver & Shepsle, 1996; for a critique, see Dunleavy and Bastow, 2001), the prime minister's power to reshuffle or deselect ministers (Strøm, 1998), political responsibility and resignation rules); parliamentary rules (decision rules such as qualified majority votes, the right to turn any vote on a specific issue into a vote of confidence (Huber, 1996)); rules for dissolving the legislature and for calling early elections (Strøm and Swindle, 2002); electoral system rules; rules granting power to external veto players (head of state, domestic pressure groups), etc. Strøm *et al.* (1994) demonstrated on a small sample that the institutional constraints model manages to predict the cabinets actually formed better than simple size- and policy-driven models, but verification of the full institutional model on a large number of cases is still lacking.

Bargaining theories and actor-oriented theories

In some theories, parties' chances of being included in government depend on their strategic position in legislative bargaining games. Hence, they focus on the existence and properties of such special 'powerful' or 'dominant' players,¹¹ and the probability of these parties getting into government, rather than the probability of particular coalition formulae.

The most basic and best-known version of this approach is the median legislator theory mentioned above. Another actor-oriented bargaining approach developed voting power indices, of

which the Shapley-Shubik (1954) index and the Banzhaf (1965) index are the most renowned. The voting power of a player, which is calculated by listing all the coalitions in which it makes the coalition win or lose (the number of pivots or swings), is compared to the voting power of other parliamentary parties. The voting power of individual parties may differ starkly from their weight in seats: a rather small party may be as powerful (and, depending on the index used, may be even more powerful) than a much bigger one within a given distribution of seats. Although hitherto rarely employed,¹² the inclusion of the power indices instead of the party weights, and their combination with the assumptions on policy distance and institutional constraints used in formal theories, could well be one of the most promising new avenues for formal as well as descriptive research on coalition formation in terms of composition, portfolio allocation, policy formulation and process. Notice also that following Warwick's (1996) analysis of factors affecting individual parties' odds of becoming government formateur or coalition partner, some scholars looked more specifically at parties' results in the elections preceding the formation of a government (Mattila and Raunio, 2004; Isaksson, 2005).

Discussion

After four decades of comparative research on the party composition of cabinets, this research field has become highly mature, in terms of the diversity of theoretical approaches and paradigms that are competing, their degree of formalization, the variety and sophistication of methods applied, and the scope and richness of the data sets used for testing hypotheses.

However, there are still major shortcomings. First, existing theories do not predict and therefore sufficiently explain a significant proportion of cabinet compositions formed in the real world. Whereas the latest comprehensive model of Martin and Stevenson does predict correctly an impressive number (about half) of real-world coalitions, this is done by lumping together two dozen variables drawn from three main schools, and the model therefore lacks parsimony and internal consistency. Still, a systematic comparative testing of theories and families of theories against each other, in combination with each other,¹³ as well as against randomly generated solutions seems a promising path in evaluating the predictive capacity of coalition theories (De Vries, 1999; Martin and Stevenson, 2001). Studies that

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concentrate on parties getting into government as the unit of analysis rather than the full cabinet composition have better prediction rates, but they clearly explain less. More generally, focusing on predictions is only one part of a causal explanation, which needs both an account of causal effects of independent variables and a verification of the real-world presence of the causal mechanisms posited by a theory. This goal may be achieved by combining quantitative tests of existing theories with a qualitative treatment of cases that confirm and cases that disconfirm the theory, by tracing the process and the variables that caused the observed outcome (Bäck and Dumont, 2004).

Second, in order to test existing spatial theories, especially multidimensional models, one needs more reliable data on party policy positions. Also many formal models theorize variables that in practice are hard to operationalize, especially for cabinets in the more distant past (such as actors' electoral expectations or satisfaction with former experiences with partners in government). It comes as no surprise that the authors who formulate such abstract models at best give one or two examples that seem to fit their model. The insertion of institutional variables into formal models, albeit generally easy to collect and boosting the prediction rate, tends to lead to unacceptable simplifications of reality and/or to unmanageable mathematical complexities (De Vries, 1999).

Finally, although most scholars acknowledge that during government formation a lot of bargaining goes on *within* parties (Luebbert, 1986; Laver and Schofield, 1990; Müller and Strøm, 1999), for the sake of model simplicity as well as data collection problems on internal party divisions, almost all theories treat parties as unitary actors (for exceptions, see Robertson, 1976; Budge and Farlie, 1983; Maor, 1995). One operational indicator of internal divisions could be voting behavior during party investitures (De Winter *et al.*, 2000: 345). The support expressed for the upcoming coalition within intra-party arenas may serve as a more valid proxy for party cohesion than parliamentary group cohesion in investiture votes.

PORTFOLIO ALLOCATION

The question 'Who gets what in coalition government?' is even older than the question of 'Who gets in?'. The basic finding of the first analyses inspired by rational choice, that is, the existence of an 'iron law' of proportionality

(Gamson, 1961), has generally been confirmed by subsequent research (Browne and Franklin, 1973; Browne and Feste, 1975; Budge and Keman, 1990). While this proportionality norm may seem trivial, it actually is not, especially seen from a bargaining perspective. Hence, interest in the question of portfolio allocation has revived in recent years in order to provide a more solid theoretical grounding for this empirical law, to explain marginal but significant deviations from the rule, and to produce weights and data (through expert surveys) for different types of ministerial portfolios (prime minister, senior ministers, ordinary and junior ministers).

The iron law of proportionality

The starting point for the proportionality rule is the assumption that players have a specific weight, usually assumed to be proportional to the number of seats in parliament. Gamson (1962: 158) postulates that 'any participant will expect others to demand from a coalition a share of the payoff proportional to the amount of resources which they contribute to a coalition'. Still, a minor player should be capable of increasing its office share if it were necessary to keep a third player out of the coalition (Gamson, 1961). As all players consider proportionality as their bottom-line demand and concede that the other players take proportionality as their minimum expectation, proportionality becomes the only allocation principle on which all can agree.

Empirical analyses confirm the proportionality thesis (over 90% of the variance explained), sometimes with smaller parties getting bonus portfolios, probably in order to avoid their potential defection to another coalition that would offer a better payoff or simply because their small size would not have allowed them to receive any portfolio under pure proportionality.¹⁴

Still, this very strong relationship between seat weight and portfolio allocation is puzzling from a bargaining perspective: if bargaining is the predominant logic behind coalition formation, and if a party's bargaining power is dependent on its strategic position rather than on its size alone, what in practice prevents parties with great bargaining power from claiming a disproportionate share of the portfolios?¹⁵

Qualitative portfolio allocation

Apart from the quantitative questions of portfolio allocation, there is the question of which party,

intra-party faction, and individual gets which type of portfolio (in terms of policy domain, prestige, spending power, etc.). Until the 1990s, few empirical theories on qualitative portfolio allocations were tested (Budge and Keman 1990). Laver and Shepsle's (1996) assumption of ministerial portfolio dictatorship, coupled with the hypothesis that the median party on the relevant policy dimension will get the specific portfolio, has drawn new attention to the qualitative aspect of portfolio allocation.

A first qualitative distinction between portfolios is policy domain. Some link was found between parties' ideological profile and their control of a particular domain of ministries. Browne and Feste (1975) explain this party-portfolio link by the 'possible reinforcement of the loyalty of each party clientele's group'. A basic problem of the empirical testing of this nexus is the a priori assumption of the static nature of party families' portfolio preferences, which are assumed constant over time and between countries (Budge and Keman, 1990). The empirical findings are therefore rather weak. Budge and Keman (1990: 98–102) also focused on the prime ministerial portfolio, predicting that the premiership goes to the major party (which actually occurs in 80% of the post-war European coalition governments). Again, under the proportionality rule, one can expect that the largest party can claim the largest spoils, and therefore can choose the biggest prize. The few deviations can be explained by presidential nomination power, by a rough equality of size between the main coalition parties, and by intra-party dissensus impeding the largest party from nominating a candidate for this office.

This points to a wider question of party unity in seeking portfolios. Case studies on factionalized parties – such as Christian Democrats in Latin countries (Blondel and Cotta, 1996; Mershon, 2001) – highlight the role of factions in distributing ministerial portfolios within parties. In addition, even in unitary parties, party leaders have to take into account a series of equilibria, in terms of the territorial background of ministers, constituency party support, gender, distribution between first and second chamber, etc. Hence, intra-party decision-making rules and constraints, and the old question of party cohesion, have entered the most recent research (Laver and Shepsle, 2000; Pennings, 2000).

Discussion

By linking the coalition formation process to the portfolio allocation process, some recent

formal theories have tried to overcome the limits of the first generations of quantitative and qualitative portfolio allocation theories. This linkage is made by assuming that portfolios are all about policy, and that obtaining 'policy portfolios' rather than 'offices and their perks' is the core of the coalition bargaining process (Austen-Smith and Banks, 1990; Schofield, 1993; Laver and Shepsle, 1990, 1996). Although these theories have been empirically tested on only a few selected cases, these formal theories also introduce a variety of institutional conditions under which the policy portfolio bargaining is supposed to occur, and thus, unlike their predecessors, are not institution-blind. They include rules concerning the nomination discretion of the prime minister and the head of state, the power of the finance minister, the role of party leaders, etc. Yet, rather than equating portfolio bargaining to policy bargaining, one should keep these goals analytically separate, as parties may differ in the emphasis they put on maximizing policy, office or vote (Strøm and Müller, 1999). These disparities allow for tradeoffs between the different payoffs, which in principle should facilitate coalition formation. For instance, office-seeking parties may want to trade policy concessions to the policy-seeking parties in return for a disproportionate share of portfolios.

Moreover, a number of questions remain unanswered regarding the dependent and independent variables, the process that links them and the potential effects on coalition governance and outputs in this type of research. As far as the dependent variables are concerned, the study of the full range of relevant offices has only very recently started. Junior ministerships are often used as spare change to round off or fine-tune portfolio deals but sometimes also are considered to be policy-relevant (Mershon, 2001; Thies, 2001; Manow and Zorn, 2004). In some countries, the 'offices cake' should be extended to include the Speaker in parliament or the European Commissioner.

Although important efforts have recently been made to weight a wide range of portfolios (Druckman and Warwick, 2005), we still know little about how parties in practice weigh portfolios and which criteria they use to do so: policy relevance (Dumont, 1998), interests of traditional or new clienteles, patronage opportunities, prestige, visibility, distributive versus redistributive policy departments, goodness of fit with the qualifications of the ministrables available in the party, the appetite of *incon-tournable ministrables*, etc.). In several countries, parties or the head of state allot certain

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portfolios to non-partisan technocrats (De Winter, 1991; Strøm, 2000; Amorim Neto and Strøm, 2004), a practice that certainly contradicts the office-seeking drive on which most portfolio theories are based.

With regard to the policy impact of portfolio bargaining, it is also important to know when portfolio bargaining actually starts: at the end of the policy negotiations (as most research seems to suggest), or before. This question is linked to decision-making within parties. Are *ministrables* members of the negotiating teams that draft the policy agreement and bargain over portfolios? Do they help themselves to a portfolio of their liking? Does such interlocking of principal and agent, when party leaders bargain over portfolios that they themselves would like to occupy (Andeweg, 2000), allow ministers to become unaccountable policy dictators (Laver and Shepsle, 1996), in spite of the formal existence of a collective coalition agreement? To date, most empirical analyses suggest that only the allocation between parties matters with regard to policy outputs (Laver and Shepsle, 1994; Klingemann *et al.*, 1994).

POLICY FORMULATION

There are two contrasting views concerning the policy relevance of coalition negotiations (Timmermans, 2003): the 'positive' version considers the formulation of coalition agreements as a genuine opportunity for parties to influence the future government's policy agenda (Peterson *et al.*, 1983; Peterson and De Ridder, 1986); the 'sceptics' consider coalition negotiations as 'policy irrelevant', being either just a 'ritual' carried out to ease the transition from election campaign competition to inter-party governmental co-operation (Luebbert, 1986), or because the link is only conditionally relevant, that is, it is relevant only if policy proposals supported in the coalition agreement are supported by the party that receives the relevant ministerial portfolio (Laver and Shepsle, 1996: 42).

Empirical studies tend to support the positive view. In most countries, policy bargaining is the main subject of the formation negotiation process. This can be inferred from numerous indicators. **First, there is a growing tendency in West-European governments to draft a government policy agreement (Müller and Strøm, forthcoming).** Policy bargaining consumes most time in the bargaining process (often weeks or months), while the allocation of portfolios is settled in a few hours or days

(De Winter and Dumont, forthcoming). Apart from Italy, portfolio allocation follows the conclusion of a general agreement on policy between the parties that will constitute the next government (Budge and Laver, 1992: 415), and most formation attempts break down on policy, not on the allocation of portfolios. Coalition agreements tend to grow in length and detail, and they mostly cover substantive policy areas (Müller and Strøm, 2000). **Second, coalition agreements contain issues that are salient to the member parties and for which they have formulated policy pledges, even when they disagree on the solution of such issues (Thomson, 1999).** They do not focus only on non-divisive issues (Klingemann *et al.*, 1994), and when divisive ones are not mentioned in the agreement, mechanisms to deal with these during the life of the cabinet are often specified (Timmermans, 2003). But overall, during the negotiations the pledges most salient to each party tend to receive explicit attention.

Regarding their potential policy impact, although coalition agreements are never legally binding, in practice they often do bind partners strongly. In fact, these agreements usually are endorsed by the parties' main decisional body (e.g., the party congress, parliamentary party or party executive), and, as such, this endorsement legitimately binds all the other sections of the party, from the rank-and-file members to constituency party organizations, individual members of parliament and ministers, the party executive, and the party leader. The party investiture is therefore a crucial moment for making agreements stick, not only between parties but also, more importantly, within parties (De Winter *et al.*, 2000).

In most countries these coalition agreements are widely available to the general public, which expands their utility for scrutinizing government performance by party bodies, as well as by other actors, such as interest groups, the media, and retrospective voters. Coalition cabinets and parties have, in addition, set up a variety of mechanisms and rules to facilitate the smooth implementation of these agreements, to solve conflicts over the way they should be interpreted, to formulate an answer to issues not anticipated by or included in the agreement, and to amend these agreements without jeopardizing the coalition's survival.

Recent empirical research (Müller and Strøm, forthcoming) suggests that in most countries coalition agreements are central instruments for coalition policy-making. They also have an important theoretical role in the process of governance once a cabinet has been formed:

they are vital devices that make coalition government possible and help tackle some of the severe and complex bargaining problems and inherent weaknesses of coalitions, such as limited information, non-simultaneity of exchange, cyclical voting, formal ministerial discretion over departmental policy agendas, their implementation and coordination, problems of interdepartmental interdependency, shared competencies, changes in external context, etc. (Lupia and Strøm, forthcoming).

Hence, from an empirical and theoretical point of view, coalition agreements emerge as one of the main institutions that make collective coalition cabinets viable. Still the practical working of 'governing by contract' remains to a large extent a black box.¹⁷

CONCLUSION

The formation of a government is a crucial aspect of democratic politics, because it deals with the conquest of power and the possibility of implementing policies that have been democratically endorsed and legitimated by the voters. This field of party studies is, together with voting, probably the most mature field in party research, in terms of the variety of competing theoretical frameworks produced by scholars from different disciplines, the sophistication of statistical techniques, and the richness of available data sets. However, this high level of scientific activity has in the last decade scarcely resulted in significant comprehensive progress in explaining and predicting real-world government compositions. Models aggregating current knowledge still do not manage to predict correctly more than half of the coalitions actually formed in the real world.

The field still has several shortcomings. First, the inclusion or exclusion of explanatory variables in formal models is often determined by difficulties of operationalization rather than by theoretical coherence. Also, some crucial variables are often poorly operationalized, leading to unreliable and unstable conclusions, especially in the field of party ideological positions. There is also the problem of selection bias as the prediction success rate of composition and portfolio allocation theories differs between countries (and to a lesser extent between time periods). The goodness of fit of theories is thus conditional on the countries and time frames selected.

Furthermore, some essential components of coalition formation are traditionally neglected,

like the frequently occurring formation failures (Müller and Strøm, 2000: 570). Also we know very little about the operation of the formation process, in terms of negotiators, their autonomy *vis-à-vis* their party principals, their tactics and games, their criteria for evaluating alternative policy and portfolio proposals, the benefits of a retreat into opposition, etc. Also, political parties figure as the main actors in explaining coalition outcomes in almost all theories, while in certain systems the head of state, pressure groups, or foreign powers sometimes have a significant formal or informal veto power.

Many of the real-world formations remain theoretical puzzles, of which vital explanatory pieces are lacking (De Winter *et al.*, forthcoming). Government formation, like all politics, is conducted by human actors, but unlike studies of most other political activity (e.g., voting, political participation, legislative behavior), coalition formation theory does not pay much attention to the accounts and explanations of the human actors involved in government formations themselves. This imbalance can be redressed by 'thick' descriptions of government formations, preferably using information from participants obtained through elite interviewing, analyses of memoirs, etc. Only in this way can we try to reconstruct actors' preferences, motivations, strategies, evaluation of past experiences, anticipation of future developments, perception of the credibility of other negotiators, capacity to commit their party, and the perceived impact of formal and informal institutional constraints and veto players. However, the ultimate aim of such an inductive approach should not be the writing of a thriller reconstructing dramatic deviant formations, but to feed new explanations – discovered by thick descriptions – back into theory formulation. As such, inductive research should serve as a complement, not as an alternative, to existing formal theories that have considerably contributed to our current state of understanding of government formation.

NOTES

1. In 17 countries of post-war Europe (1945–99), more than 80% of the majority governments formed were coalition governments (Strøm *et al.*, forthcoming).
2. In the vast majority of comparative studies conducted since the early 1970s, of governments formed one third or more were minority cabinets and at most 40% were minimal winning.

- formation failures (0). Also we know of the formation of parties, their autonomy, their tactics and evaluating alternative, the benefits of a so, political parties explaining coalition, while in certain pressure groups, or have a significant er.
- ormations remain vital explanatory er *et al.*, forthcoming like all politics, is but unlike studies vity (e.g., voting, relative behavior), does not pay much d explanations of n government form-balance can be otions of govern- using information hrough elite inter- es, etc. Only in this ct actors' prefer- es, evaluation of n of future devel- redibility of other nit their party, and mal and informal and veto players. of such an induc- e the writing of a tic deviant forma- tions – discovered nto theory formu- research should s an alternative, to have considerably ate of understand- a.
- r Europe (1945–99), majority governments nments (Strøm *et al.*,
- comparative studies con- 0s, of governments ere minority cabinets nal winning.
3. In the 1945–99 period, roughly 80% of Western European parliamentary governments included the median legislator party on the first dimension (Strøm *et al.*, forthcoming), while two-thirds of the minority governments formed in 13 countries of post-war western Europe contained the median party on the first dimension (Müller and Strøm, 2000: 561, 564).
 4. Amongst the other incentives facilitating minority governments, Strøm (1990) added legislatures with a strong committee system that allows opposition parties to have a say in legislation without carrying the electoral burden of incumbency, Kalandakis (2004) added the (low) share of central government in total public spending, while Indridason (2004) added the lack of government opportunities for clientelism (which render parties less office-seeking).
 5. While in most of the composition models discussed up until now, parties are predominantly office- and/or policy-seekers, some authors explicitly refer to their vote-seeking motivations (Strøm, 1990; Warwick, 2000, 2005; Austen-Smith and Banks, 1988; Baron, 1993; Baron and Diermeier, 2001; and especially Strøm and Müller, 1999). Although taken up by a number of scholars, the office cum policy cum voting framework has not yet been systematically tested in a quantitative, comparative way but relies on formal models or thick descriptions of a number of instances in which parties had to make particularly difficult choices between the three objectives.
 6. In the 1945–99 period, of parliamentary governments in 17 western European countries (excluding cases of single-party majority governments) slightly more than one third were connected, but less than one-fifth were minimal connected winning (Strøm *et al.*, forthcoming). Martin and Stevenson (2001: 47) show that coalitions that have, according to traditional size and policy variables, the highest chances of forming actually form in the real world only 11% of the time!
 7. See Grofman's (1982) protocoalition formation model, Schofield's (1993, 1995) model of the political heart, De Swaan's (1973) policy distance theory, Laver and Shepsle's (1990, 1996) winset theory on credibility proposals, etc.
 8. Testing Grofman's model of protocoalition formation, a highly disaggregated 20-dimensional representation triggered better predictive rates than unidimensional models in less than half of the countries covered in Laver and Budge's (1992: 413) volume, and a two-dimensional representation was better than a unidimensional one in only one of the 11 countries studied!
 9. For empirical testing, see Diermeier and Merlo (2004), Warwick (1996), and Martin and Stevenson (2001).
 10. Downs (1998) also investigated whether the composition of coalitions formed at a subnational level has an effect on the formation of national-level governments.
 11. Peleg (1980) introduced the concept of the 'dominant player', while Van Deemen (1991) introduced the concept of the 'central player'.
 12. Van Deemen (1997) combined power indices with an actor-oriented theory when he introduced power indices in the 'power-excess' theory. Different chapters in Strøm *et al.* (forthcoming) use Banzhaf power indices and the measure of fragmentation of individual parties' shares of power to reflect bargaining complexity in coalition formation, duration, and termination.
 13. Martin and Stevenson (2001) compared the predictions generated from different families of coalition theories with the coalitions that actually formed in 14 countries in roughly the 1945–85 period. They conclude that nine size- and ideology-based variables predict actually formed government compositions only 11% of the time, that adding eight pre-formation institutional factors increases the prediction success rate to 40%, while adding four post-formation variables drawn from the portfolio allocation approach predicts the correct government approximately half the time.
 14. The proportionality norm is also respected when one takes the relative saliency of different ministerial portfolios into account (Warwick and Druckman, 2001, 2004; Druckman and Warwick, 2005).
 15. On this debate see Warwick and Druckman (2004) and Ansolabehere *et al.* (2005).
 16. On the implementation of coalition contracts, see Klingemann *et al.*, 1994; Thomson, 1999; Timmermans, 2003; Moury, 2005.

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Tabel 3:
Naoorlogse Belgische regeringen

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42
EEERSTE MINISTEER	DATUM EEDPLEGING	DATUM ONTSLAG	POTENTIELE MAXIMALE DOOR	EFFECTIEVE DOOR	PARTIJSAMENSTELLING																																				
Spaak	13-03-46	20-03-46	1.495	1.495	7	PSB/BSB																																			
Van Racker III	31-03-46	09-07-46	1.477	1.477	100	PSB/BSB-PLP/PVV-PCB/KPB																																			
Huyssens	03-08-46	13-03-47	1.352	1.352	222	PSB/BSB-PLP/PVV-PCB/KPB																																			
Spaak II	20-03-47	19-11-48	1.123	1.123	610	PSB/BSB-PSB/CVP																																			
Spaak III	26-11-48	27-06-49	506	506	213	PSB/BSB-PSB/CVP																																			
Eyskens	11-08-49	18-03-50	1.473	1.473	219	PSC/CVP-PLP/PVV																																			
Duviusart	08-06-50	11-08-50	1515	1515	64	PSC/CVP																																			
Pholien	16-08-50	09-01-52	1.446	1.446	511	PSC/CVP																																			
Van Houtte	15-01-52	12-04-54	929	929	818	PSC/CVP																																			
Van Racker IV	22-04-54	02-06-58	1.508	1.508	1.502	PSB/BSB-PLP/PVV																																			
Eyskens II	23-06-58	04-11-58	1.497	1.497	134	PSC/CVP																																			
Eyskens III	06-11-58	27-03-61	1.361	1.361	872	PSC/CVP-PLP/PVV																																			
Lefèvre	25-04-61	24-05-65	1.489	1.489	1.490	PSC/CVP-PSB/BSB																																			
Harmerl	27-07-65	11-02-66	1.454	1.454	199	PSC/CVP-PSB/BSB																																			
Vanden Boeynants I	19-03-66	07-02-68	1.219	1.219	690	PSC/CVP-PLP/PVV																																			
Eyskens IV	17-06-68	08-11-71	1.388	1.388	1.239	PSC/CVP-PSB/BSB																																			
Eyskens V	21-01-72	23-11-72	1.444	1.444	307	CVP/CVP-PSB/BSB																																			
Leburton	26-01-73	19-01-74	1.073	1.073	358	PSB/BSB-CVP-PSB-VLD-PRL																																			
Tindebaens	25-04-74	11-06-74	1.473	1.473	47	CVP-PSB-VLD-PRL																																			
Tindebaens II	11-06-74	04-03-77	1.426	1.426	997	CVP-PSB-VLD-PRL																																			
Tindebaens III	06-03-77	18-04-77	427	427	45	CVP-PSB-VLD-PRL																																			
Tindebaens IV	03-06-77	11-10-78	1.472	1.472	495	CVP-PSB-VLD-PRL																																			
Vanden Boeynants II	20-10-78	18-12-78	968	968	59	CVP-CVP-PSB/BSB-FDF-VU																																			
Martens I	03-04-79	16-01-80	1.412	1.412	288	CVP-PSB-PS-FDF																																			
Martens II	23-01-80	09-04-80	1.117	1.117	77	CVP-PSB-PS-SP																																			
Martens III	18-05-80	07-10-80	1.001	1.001	142	CVP-PSB-PS-SP-VLD-PRL																																			
Martens IV	22-10-80	02-04-81	854	854	162	CVP-PSB-PS-SP																																			
M. Eyskens	06-04-81	21-02-81	690	690	168	CVP-PSB-PS-SP																																			
Martens V	17-12-81	14-10-85	1.432	1.432	1.397	CVP-PSB-VLD-PRL																																			
Martens VI	28-11-85	19-10-87	1.473	1.473	690	CVP-PSB-VLD-PRL																																			
Martens VII	21-10-87	14-12-87	781	781	54	CVP-PSB-VLD-PRL																																			
Martens VIII	09-05-88	29-09-91	1.371	1.371	1.238	CVP-PSB-PS-SP-VU																																			
Martens IX	29-09-91	25-11-91	133	133	57	CVP-PSB-PS-SP																																			
Dehaene I	07-03-92	21-05-95	1.415	1.415	1.170	CVP-PSB-PS-SP																																			
Dehaene II	23-06-95	13-06-99	1.486	1.486	1.451	CVP-PSB-PS-SP																																			
Verhofsstadt	12-07-99	19-05-03	1.490	1.490	1.407	VLD-MR-PS-SP-E-A																																			
Verhofsstadt II	12-07-03	11-06-07	1.467	1.467	1.484	VLD-MR-PS-SP-R																																			
Verhofsstadt III	21-12-07	20-03-08	1.325	1.325	90	CD&V-VLD-MR-PS-CDH																																			
Letezme I	20-03-08	30-12-08	1.235	1.235	285	CD&V-VLD-MR-PS-CDH																																			
Van Rompuy	30-12-08	25-11-08	950	950	340	CD&V-VLD-MR-PS-CDH																																			
Letezme II	25-11-08	13-6-2010	610	610	545	CD&V-VLD-MR-PS-CDH																																			
(Letezme III)	(24-6-2010)	(6-12-2011)	--	--	(541)	CD&V-VLD-MR-PS-CDH																																			
Di Rupo	6-12-2011	25-5-2014	978	978	--	CD&V-VLD-MR-PS-CDH-SP-R																																			
GEMIDDELE DOOR (41 REGERINGEN)				542																																					

deel III:
Het politieke
systeem

Lieven De Winter
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Regeringsvorming in België:
mission impossible?

BE
LGE
#2014

De unieke complexiteit van het formatieproces

Toen 541 dagen na de verkiezingen van 13 juni 2010 de regering-Di Rupo de eed aflegde bij Koning Albert II, verpulverde België het wereldrecord regeringsvormen, een record dat lange tijd in handen lag van onze noorderburen (208 dagen in 1977). Deze recordduur – met zes mislukte pogingen bovenop de vele ‘impasses’ – en de uitzonderlijke lengte van het regeerakkoord (180 pagina’s) wijzen erop dat het vormen van een regering in België een aartsmoeilijke opdracht is, moeilijker dan in om het even welk West-Europees land, en dat dit bovendien steeds moeilijker wordt. Men kan dus verwachten dat de vorming van een federale regering na de nieuwe ‘moeder van alle verkiezingen’ van 25 mei 2014 opnieuw zal uitdraaien op een *mission impossible*.

In dit hoofdstuk gaan we dieper in op de unieke complexiteit van het formatieproces in België. Meer bepaald focussen we op de drie ‘klassieke’ fasen en uitdagingen die inherent zijn aan het vormen van een regering: de keuze van de coalitiepartners, de onderhandelingen over het regeerakkoord en de beleidsagenda, en de verdeling van de ministerportefeuilles tussen en binnen de regeringspartijen. Elk van deze drie uitdagingen kenmerken zich door formele en informele spelregels die de vorming van een regering vergemakkelijken maar nog vaker bemoeilijken. We behandelen daarbij ook de ‘goedkeuringsrituelen’ van het formatieproces door de partijcongressen en het parlement. Verder duiden we de mate van regerings(in)stabiliteit in historisch perspectief en de toenemende electorale tol die regeringspartijen moeten betalen. We sluiten het hoofdstuk af met enkele mogelijke scenario’s voor de formatie na de verkiezingen van 2014.

Het meest cruciale en complexe beslissingsmoment in de Belgische politiek

De vorming van een Belgische regering is steeds complexer geworden. Sinds de jaren 1970 kent België verscheidene factoren die het formatieproces bemoeilijken: extreme partijfragmentatie en dus veel meer *konditionele* partijen of mogelijke coalitiepartners die wedijveren op een groot aantal relevante breuklijnen, een grote electorale volatilititeit, de toenemende electorale tol van regeringsdeelname, de afkalving van het electoraat van de traditionele regeringspartijen,¹ de spectaculaire opkomst en zelfs electoraal leiderschap van anti-establishmentpartijen,² allerlei nieuwe formele en informele formatieregels, de ingewikkelde interacties tussen verschillende regeringsniveaus, enz. Die complexiteit vertaalt zich onder andere in zeer lange formaties, met talrijke mislukte pogingen, ellenlange gedetailleerde regeerakkoorden, periodes van extreme regeringsinstabiliteit, en weinig impact van het oordeel van de kiezer en zijn verkozenen.

Het jaar 1968 is duidelijk een keerpunt in de geschiedenis waarbij afscheid wordt genomen van de simpele logica van het vormen van een tweepartijenregering in een driepartijenselsel. Als we de duur van de postelectorale formaties bekijken,³ nam de regeringsvorming in de periode 1946-1966 gemiddeld slechts 27,6 dagen in beslag. Vanaf 1968 was dat vier keer meer, gemiddeld 109 dagen (zie tabel 2). De toename van de duur van de onderhandelingen heeft duidelijk te maken met de toename van het aantal relevante partijen. Vóór 1968 telde de regering gemiddeld 1,6 partijen, sinds de splitsing van alle traditionele partijen en verdriedubbelde dit tot 4,7 partijen (zie tabel 1). Het toegenomen

1 In 1958 behaalden christendemocraten, socialisten en liberalen samen nog 93,3% van de stemmen, in 2010 bedroeg dit amper 57,2%.

2 Vlaams Belang was de grootste partij na de Vlaamse verkiezingen in 2004. N-VA werd in 2010 de grootste federale partij.

3 Omgeweerde helft (22/42) van de Belgische regeringen wordt midterm gevormd, d.w.z. tussen twee verkiezingen. Bij midtermregeringen gaat het vaak om een beperkte herschikking van de coalitie. Sommige tussentijdse formaties zijn een succesvolle poging om een zittende coalitie weer op de been te krijgen. Zo nam Marc Eyskens in 1981 het roer over van partijgenoot Wilfried Martens, maar werd de coalitie van CVP/PSC en SP/PS verdergezet. Soms wordt een kleine coalitiepartner overboord gegooid (zoals de VU in 1991) of wordt de zittende coalitie verruimd met een partijfamilie om een tweederde meerderheid te vormen, die nodig is om in het parlement een grondwetswijziging door te drukken. Zo werden de liberalen in 1980 aan boord van de regering-Martens III gehaald. Meestal gaat het dus slechts om een gedeeltelijke coalitiewissel die geen lange onderhandelingen of nieuw regeerakkoord vereist.

aantal partijen leidt dus tot moeilijker en langere onderhandelingen, die vaker mislukken of moeten worden gereïnieerd. Soms moeten ook verschillende coalitieformules worden uitgetest, wat de formatie-duur verder opdrijft. Wanneer communautaire knelpunten hoog op de agenda staan, zijn er meer mislukte pogingen – 11 in 1979! – en duurt de formatie dus ook langer (zie tabel 3).⁴

De kiezer kan met zijn keuze voor bepaalde partijen en programma's enige richting geven aan het beleid dat hij verwacht, maar 'de boodschap van de kiezer' is vaak onduidelijk, tegenstrijdig en vluchtig. Bovendien stemmen meer dan zes op de tien kiezers eerder voor een kandidaat dan voor een partij en haar programma. De verkiezingsprogramma's die de partijen voorleggen, bieden ook zelden een duidelijke keuze tussen verschillende beleidsalternatieven. Niet alleen zit er heel wat overlap tussen de programma's, maar ook de beleidsvoorstellen die 'uniek' zijn voor een bepaalde partij, zijn zelden gesteld in klare termen. Partijprogramma's fietsen vaak in een bocht om 'breekpunten', d.w.z. duidelijk verifieerbare beleidsbeloftes, zoals de onverwijldte splitsing van BHV.

Partijen beloven – uiteraard – ook veel meer dan ze kunnen waarmaken door toe te treden tot een regering. Vaak zijn er bijvoorbeeld niet de nodige budgettaire middelen. Maar bovenal moet elke regeringspartij haar specifieke beleidsvoorkeuren afzwakken, omdat ook de coalitiepartners hun eigen visie op bepaalde strijdpunten hebben. Er moet dus naar een compromis moet worden gezocht, niet alleen voor een dozijn 'hete hangijzers' uit de campagne, maar voor honderden beleidsmaatregelen. In vergelijking met wat ze aan de kiezer beloven tijdens de campagne, moeten alle regeringspartijen achteraf bakken water in hun glas wijn doen. Onderhandelen over de vorming van een regering betekent vooral heel veel geven en toegeven. Uiteindelijk kan elke regeringspartij maar zeer weinig eigen beleidsvoorstellen integraal uit de brand slepen.

In elk democratisch land behelst de vorming van een regering drie cruciale uitdagingen. Ten eerste is er de puzzel welke partij(en) tot de regering toetreden en welke in de oppositie gaan. Ten tweede stelt zich de vraag welk beleid de nieuwe regering wil voeren in de diverse

beleidsectoren, en met welke timing ze dat wil aanpakken. Ten slotte is er nog de kwestie van de verdeling van de ministerportefeuilles, niet alleen tussen de regeringspartijen maar ook binnen die partijen, tussen de 'ministeriabelen' van elke coalitiepartner.

In landen waar één partij een absolute meerderheid haalt in het parlement, volstaan een paar dagen om een antwoord te vinden op deze drie uitdagingen. Zo trad in Groot-Brittannië het eerste kabinet van Tony Blair aan amper twee dagen na de verkiezingen van 1 mei 1997. In dat geval liggen de zaken uiterst simpel. De partij die de verkiezingen wint, vormt een regering. Haar partijleider of verkiezingsbegeerbeeld wordt eerste minister en verdeelt de ministerportefeuilles tussen de gegadigden binnen zijn partij. Het verkiezingsprogramma van de partij vormt de belangrijkste leidraad voor het te voeren beleid tijdens de volgende legislatuur, een programma waarop de regering zal worden afgeremd bij de volgende verkiezingen.

Dergelijk eenvoudige situatie heeft zich in het naoorlogse België slechts één keer voorgedaan, in 1950. In alle andere gevallen was het nodig om een coalitie te vormen tussen minstens twee partijen,⁵ en dus te onderhandelingen over de drie basisvragen. Terwijl tot 1968 meestal twee coalitiepartners volstonden, is sinds de splitsing van de traditionele partijen (1968-1978) en de opkomst van nieuwe partijen (de drie 'communautaire' partijen, de groenen en de rechts-populisten) het partijlandschap zo versnipperd geworden dat meestal vier tot zes partijen nodig zijn voor een parlementaire meerderheid (zie tabel 2). De fragmentering van het partijlandschap is zonder twijfel de voornaamste oorzaak van de complexiteit van een regeringsvorming. Ook op dit vlak heeft België een Europees record verbroken: in 1999 behaalde de grootste partij van het land (VLD) slechts 14,3% van de stemmen, terwijl de tiende grootste partij (VU) nog 5,6% scoorde.

In tegenstelling tot andere landen bepaalt het formatieproces in België niet alleen de partijen die zullen regeren, het beleidsprogramma en de verdeling van de ministerportefeuilles. Het is ook gekoppeld

5 We volgen de meest courante werkwijze in vergelijkend politologisch onderzoek (Strøm & Müller, 2003) om te bepalen hoeveel regeringen er zijn geweest, hoelang een formatie of een legislatuur heeft geduurd, enz. Een nieuwe regering wordt gevormd indien (minstens) een van de volgende drie voorwaarden zich voordoet: een verandering van eerste minister, een verandering in de samenstelling van de coalitie (in termen van deelnemende partijen) en parlementsverkiezingen.

aan de omvang van de regering, de machts hiërarchie en consensusbevoederende gedragsregels binnen de regering, de vorming van regionale regeringen, het initiatiefrecht van het parlement, de verdeling van de politieke benoemingen, enz. In de 'glorietijd' van de politieke benoemingen (jaren 1970 en 1980) werd bij de regeringsvorming een geheim akkoord gesloten over het aandeel waarop elke regeringspartij aanspraak kon maken bij aanwervingen en bevorderingen in de overheidssector.⁶ Gelet op de geleidelijke depolitiserende van de overheidsadministratie is er vandaag geen nood meer aan zo'n akkoord. Toch moest ook de regering-Di Rupo bij haar aantreden op zoek naar een 'verdeelsleutel' voor een vijftigtal topbenoemingen die de regering-Leterme III als regering in lopende zaken niet had kunnen bekrachtigen. En dus moest naar goede Belgische gewoonte een zeker partijevenwicht worden gevonden.

Ten slotte vormt ook de quasipermanente roep om staats hervormingen een uitzonderlijk en typisch Belgisch ingrediënt in het formatieproces. In geen enkel ander West-Europees land worden de bevoegdheidsverdelingen tussen het nationale/federale en deelstatelijke niveau zo vaak hertekend: zes geslaagde staats hervormingen sinds 1970, met daarbovenop verscheidene mislukte pogingen. Sinds 1970 hebben slechts twee regeringen die communautaire uitdaging tijdens de formatie in de 'politieke doofpot' kunnen steken (Martens V en Dehaene II). Een staats hervorming verschildt ook sterk van de klassieke sociaaleconomische of levensbeschouwelijke kwesties die het *bread and butter* uitmaken van de regeringsvorming in 'normale' landen. Zeker als de roep om een staats hervorming gepaard gaat met eisen tot Vlaamse onafhankelijkheid die het voortbestaan van de staat in vraag stellen. Ook door die koppeling van klassieke aan niet-klassieke inzetten is de formatie in België uitgegroeid tot het meest belangrijke maar ook meest complexe besluitvormingsproces.

6 Dumont & De Winter (1999).

De formele en informele fasen van het formatieproces

Voor elk van de drie klassieke formatievraagstukken gelden een aantal formele en informele regels. Wat de samenstelling van de coalitie betreft, is de algemeen aanvaarde maar informele regel dat de grootste partij het initiatiefrecht heeft. De vorming van een nieuw kabinet start officieel met de koninklijke raadpleging van alle (democratische) partijen in het parlement. De koning duidt daartoe een 'informatuur' of een 'formateur' aan. In moeilijke politieke situaties schakelt hij soms een 'preformateur', 'onderhandelaar', 'bemiddelaar', 'verduidelijker', 'verkenners', 'verzoener' of 'ontmijner' in. Tijdens de formatie van 2010 moest de koning vijf keer een beroep doen op dergelijke 'tussenpersonen'. Deze gaat meestal verder dan een informatuur, die nagaat welke partijen bereid zijn om samen te regeren, maar minder ver dan een echte formateur, die met bepaalde partijen rond de tafel gaat zitten om een regeerakkoord te maken. Zijn missie bestaat erin bepaalde knelpunten uit te klaren of het vertrouwen en de dialoog (bereidheid) tussen partijen te herstellen.

De tweede fase, de onderhandelingen over het regeerprogramma, duurt het langst en is de beleidsvormingsarena *par excellence*. Vanaf de jaren 1970 worden de onderhandelingen steeds meer gevoerd door heuse partijdelegaties, met vaak tientallen medewerkers per partij, waarbij verschillende werkgroepen op specifieke beleidsdomeinen politieke compromissen formuleren. Geregeld komen de formateur en de partijvoorzitters en *petit comité* bijeen om deze voorstellen af te ronden tot een finaal compromis. Hoewel de coalitievorming onlosmakelijk verbonden is met het schrijven van een regeerprogramma, ontwerpt de formateur (soms al de informatuur) al een eerste algemeen programma, dat wordt verspreid onder een aantal mogelijke coalitiepartners. Zo'n programma kan zich beperken tot een summier lijst van discussiepunten maar is meestal al een doorwrocht document. Op dat moment kunnen partijen nog steeds aanschuiven aan de onderhandelingsstafel of die verlaten. Soms bereiken twee partijfamilies al een akkoord over een aantal punten voordat een of meerdere andere partijen aan de onderhandelingen mogen deelnemen. De coalitievorming wordt afgeslo-

ten wanneer de resultaten van de onderhandelingen ter goedkeuring worden voorgelegd aan de partijcongressen.

De verdeling van de portefeuilles is de laatste fase in het formatieproces en duurt over het algemeen slechts een paar dagen. Maar aangezien veel toponderhandelaars ministeriabel zijn, kunnen we deze fase niet los zien van de vorige. Partijen claimen vaak bepaalde portefeuilles. Hoewel het gebruikelijk is dat de grootste partij de eerste minister levert en dat de coalitiepartners die portefeuilles krijgen waarin ze beleidsmatig het meest geïnteresseerd zijn, is de toekenning van die bevoegdheden het resultaat van aardig wat getouwtrek. Na de verdeling van de bevoegdheden tussen de partijen duiden de partijvoorzitters de kandidaten (ministers en staatssecretarissen) aan voor de portefeuilles die hun partij in de wacht heeft gesleept. Nadat de nieuwe regeringsleden de eed hebben afgelegd bij de koning, stelt de eerste minister de 'regeringsverklaring' (de krachtlijnen van het regeerakkoord) voor in de Kamer en vraagt er een vertrouwenstemming. Hierna gaan we dieper in op elk van de beschreven fasen.

De keuze van coalitiepartners

Minimal winning

Wat de eerste 'klassieke' inzet van de regeringsvorming betreft, is het aantal geïnteresseerde en aanvaardbare regeringspartijen spectaculair toegenomen. Tussen 1947 en 1968 waren er maar drie *coalitionsfähige* regeringspartijen, de christendemocraten, socialisten en liberalen, die doorgaans in wisselende tweepartijencoalities de macht deelden. Tot 1974 werden de toenmalige 'federalistische' partijen als *unregierungsfähig* beschouwd en dus systematisch uit de coalities geweerd. Regeringsvorming was in die periode dus vrij simpel: welke van de drie traditionele partijfamilies zouden een 'regeringstandem' vormen? Sindsdien lijkt de samenstelling van een regering een vraagstuk van hogere politieke wijskunde geworden. België is Europees recordhouder niet alleen qua fragmentatie van het partijsysteem maar ook qua aantal 'regeerrelevante' partijen. Wegens die fragmentatie en regeerbereidheid zijn er theoretisch veel meer haalbare combinaties, wat de uiteindelijke totstandkoming van de 'winnende' combinatie, de coalitie die

een meerderheid in het parlement oplevert en waarvan het programma elke coalitiepartner voldoende bekoort, sterk bemoeilijkt.

Maar van de honderden coalitiemogelijkheden zijn in de praktijk meestal slechts enkele realistisch, en dit vanwege verschillende factoren. Cruciaal blijft immers de uitslag van de verkiezingen, meer bepaald het aantal zetels dat elke partij in de wacht sleept. Wat de impact van de zetelverdeling betreft, hebben politologen sinds de jaren 1960 tientallen hypothesen geformuleerd en uitgebreid getest op honderden regeringsformaties in een paar dozijn landen.⁷ Helaas hebben de meeste theorieën, ook de meest gesofisticeerde, in de praktijk maar een beperkte voorspellende kracht. De meeste slagen erin om ongeveer de helft van de uiteindelijke coalitieformules correct te voorspellen. De 'afwijkende' helft kan slechts ad hoc worden geduid, via wetenschappelijk moeilijk vatbare factoren, zoals persoonlijke verhoudingen tussen partijleiders.⁸ Dat geld uiteraard ook en vooral voor België.

Toch halen partijleiders en strategen tijdens de verkiezingsnacht hun rekenmachientjes naar boven om een aantal simpele berekeningen te maken: welke partijcombinaties leveren een werkbare parlementaire meerderheid op? En indien een staatsvorming hoog op de politieke agenda staat: welke combinaties vormen een tweederde meerderheid die toelaat de grondwet te hervormen? Bij deze berekeningen geldt de regel dat wanneer een partij niet nodig is om de vereiste meerderheid te halen, het ook weinig zin heeft om ze op te nemen in de regering – en dus toegevingen te doen inzake ministerportefeuilles en beleidsprioriteiten. *Minimal winning* is een rationele norm met het oog op het maximaliseren van de macht en was een gangbare praktijk in de periode vóór de splitsing van de traditionele partijen.

Horizontale en verticale symmetrie

Nochans zijn de meeste regeringen vanaf 1968 'surpluscoalities'.⁹ Dit surpluskarakter is het gevolg van het respect voor een van de meest solide maar informele regels van het Belgische formatieproces: partijen die tot dezelfde familie behoren, gaan samen in de regering of de oppositie, al functioneren ze vanaf de jaren 1970 volstrekt autonoom. In

7 De Winter & Dumont (2005).

8 Dumont, De Winter & Andeweg (2011).

9 Van de 27 regeringen sinds 1968 zijn slechts 7 echt minimal winning coalities.

een coalitie fungeert de zusterpartij van een grote partij aan de andere kant van de taalgrens vaak als een kleine 'surpluspartij'. Dit gold vooral voor de PSC en de SP ten aanzien van de incontournable CVP en PS. Deze symmetrienorm is niet (langer) het gevolg van de nauwe banden die zusterpartijen en hun leiders in het verleden hebben gesmeed, maar van grondwettelijke beperkingen en strategische berekeningen.

Het blijft voor elke partij immers voordelig om haar kleinere zusterpartij in de regeringsboot te hijsen, omdat dit het gewicht versterkt van de beleidsvoorkeuren van de partijfamilie in het coalitieakkoord en tijdens de regeringsduur. Wegens de taalpariteitsregel in de ministerraad wordt bovendien de 'kost' qua portefeuilles van het inbrengen van een extra partner 'betaald' door de partijen van de andere taalgemeenschap. Enkel toen het vasthouden aan de zusterpartij de eigen regeringsdeelname in het gedrang dreigde te brengen, werd het nut van deze solidariteit in vraag gesteld. In de jaren 1990 ergerden de Franstalige liberalen zich aan de neoliberalen koers van de VLD omdat die de PRL inbuivable maakte voor de PS, terwijl de Vlaamse christendemocraten geregeld de communautaire standpunten van de PSC/cdH hekelden. Tot nu toe houdt de 'horizontale' symmetrie stevig stand, ondanks de verschillende machtsverhoudingen tussen de drie traditionele partijen en de groenen in het Vlaamse en Franstalige partijstelsel. De symmetrieregels werden slechts eenmaal radicaal doorbroken, toen de PS in 2007 toetrad tot een regering van christendemocraten en liberalen, terwijl de SP resoluut voor de oppositie koos.

Het respecteren van de symmetrieregels vermindert sterk het aantal mathematische combinaties en vergemakkelijkt zo de coalitiesamenstelling. Die is bovendien ook gebonden aan wettelijke bepalingen. Sinds de grondwetsherziening van 1970 kan een Belgische regering niet bestaan uit alleen Vlaamse of Franstalige partijen. Artikel 99 bepaalt dat de regering evenveel Franstalige als Nederlandstalige ministers telt, de eerste minister eventueel niet meegerekend. Dit betekent echter niet dat de regering de steun moet genieten van een meerderheid van zowel Vlaamse als Franstalige parlementsleden. Zo beschikt de regering-Di Rupo niet over de steun van een meerderheid van de Nederlandstalige Kamerleden (43/88). Uiteraard heeft ze wel een meerderheid onder het totaal aantal Kamerleden (93/150).

Lange tijd was ook een tweede symmetrieregule van kracht, namelijk de 'verticale' symmetrie tussen de coalitieformules op het federale en het deelstatelijke niveau. Indien numeriek mogelijk werden dezelfde formules op beide niveaus nagestreefd. De onderhandelaars waren vaak ook dezelfde personen op beide niveaus. Aangezien tot 1999 de federale en regionale parlementen op dezelfde dag werden vernieuwd, konden de onderhandelaars de formatieprocessen op federaal en regionaal niveau vrij makkelijk aan elkaar koppelen en hun partij op beide niveaus in de regering sluiten. Pogingen om op regionaal niveau een andere coalitie te vormen werden vaak afgeblokt vanuit de nationale partijhoofdkwartieren. Meestal werd het coalitiemodel voor de federale regering opgedrongen aan de regionale regeringen. Enkel voor het Brussels Gewest lukte dit sinds 1995 minder vaak, omdat de totale krachtsverhoudingen tussen partijen er soms te veel verschillen van het federale niveau en de verticale symmetrie er rekenkundig niet haalbaar is. Sinds 2004 wordt de verticale symmetrienorm nog zelden gerespecteerd.

De ont koppeling van de regionale en federale verkiezingen stort elke partij in een permanente mood van campagnevoeren, wat het nemen van 'moedige' beslissingen op verschillende beleidsniveaus niet vergemakkelijkt. De verschillen in machtsverhoudingen tussen partijen op federaal en regionaal vlak en de daaruit voortvloeiende asymmetrie tasten de cohesie van beide regereenniveaus aan, omdat veel partijen op het ene niveau in de regering zitten en op het andere in de oppositie. Om deze complexiteit enigszins onder controle te houden is de rol van de partijvoorzitters verder toegenomen. Enkel zij kunnen nog zorgen voor de nodige coördinatie tussen de verschillende beleidsniveaus en zo een minimum aan stabiliteit waarborgen. Dus proberen zij – waar mogelijk – de invloed te neutraliseren van andere spelers zoals het parlement, de partijbasis en de kiezers. Doordat de federale en regionale verkiezingen in mei 2014 (en wellicht ook in 2019) echter opnieuw samenvallen, zullen de partijen naar alle waarschijnlijkheid weer 'alles aan alles' trachten te koppelen.

Het centrum, de keuze van de kiezer en never change a winning team

Politologen argumenteren ook dat coalitieformules tussen partijen die ideologisch nauwer bij elkaar aanleunen, een grotere kans op slagen hebben dan deze tussen partijen die programmatisch verder uit elkaar liggen. Het verklaart alleszins de centrale rol die de christendemocraten in de meeste naoorlogse formaties hebben gespeeld. Op de sociaaleconomische breuklijn, die in eigen rangen wordt vertegenwoordigd door drie goed georganiseerde facties rond de arbeiders-, landbouwers- en middenstandsvleugel, situeren de christendemocraten zich 'ergens rond het centrum'. Als grootste van het land kon deze centrumfamilie meestal vrij kiezen tussen een linkse of rechtse coalitiepartner (socialisten of liberalen). Van midden jaren 1960 tot midden jaren 1990 bestond bovendien een grote ideologische afkeer tussen socialisten en liberalen, die paarse regeringen haast onmogelijk maakte.

Deze spilpositie – centrumspeler op de sociaaleconomische breuklijn én grootste partijfamilie tot 1987 – maakte de christendemocratie haast incontourneable bij elke naoorlogse regeringsvorming. Gedurende vier decennia (1958–1999) dicteerde zij de coalitieformule. De christendemocraten leidden de dans en kozen de minst veeleisende partner. De grootste partij van de christendemocratische familie kon zo steeds de post van eerste minister opeisen. Enkel toen de sociaaleconomische breuklijn tijdelijk aan belang inboette na de zeven magere besparingsjaren van de twee regeringen Dehaene en er voldoende budgettaire zuurstof was om zowel links als rechts te treden te stellen, kon een 'onwaarschijnlijkje' – *'contre nature'*, dixit Onkelinx – coalitie tot stand komen. Zeker toen bleek dat de paarsgroene partijen zich ook vonden op nieuwe breuklijnen die aan belang hadden gewonnen, zoals ethische kwesties en issues van 'nieuwe politieke cultuur'.

Er zijn nog andere factoren die mathematisch haalbare coalities in de praktijk onhaalbaar maken. Zo worden bepaalde partijen als niet *koalitionsfähig* beschouwd, zoals Vlaams Belang, dat in de ban van het cordon sanitaire werd geslagen. Soms sluit een partij zichzelf uit, omdat ze van de kiezer een pak rammel heeft gekregen en verkiest om haar wonden te likken en tijdelijk niet deel te nemen aan de onderhandelingen (zoals Open vld in 2010). Of ze besluit om zich te herbronnen in de oppositie (zoals de sp in 2007). Verder is een coalitie van partijen

die alle bij de verkiezingen achteruitboerden, moeilijk te verkopen aan de publieke opinie. Men zal dus zeker minstens één 'winnaar' mee in het regeringsbad willen nemen. Maar daar blijft het vaak ook bij: winst is zeker geen garantie op regeringsdeelname, net zo min telt verlies een partij per definitie uit. De partnerkeuze houdt zelden rekening met de voorkeur van de kiezer. Zo zetelden de christendemocraten van 1958 tot 1999 in elke regering, ondanks de afkalfing van hun electoraat van 46,5% in 1958 tot 20,0% in 1999. De socialistische familie verloor van 1958 tot 1985 en van 1987 tot 1999 alle verkiezingen en zag haar electoraat bijna gehalveerd, van 37,3% in 1954 tot 21,2% in 2007, maar toch nam ze deel aan 10 van de 13 postelectorale regeringen tussen 1968 en 2007 (zie tabel 1).

Ten slotte is het ook niet zo dat eens de zetelverdeling na de verkiezingen definitief vastligt, de partijen de spons vegen over het verleden en enkel afwegen wat mogelijk is gegeven de nieuwe krachtsverhoudingen. Goede of slechte ervaringen met een voormalige coalitiepartij spelen zeker een rol. Zo hadden de christendemocraten in 1981 de buik vol van de ps met haar 'stakende ministers'. Echte voorakkoorden zoals bij gemeenteraadsverkiezingen worden er niet gesloten, al zijn er soms wel informele afspraken.¹⁰ Zo was het duidelijk dat indien de partijen van de regering-Dehaene I de verkiezingen van 1995 niet zouden verliezen, zij deze hechte coalitie onder het strakke leiderschap van de tandem Dehaene-Tobback zouden voortzetten. Hetzelfde gold voor de paarsgroene coalitie van Verhofstadt, al werden de verliezers van de verkiezingen van 2003 (de groenen) toen wel gedumpt. Meestal geldt dus de regel: *never change a winning team*.

De onderhandelingen over het beleidsakkoord

Van de drie klassieke uitdagingen in het formatieproces is het schrijven van een regeerakkoord de moeilijkste fase die vanuit de meeste tijd in beslag neemt. Het regeerakkoord vervult diverse functies: het bepaalt aan welke beleidsvraagstukken de regering aandacht zal besteden tijdens de komende legislatuur, en welke concrete oplossingen ze voor deze vraagstukken nastreeft. Soms bevatten regeerakkoorden ook een

¹⁰ Ackaert et al. (2013).

beleidsagenda, een kalender die vastlegt wanneer of in welke volgorde de regering bepaalde issues zal aanpakken, om te vermijden dat één partij na een jaar al haar dada's uit het regeerakkoord heeft gerealiseerd, terwijl die van andere pas later aan bod komen. Een onevenwichtige timing maakt de coalitiepartners nerveus uit vrees dat de partij die eerst is 'bediend', gemakkelijker de neiging zal hebben om de regering te doen vallen.

Tot de regering-Verhofstadt I (1999) trachtten de cvr-formateurs voor elk beleidsdomein de kerk in het midden te laten: ze probeerden een eerder kleurloos compromis te sluiten waarbij iedere partij voor elk beleidsdomein heel wat toegevingen moest doen. Formateur Verhofstadt gebruikte wat de Nederlanders een 'uitruilstrategie' noemen: de belangrijkste wensen op het politieke boodschappenlijstje van elk van de zes partners werden uitgeruild. Zo kregen de liberalen lastenverminderingen, de socialisten verhogingen van socialezekerheidsuitkeringen, en de groenen (beloftes inzake) nieuwe politieke cultuur en milieu (bijv. kernuitstap). Het akkoord was dus niet evenwichtig in elk beleidsdomein, maar wel in zijn geheel. Bovendien kregen de partijen de relevante ministeries voor hun dada's in handen, zodat de ene partij geen punten uit het verkiezingsprogramma van de andere hoefde uit te voeren. Zo kreeg elke partij onder paarsgroen een kans om te scoren op haar favoriete bevoegdheidsdomein.

De nieuwe werkwijze was vooral het gevolg van de grote politieke heterogeniteit van de paarsgroene regering én van de snelheid waarmee het eerder beknopte en vage regeerakkoord in elkaar was gebokst. In combinatie met de 'open debatcultuur' leidde dit alles tot veelvuldige conflicten tussen de coalitiepartijen; enkele keren werd de regering zelfs aan het wankelen gebracht. De daaropvolgende paarse regering-Verhofstadt II had haar les geleerd: ze nam de tijd om een zeer gedetailleerd akkoord uit te schrijven en trachtte conflicten meer binnenskamers op te lossen. Het gedetailleerd vastleggen van de beleidsagenda voor de regering van start gaat, vermijdt in elk geval dat regeringspartijen elke week met elkaar in de clinch gaan wanneer een nieuw beleidsvraagstuk op de ministerraad wordt aangesneden. Akkoorden die de voornaamste beleidsopties in alle ministeriële departementen vastleggen, 'ontmantelen' immers grotendeels het 'conflict karakter' dat inherent is aan coalitieregeringen waarbij een veelvoud van partijen

nu eenmaal verschillende en vaak tegenstrijdige beleidsvoorkeuren hebben.

Vanaf de jaren 1970 werden onderhandelingen steeds meer geïnstitutionaliseerd en werden regeerakkoorden gepubliceerd zodra de onderhandelaars hadden getekend. Wegens de steeds langere, gedetailleerdere en bindend wordende inhoud wordt dit document ook vaak de 'regeringsbijbel' genoemd. Terwijl de eerste twee akkoorden nog geheim waren (1958 en 1961), worden zij sinds 1965 openbaar gemaakt. Het publiceren van het akkoord zet de coalitiepartijen natuurlijk onder druk, zowel bij de basis als bij de bredere publieke opinie, omdat iedereen duidelijk kan vaststellen wie waar water in zijn verkiezingswijn heeft gedaan. Die zwakte wordt natuurlijk gretig uitgebuit door journalisten en oppositiepartijen die elke regeringsmaatregel beoordelen op de overeenstemming met het akkoord.

Regeerakkoorden zijn in de loop van de afgelopen decennia steeds omvangrijker geworden en behoren nu tot de langste van West-Europa, met als record het Vlinderakkoord van de regering-Di Rupo (52.939 woorden oftewel 180 bladzijden). Dit wijst erop dat regeerakkoorden een steeds breder terrein van beleidsmateries dekken en dus nog wel-nig problemen onbesproken laten. Dat komt onder andere door het uitdijen van de reikwijdte van het overheidsingrijpen, maar ook door de steeds complexere coalitieformules, waarbij nieuwe partijen zoals regionalisten en groenen problemen aankaarten die voortspruiten uit nieuwe breuklijnen. Vooral communautaire problemen vereisen soms zeer gedetailleerde oplossingen, opgesteld in verfijnd politiek-juridisch jargon (*Weistatutes*), waarbij elk woord gewikt en gewogen is en niet voor interpretatie vatbaar is. Of juist wel, wanneer de coalitiepartners het echt niet eens raken over een bepaalde materie.

Regeerakkoorden zijn wettelijk niet bindend. Zoals gezegd, is het respecteren ervan nochtans essentieel om het conflictniveau in een coalitie binnen de perken te houden. Er zijn dan ook verschillende mechanismen en regels ontworpen om deze juridisch niet-bindende teksten toch politiek bindend en afdwingbaar te maken, zowel voor de ministers, hun parlementsfractionen en hun partijinstanties.¹¹ Eerst en vooral is er de algemene aanvaarde morele plicht tot coalitietrouw aan

11 De Winter, Dumont & Timmermans (2003).

de gemaakte afspraken (*pacta sunt servanda*). Eenmaal een regering van start is gegaan, verwijzen partijleiders, ministers en parlementsfractionen veelvuldig naar de overeenkomsten van het regeerakkoord om hun eigen initiatieven te verantwoorden en kritieken van de oppositie te pareren, maar ook om een autonoom initiatief te nemen betreffende een beleidsmaterie die niet in het akkoord werd beslecht (bijv. de uitbreiding van de euthanasiewetgeving naar minderjarigen).

In de regeerakkoorden van 1992 en 1995 werd de vrijheid van initiatief verder afgezwakt door de volgende slotclausule: "Daarenboven hebben de meerderheidspartijen afgesproken dat zij zich voor de overige op basis van de consensus in de regering en tussen de meerderheidsfractionen in het parlement." Strikt genomen betekent dit dat de parlementleden en de ministers van elke meerderheidspartij geen eigen initiatieven mogen nemen zonder ruggespraak met en toestemming van de andere coalitiepartijen. Voor leden van de meerderheid geldt dus de regel: 'De bijbel, en alleen de bijbel'.

Een tweede reeks regels bepalen hoe de partijen tot een overeenkomst zullen komen in specifieke beleidsdomeinen, vooral in de gevoelige communautaire sector. Vaak behelst deze overeenkomst de beslissing om een dossier niet te berde te brengen tijdens de regeerperiode ('koelkaststrategie') of de conflictueuze materie uit de regering te lichten door ze door te verwijzen naar een andere besluitvormingsarena, zoals het parlement of een commissie van experts of wijzen. Zo werd de staatsvorming van 1992 toevertrouwd aan de werkgroep Dialogo tussen de Gemeenschappen onder het voorzitterschap van Hugo Schilz (VU) en Gérard Deprez (PSC). In de praktijk blijkt dat regeerakkoorden geen 'praat voor de vaak' zijn. Onderzoek toont aan dat van de duidelijk verifieerbare afspraken in de Belgische regeerakkoorden een overgrote meerderheid effectief wordt uitgevoerd.¹²

De verdeling van de portefeuilles

Formeel wordt eerst een overeenkomst getroffen over de verdeling van het aantal portefeuilles (ministers en staatssecretarissen) tussen de

12 Moury (2013).

regeringspartijen en over de bevoegdheidsverdeling tussen deze portefeuilles. Pas daarna worden in elke partij de titularissen voor elke verworven portefeuille aangeduid. Ook in deze fase van de formatie gelden een aantal informele regels.

Een eerste informele regel is dat de grootste partij die aan de onderhandelingen deelneemt, de functie van eerste minister mag opeisen, tenzij zij hieraan verzaakt. Dat was lange tijd de CVP, maar de regel wordt ook bevestigd voor de regeringen Verhofstadt I & II, Leterme I en Di Rupo I. Voorts hebben alle partijen traditionele voorkeuren voor bepaalde ministeriële departementen (*chasses gardées*). In de onderhandelingen zitten vaak ook politieke zwaargewichten die kandidaat zijn voor een bepaalde portefeuille. In de marge van de beleidsonderhandelingen kunnen ze al een informele afspraak afsluiten over de toewijzing van de portefeuilles die hen interesseren. Deze 'zelfbediening' heeft ook voordelen: vaak is de minister die een portefeuille in de wacht sleept, de stuwende kracht in het uitwerken van het regeerakkoord in een bepaalde sector. Zo werd het concept van de 'actieve welvaartsstaat' tijdens de formatie van Verhofstadt I gepromoot door de latere minister van Sociale Zaken, de socialist Frank Vandenbroucke.

Ondanks de beperkte 'preconfiguratie' die soms al tijdens de onderhandelingen over het beleidsakkoord opdoemt, blijft de eindfase van de verdeling van de portefeuilles tussen en binnen de partijen een cruciale en soms moeizame horde. De eerste opgave is het vastleggen van het aantal en het soort regeringsambten. Voor ministers gelden twee formele beperkingen: de pariteitsregel tussen Franstaligen en Nederlandstaligen (vanaf 1971) en de beperking van het aantal ministers (inclusief de eerste minister) tot vijftien (vanaf 1995). Naast de ministers worden sinds 1960 ook staatssecretarissen aangeduid. Voor hen gelden geen beperkingen inzake taal of aantal.

Door de aangroei van het aantal deelnemende partijen en de complexiteit van de institutionele regels heeft men getracht gedetailleerde spelregels te ontwikkelen voor de steeds moeilijker verdeling van het aantal ministers en staatssecretarissen. Een van de meest ingenieuze werkwijzen, die wordt gebruikt sinds 1980, is de '3-2-1-weging' van de portefeuilles. Volgens deze overeenkomst is een eerste minister drie punten waard, een minister twee en een staatssecretaris één. Ook de voorzitters van Kamer en Senaat (elk twee punten) worden aan de

portefeuillekoek toegevoegd. De partijleiders beslissen eerst over de grootte van de te verdelen koek, d.w.z. het totaal aantal ministers en staatssecretarissen, en de verdeling tussen de taalgroepen. Dan wordt binnen elke taalgroep het aantal punten berekend waarop de verschillende partijen op basis van hun relatieve getalsterkte in het parlement recht hebben.

Tijdens een eerste verdelingsronde kiest iedere partijvoorzitter de voor zijn partij meest gegeerde portefeuille. De voorzitter van de grootste partij in de coalitie is daarbij het eerst aan zet, die van de kleinste partij het laatst. Daarna start een tweede, derde en soms vierde ronde tot alle partijen hun 'trekkingsrechten' hebben opgebruikt en alle portefeuilles zijn toegewezen. Wanneer men vaststelt dat het eindresultaat toch niet 'optimaal' is, worden nieuwe, bilaterale of multilaterale onderhandelingen gevoerd tot een beter evenwicht wordt gevonden. Soms wordt de deal vergemakkelijkt door wat staatssecretarissen toe te voegen of nieuwe regeringsmandaten uit te vinden zoals de drie 'regeringscommissarissen' onder Verhofstadt I. Of wordt de verdeling van de portefeuilles op regionaal niveau erbij betrokken. Zelfs de positie van het Belgische lid van de Europese Commissie wordt sinds 1988 opgenomen in de onderhandelingen. Er moeten soms heel wat combinaties worden uitgetest voor de puzzel in elkaar past. De regering-Di Rupo besloot zelfs om het aantal ministers terug te brengen tot dertien om de rekening te doen kloppen...

Ten slotte moet iedere partijvoorzitter de kandidaten aanduiden voor de portefeuilles die hij voor zijn partij in de wacht heeft weten te slepen. De eerste minister heeft in deze laatste fase weinig invloed, zelfs niet op de keuze van de gegadigden binnen zijn eigen partij. Maar ook de partijvoorzitters hebben geen vrije hand: gewezen ministers zullen aandringen op een herbenoeming, sterke partijfederaties of invloedrijke standen zullen een ministerspost opeisen, elke provincie moet bij voorkeur een minister krijgen, er moeten voldoende vrouwen zetelen, enz. De keuzevrijheid van de partijvoorzitter hangt ook sterk af van zijn machtspositie binnen zijn partij. Die is uiteraard sterker als hij zijn partij net naar een verkiezingsoverwinning heeft geleid.

De goedkeuringsrituelen van het formatieproces

Wanneer een handvol partijleiders een regeerakkoord hebben onderhandeld, moet dat uiteraard nog worden omgezet tot een bindend beleidscontract tussen de regeringspartijen. Daartoe is de formele goedkeuring vereist door enerzijds de belangrijkste beslissingsorganen binnen de deelnemende partijen en anderzijds de parlementsfractionen van de meerderheid.

De ratificatie door het partijcongres

Sinds 1961 bepalen de statuten van de meeste regeerpartijen dat de deelname aan een nieuwe regering (de samenstelling ervan en het regeerakkoord) moet worden geratificeerd door het nationale partijcongres, het hoogste besluitvormingsorgaan dat binnen elke partij de voornaamste bindende beslissingen neemt.¹³ Deze congressen bestaan uit vertegenwoordigers van gemeentelijke, arrondissementale en provinciale partijorganen. In sommige partijen mogen alle leden aan het congres deelnemen, maar in de praktijk zijn het vooral de top- en middenkaders van de partij die er de plak zwaaien. De beslissing van dit opperste 'sovereine' partijorgaan bindt de ganse partij (gaande van de eenvoudige militant, over de parlementsleden tot het partijbureau en de partijleiders) aan het coalitiecontract.

De ratificatie van het regeerakkoord door de verschillende partijcongressen is een cruciale garantie voor het bewaren van de regeringssamenhang. Het laat de partijleiding immers toe om elke kritiek die vanuit de partij op het beleid van ministers van andere coalitiepartijen wordt geuit, te veroordelen als een inbreuk op de democratisch verworven consensus binnen de partij en op de daaruit volgende verplichting tot partijdiscipline. Regeerakkoorden dienen dus niet alleen om verschillende partijen aan elkaar te binden, maar ook om alle leden binnen elke coalitiepartij te dwingen tot trouw aan de regering. De 'investituur' door de partijcongressen vormt daarom een cruciale fase in het formatieproces.

De praktijk wijst uit dat geen enkel partijcongres tot nu toe een federale regeringsdeelname heeft verworpen, ook al omdat een afwijzing

¹³ Deschouwer (1992).

blijk zou geven van interne verdeeldheid, wat elke partij kan missen als kiespijn. Er bestaat dus meestal een zeer brede, zelfs 'stalinistische' consensus over de regeringsamenstelling en het regeerakkoord, met slechts een handvol rebelse congressen.¹⁴

De investituur door het parlement

Nadat de partijcongressen hun fiat hebben gegeven, zonder te weten welke ministeriële van de partij uiteindelijk de toegekende ministerportefeuilles zullen bekleden, selecteren de partijvoorzitters hun ministers. Eens deze genomineerden de eed bij de koning hebben afgelegd, kan de nieuwe regering zich aanbieden aan het parlement. De eerste minister stelt zijn ploeg en beleidsakkoord voor aan de Kamer (tot 1995 ook aan de Senaat). Daarop volgen enkele dagen van parlementair debat tussen meerderheids- en oppositieleden met replieken van de kersverse regering. Ten slotte wordt overgegaan tot de 'investituurstemming' die uitmaakt of de nieuwe regering wel degelijk kan rekenen op het vertrouwen van het parlement.

Dit vertrouwen wordt doorgaans snel en vrijwel unaniem geschonken. De parlementsleden van de meerderheidspartijen stemmen immers heel gedisclineerd: in de naoorlogse periode stemde gemiddeld minder dan 1% van de meerderheidsleden in elke kamer tegen de nieuwe regering tijdens de investituurstemming. Voor traditionele *backbenchers* ligt het ook bijzonder moeilijk om tegen de regering te stemmen, als enkele dagen voordien hun hoogste partijorgaan de regeringsdeelname met een overweldigende meerderheid heeft goedgekeurd. Dus beperken de meeste misnoegde zich tot kritische tussenkomsten over het regeerakkoord, maar echt bijten doen ze niet. Hooguit onthouden ze zich van de stemming, of zijn ze toevallig even afwezig...

¹⁴ Zo splitsten de Brusselse Franstalige liberalen zich in 1974 tijdelijk af (De Winter & Dumont, 2006b).

Regeringsstabiliteit en electorale kost van regeringsdeelname

Regeringsstabiliteit en -deelname

Met 41 regeringen in de periode 1946-2010 (zie tabel 2), of een gemiddelde duur van 1,48 jaar (542 dagen) komt België aardig in de buurt van het 'pathologisch instabiele' Italië. Toch mag men deze instabiliteit niet overdrijven. Turbulente periodes wisselen af met stabielere. Bijna 24 jaar naoorlogse regeringstijd kan op het conto worden geschreven van slechts 6 regeringen die hun legislatuur (haast) volledig uitdeden (o.a. Dehaene II en Verhofstadt I & II). Daarnaast waren er twee regeringen die verkiezingen uitschreven in hun vierde regeringsjaar met het oog op het verwerven van een nieuw mandaat van de kiezer (o.a. Dehaene I). De lage gemiddelde stabiliteit is vooral te wijten aan de veertien regeringen die minder dan een half jaar standhielden. Soms had dit te maken met een valse start, met de aangekondigde uitbreiding van een minderheidsregering, of met pogingen om een gekapseide regering te reanimeren.

De regeringsinstabiliteit varieerde ook sterk van de ene periode tot de andere. Tijdens de naoorlogse wederopbouw, afgerond met de afhandeling van de Koningskwestie, telde men acht regeringen in zes jaar tijd (1944-1950). In de daaropvolgende periode (1950-1968) waren regeringen relatief stabiel (acht in achtien jaar). De splitsing van de traditionele partijen, de intrede van regionalistische partijen in de regering en het toenemende belang van de communautaire spanningen leidden opnieuw tot grote instabiliteit met dertien regeringen in evenveel jaar (1968-1981). De belangrijke toename in stabiliteit tussen 1981 en 2007 (amper 7 regeringen in 26 jaar)¹⁵ is echter niet het gevolg van het wegdeemsteren van (communautaire) conflicten, maar eerder van een verdere toename van de complexiteit van het onderhandelingsproces. Door de groeiende polarisatie tussen Vlaamse en Franstalige partijen op de communautaire breuklijn wordt het vinden van een oplossing zo moeilijk dat regeringspartijen minder happig zijn om een regeringscrisis uit te lokken, vaak omdat er ook geen echt leefbaar alternatief is voor de zittende regering.

15 Met uitzondering van de regering-Martens VII (1991), die een kortstondige poging was om de vorige regering voort te zetten zonder de uitgetreden VU.

Ten slotte heeft de ontsporing van de overheidsschuld tot Europese recordhoogtes,¹⁶ aangewakkerd door regeringsinstabiliteit over de communautaire problemen in de jaren 1970 en begin jaren 1980, de politieke elites ervan overtuigd dat regeringsstabiliteit een absolute voorwaarde is om diepe budgettaire crisissen en economisch herstel aan te pakken. Vandaar de hoge stabiliteit tussen 1981 en 2007. Tegelijk wijst de hoge instabiliteit tussen de verkiezingen van 2007 en 2010 (vier regeringen) uit dat het bewustzijn van de nood aan een stabiele regering ook maar relatief is...

Dodelijke conflicten

Bijna twee derde van de coalitieregeringen werden ontbonden naar aanleiding van beleidsconflicten tussen de coalitiepartners. Bij de meeste ontslagen waren CVP en PS de stokebranden; beide waren de sterkste partij in hun taalgemeenschap en maakten de meeste kans maken om ook in de volgende regering te zetelen. Driemaal lag een intern partijconflict, steeds binnen de CVP, aan de grond van een ontslag. Slechts driemaal was het parlement – op zijn minst indirect – betrokken bij de val van een regering. Als we concrete oorzaken van de val van regeringen bekijken, blijkt dat sinds 1961 geen enkele regering ontslag nam ten gevolge van de druk van de publieke opinie of internationale crisissen. Belgische coalitieregeringen blijken dus eerder immuun voor 'externe schokken'. De voornaamste oorzaak van regeringsafbreken zijn communautaire kwesties, gevolgd door economische conflicten.

De stijgende tol van regeringsdeelname

Sinds 1973 impliceert het toetreden tot een coalitieregering het sluiten van beleidscompromissen tussen drie tot zes partijen. Coalitiepartijen moeten dus heel wat concessies doen ten opzichte van hun verkiezingsprogramma. Deze onvermijdelijke toegeeflijkheid stelt uiteraard heel wat kiezers en militanten teleur. Deelname aan een regering wordt daarom meestal betaald met een nederlaag in de daaropvolgende verkiezingen. Slechts vier coalities haalden globaal (alle partners opgeteld) een beter resultaat dan bij de vorige verkiezingen (de laatste was Verhofstadt I). Het gemiddelde verlies per regeringspartij bedraagt

16 In 1993 liep de openbare schuld op tot 139% van het bnp, de terugbetalingskost steeg tot 44% van de jaarlijkse overheidsbegroting.

1,2% en gaat in stijgende lijn. Van geen enkele regering boekten alle coalitiepartners tegelijk winst bij de volgende verkiezingen.

De toenemende electorale tol voor regeringspartijen is niet uniek voor de Belgische situatie waarbij een groeiende hoeveelheid regeringspartijen een overloos aantal compromissen moet slikken. Ook in andere landen, waar regeringen uit slechts twee of drie coalitiepartners bestaan, stijgen de electorale sancties. Dit heeft in eerste plaats te maken met het feit dat de manoeuvreerruimte van de nationale regeringen steeds meer wordt ingeperkt door directieven van de EU, het IMF, de internationale markten en de creditratingbureaus. Toch blijven partijen de kiezer de hemel op aarde beloven, een hemel die ze niet kunnen waarmaken, zelfs al behaalden zij de absolute meerderheid en hoefden ze dus geen waterige compromissen met andere partijen te sluiten.

Besluit: naar een federale of confederale regering?

De nieuwe regering heeft om daadwerkelijk te regeren. Zo duurde de vorming van de regering-Di Rupo – op één dag na – even lang als de gemiddelde levensduur van een naoorlogse regering (542 dagen). Anderzijds stelt het België bloot aan externe factoren. Bij de vorming van Letermé I en Di Rupo I is België weliswaar ontsnapt aan sancties door de internationale markten en instellingen (IMF en EU), maar dat biedt geen garantie dat het niet zal gebeuren bij een volgende formatiecrisis, zeker als het voortbestaan van het land opnieuw in vraag wordt gesteld.

Wat het effect zal zijn van het opnieuw samenvallen van federale en regionale verkiezingen in mei 2014, is koffiedik kijken. Men kan verwachten dat de partijen vanuit hun streven naar machtsmaximalisering opnieuw ‘alles aan alles’ zullen trachten te koppelen om zo op alle niveaus in de regering te zitten. Maar ze kunnen er ook voor kiezen om eerst hun schaapjes op het droge te brengen op het regionale niveau, waar de vorming van een regering veel sneller kan verlopen wegens het geringere aantal partijen en breuklijnen, én wegens het nieuwbakken pakket aan uitgebreide bevoegdheden.

Eens de deelstaatregeringen gevormd, is het bovendien moeilijk om de formules nog open te breken, zelfs al zou een andere coalitie

op federaal niveau haalbaar en wenselijk zijn. Uiteindelijk zouden bepaalde partijen die op regionaal vlak uit de boot vallen, zich dus genoodzaakt kunnen voelen om op federaal vlak in een asymmetrische coalitie te stappen. Een ‘confederale’ federale regering, als het ware, zonder programmatische samenhang, niet in staat om de uitstaande sociaaleconomische uitdagingen bij de horens te vatten... Wat De Wever een *quod-erat-demonstrandum*-troef zou opleveren in zijn discours over de onwerkbaarheid van het Belgische federalisme.

De hamvraag blijft in welke mate N-VA *incontournable* wordt bij de ‘moeder van alle verkiezingen’ van 25 mei 2014. Indien de huidige regeringspartijen een werkbare meerderheid behouden op federaal en regionaal niveau, zullen zij geneigd zijn om verder te regeren, al dan niet met een andere eerste minister of minister-president. Als bovendien in Vlaanderen op de een of andere manier ook nog N-VA buiten-spel kan worden gezet, ligt de weg open naar een regeringsformule met horizontale en verticale symmetrische coalities, die minder conflictgevoelig zijn. Bovendien zou het opsluiten van N-VA in de oppositie, voor vijf lange jaren op federaal én Vlaams niveau, de partij een fatale mokerslag kunnen toedienen. Het charisma van De Wever, de enige echte sterkhouder van N-VA, is immers niet eeuwig houdbaar...

Tegelijk is een centrumrechtse sociaaleconomische herstelregering met N-VA, en dus zonder de vermaleidigde ps, een zeer aantrekkelijke optie voor liberalen en christendemocraten. Alleen staat elke Franstalige partij huiverig tegenover het scenario om met N-VA als sterkste regeringspartij in zee te gaan, zelfs als deze bereid is om haar confederale eisen *on hold* te zetten en genoegen te nemen met een A4'tje met enkele confederale beloften van de partners. Maar ook voor Open vld en CD&V houdt het leiderschap van N-VA een groot risico in. Het kartel met CD&V heeft N-VA immers grootgemaakt, terwijl de christendemocraten allicht hadden gehoopt dat N-VA op termijn in hun partij zou ‘opgaan’. De liberalen lopen van hun kant het risico om verder electoraal te worden leeggevreten door N-VA.

Het ‘koekoeksjong’ De Wever en zijn luitenanten voor vijf jaar op droog zaad zetten is voor de meeste partijen een natte droom, voor N-VA een worstcasescenario. Veel meer dan bij vorige verkiezingen zal de kiezer beslissen, althans in eerste instantie, niet alleen over de samenstelling en het beleid van de federale en regionale regeringen, maar

vooral over de toekomst van dit land en zijn deelstaten. Toch zullen de partijvoorzitters met hun interpretatie van de uitslag het laatste woord hebben...

Legende

De regeringspartijen zijn in vet weergegeven. Bij de weigerende verkiezingen van 1971, 1978, 1987, 1991 en 2010 werd de regering pas gevormd in 1972, 1979, 1988, 1992 en 2011.

(a) Van 1973 tot 1979 kwam de Brusselse afdeling van de Franstalige liberalen op als onafhankelijke partij onder de naam Parti Libéral Démocrate et Pluraliste. Haar parlementsleden (3 in 1974, 2 in 1977 en 1 in 1978 in elke kamer) hebben in deze periode de regering niet gesteund, ondanks de regeringsdeelnamen van de Vlaamse en Waalse liberalen tussen 1974-1977. Toen de PRL werd opgericht in mei 1979, vervoegden zij hun Waalse collega's.

In 1992 werden 3 Kamerleden van ROSSEM verkozen, in 2007 5 van Lijst Dedeker. In 2010 werd 1 Kamerlid verkozen voor Lijst Dedeker en 1 voor de Parti Populaire (die als onafhankelijke zetel sinds zijn uitsluiting van die partij in januari 2011).

(b) Tot september 2011 maakte FDF deel uit van de alliantie MR (PRL-FDF, opgericht in 1993, nadien PRL-FDF-MCC). Na de verkiezingen van 2010 telde MR dus 18 Kamerleden. Maar sinds september 2011 – op het einde van de vorming van de regering-Di Rupo – zijn dat er slechts 15 meer.

(c) Wat 2007 betreft, gaat het om N-VA in kartel met CD&V. In september 2008 werd het kartel echter opgeblazen. De meerderheid die de regering-Leterme I steunde, verloor daarmee de steun van 5 Kamerleden (van 101 tot 96). Deze meerderheid bleef behouden onder de regering-Van Rompuy en de regering-Leterme II.

(d) Het betreft het effectief aantal partijen na de verkiezingen van 2010, toen FDF nog deel uitmaakte van MR. Zoals in de legislatuur 2007-2010 (met de splitsing van het kartel CD&V/N-VA) veranderde het effectief aantal partijen in de Kamer dus tijdens de legislatuur.

1992	DF	0	35	26	10	7	0	3	18	39	10	20	26	0	1	12	3	8,4	120	212
1995	DF	0	21	20	6	5	5	0	12	29	5	18	23	0	2	11	6,1	82	150	
1999	DF	0	19	14	11	9	0	0	12	22	8	18	25	0	1	15	9,1	94	150	
2003	DF	0	25	23	4	0	0	0	10	21	1	24	25	0	1	18	7,0	97	150	
2007	0	0	28	14	8	4	0	0	18	30(c)	0(c)	23	18	0	1	17	7,9	101	150	
2008	F	20	20	13	13	8	0	0	10	25(c)	5(c)	23	18	0	0	0	9,6	96	150	
2011	D	0	40	32	3	6	0	3	19	43	16	23	25	0	2	0	7,2	150	212	

JARA	POST-ELECTORALE (D)	PRE-ELECTORALE (F)	PCB/PPB	PSB/BSP	E	R	NW	FDF	PSC/CVP	VU	PLP/PPV	YLD	UORT	FN	VB	ANDERE (B)	EFFECTIEF AANTAL PARTIJEN	ANDERE MEERDERHEID	TOTAAL KAMERZETELS
1946	D	23	69	92												17	2,9	69	202
1946																			
1947	F	49	92																109
1949	DF	12	66	105	29												2,8	134	212
1950	DF	7	77	108	20												2,5	108	212
1954	DF	4	86	95	1											1	2,6	111	212
1958	D	2	84	104	1												2,5	104	212
1958	F			104	21													125	212
1961	DF	5	84	96	5											2	2,7	180	212
1965	D	6	64	77	48													141	212
1968	F			77	48													125	212
1968	DF	5	59	58	47												5,0	128	212
1972	D	5	61	20	14												5,9	128	212
1973	F			20	14													142	212
1974	D	4	59	22	9											3	5,8	102	212
1974	F			22	9													115	212
1977	DF	2	62	24	58	20	14	17								2	5,2	172	212
1979	D	4	32	26	11	4	14	22	1						1	1	6,8	151	212
1980				32	26													140	212
1980	F			32	26													140	212
1980				32	26													177	212
1981	DF	2	35	26	2	2	2	20	24	28	3				1	1	7,7	113	212
1985	DF	0	35	32	5	4	0	3	20	49	16	24	22	1	1	1	7,0	115	212
1988	D	0	40	32	3	6	0	3	19	43	16	23	25	0	2	0	7,2	150	212
1991	F			40	32													134	212

Tabel 1: Resultaten Kamerverkiezingen en regeringsparticipatie 1945-2011

Tabel 2:
De vorming van Belgische regeringen 1945-2014: formatiejaar en mislukte pogingen

REGERING	ANTAL PARTIJEN IN DE KAMER	ANTAL MISLUKTE POGINGEN	PARTIJEN BETROKKEN BIJ MISLUKTE POGINGEN	FORMATIEJAAR
PSB/BSF 1946 1	5	2	(1) PSC/CVP-PSB/BSF-PLP/PVV (2) PSB/BSF-PLP/PVV-PCB/KPB	23
PSB/BSF-PLP/PVV-PCB/KPB 1946 2	5	0		11
PSB/BSF-PLP/PVV-PCB/KPB 1946 3	5	2	(1) PSB/BSF-PLP/PVV-PCB/KPB (2) PSB/BSF-PSF/CVP	25
PSC/CVP-PSB/BSF 1947	5	1	PSB/BSF-PSF/CVP-PLP/PVV-PCB/KPB	7
PSC/CVP-PSB/BSF 1948	5	2	(1) PSB/BSF-PSF/CVP (2) PSC/CVP-PSB/BSF	7
PSC/CVP-PLP/PVV 1949	4	3	(1) PSC/CVP-PSB/BSF-PLP/PVV (2) PSC/CVP-PSB/BSF-PLP/PVV (3) PSC/CVP-PSB/BSF-PLP/PVV	45
PSC/CVP 1950	4	0		1
PSC/CVP 1950	4	0		5
PSC/CVP 1952	4	1	PSC/CVP	6
PSB/BSF-PLP/PVV 1954	6	0		10
PSC/CVP 1958 1	5	1	PSC/CVP-PSB/BSF-PLP/PVV	21
PSC/CVP-PLP/PVV 1958 2	5	0		2
PSC/CVP-PSB/BSF 1961	6	0		29
PSC/CVP-PSB/BSF 1965	7	2	(1) PSC/CVP-PSB/BSF-PLP/PVV (2) PSC/CVP-PSB/BSF-PLP/PVV	64
PSC/CVP-PLP/PVV 1966	7	3	(1) PSB/BSF-PSF/CVP-PLP/PVV (2) PSC/CVP-PSB/BSF (3) PSC/CVP-PSB/BSF-PLP/PVV	36
CVP-PSB/BSF 1968	8	4	(1) CVP-PSB/BSF-PSB/BSF (2) PSB/BSF-CVP-PSC (3) PSC-CVP-PLP/PVV-PSB/BSF (4) PSC-CVP-PSB/BSF	77
CVP-PSB/BSF 1972	9	2	(1) CVP-PSB/BSF (2) PSB/BSF-CVP-PSC	74
PSB/BSF-CVP-PSB-PLP 1973	9	1	CVP-PSB/BSF-PSB-PLP	64
CVP-PSB-PLP/RW 1974 2	9	1	CVP-PSB-PLP/RW-VU-FDF	1
CVP-PSB-PLP/RW 1977 1	9	0		2
CVP-PSB/BSF-VU-FDF 1977 2	9	1	CVP-PSB/BSF-PLP/PVV	46
PSC-CVP-PSB/BSF-VU-FDF 1978	12	0		9
CVP-PSB-SP-FDF 1979	12	11	(1) SP-PS-CVP-PSC (2) CVP-PSB-SP (3) CVP-PSB-SP-VU-FDF (4) CVP-PSB-SP (5) CVP-PSB-SP-VU-FDF (6) PSC-CVP-PS-SP-VU-FDF (7) PSC-CVP-PS-SP-VU-FDF (8) PSC-CVP-PS-SP (9) PSC-CVP-PS-SP-VU-FDF-PLP-VU-FDF (10) PSC-CVP-PS-SP-VU-FDF (11) PSC-CVP-PS-SP-VU-FDF	106

CVP-PSB-SP 1980 1	12	0		7
CVP-PSB-SP-PS-PLP-PLP 1980 2	12	1	SP-PS-CVP-PSB-PLP-PLP	39
CVP-PSB-SP 1980 3	12	0		15
CVP-PSB-SP 1981 1	12	0		4
CVP-PSB-PLP/PVV-PLP/PVV 1981 2	14	3	(1) VLD-PLP/PVV-PS-SP (2) PSC-CVP-PSB-PLP/PVV	39
CVP-PSB-PLP/PVV 1985	12	0		45
CVP-PSB-PLP/PVV 1987	12	0		2
CVP-PSB-PS-SP-VU 1988	11	3	(1) PS-SP-CVP-PSC (2) SP-PS-CVP-PSC	148
CVP-PSB-PS-SP 1991	11	0		0
CVP-PSB-PS-SP 1992	13	3	(1) VLD-PLP/PVV-PS-SP-VU-E-A (2) PSC-CVP-PS-SP (3) CVP-PSB-PLP/PVV-PS-SP	103
CVP-PSB-PS-SP 1995	11	0		33
VLD-PLP/PVV-PS-SP-E-A 1999	11	1	PLP-VLD-PS-SP-E-A	29
VLD-PS-SP-A 2003	10	1	PS-SP-A-VLD-RR	52
VLD-RR-CDHV/NV-A-CDH-PS 2007	12	3	CDHV/NV-A-CDH-VLD-RR CDHV/NV-A-CDH-VLD-RR VLD-RR-CDHV/NV-A-CDH-PS	194
CDHV-CDH-VLD-RR-PS 2008 1	12	0		0
CDHV-CDH-VLD-RR-PS 2008 2	12	0		8
CDHV-CDH-VLD-RR-PS 2008 3	12	0		6
CDHV-CDH-VLD-RR-PS-SP-A 2011	12	6	PS-SP-A-NV-A-CDHV-CDH-E-A NV-A-PS-SP-A-CDHV-CDH-E-A SP-A-PS-NV-A-CDHV-CDH-E-A SP-A-PS-NV-A-CDHV-CDH-E-A PS-SP-A-NV-A-CDHV-CDH-VLD-RR-E-A PS-SP-A-CDHV-CDH-VLD-RR-E-A	541

Tabel 3:
Naoitlogse Belgische regeringen

EEERSTE MEMISTEN	OMTOM EEDORFLEEGING	OMTOM ONTSLAG	POTENTIELE MAXIMALE DOOR	EFFECTIEVE DOOR	PARTIJSAMENSTELLING	
1	Spaak	13-03-46	20-03-46	1.495	7	PSB/BSB
2	Van Rcker III	31-03-46	09-07-46	1.477	100	PSB/BSB-PLP/PVV-PCB/KPB
3	Muyssens	03-08-46	13-03-47	1.352	222	PSB/BSB-PLP/PVV-PCB/KPB
4	Spaak II	20-03-47	19-11-48	1123	610	PSB/BSB-PSB/CVP
5	Spaak III	26-11-48	27-06-49	506	213	PSB/BSB-PSB/CVP
6	Eyskens	11-08-49	18-03-50	1.473	219	PSB/CVP-PLP/PVV
7	Duvieusert	08-06-50	11-08-50	1515	64	PSB/CVP
8	Phalieu	16-08-50	09-01-52	1.446	511	PSB/CVP
9	Van Rutte	15-01-52	12-04-54	929	818	PSB/CVP
10	Van Rcker IV	22-04-54	02-06-58	1.508	1.502	PSB/BSB-PLP/PVV
11	Eyskens II	23-06-58	04-11-58	1.497	134	PSB/CVP
12	Eyskens III	06-11-58	27-03-61	1.361	872	PSB/CVP-PLP/PVV
13	Lefèvre	25-04-61	24-05-65	1.489	1.498	PSB/CVP-PSB/BSB
14	Harwel	27-07-65	11-02-66	1.454	199	PSB/CVP-PSB/BSB
15	Vanden Boeynants I	19-03-66	07-02-68	1.219	690	PSB/CVP-PLP/PVV
16	Eyskens IV	17-06-68	08-11-71	1.368	1.239	CVP-PSB-PSB/BSB
17	Eyskens V	21-01-72	23-11-72	1.444	307	CVP-PSB-PSB/BSB
18	Leburton	26-01-73	19-01-74	1.073	358	PSB/BSB-CVP-PSB-VLD-PRL
19	Tindemans I	25-04-74	11-06-74	1.473	47	CVP-PSB-VLD-PRL
20	Tindemans II	11-06-74	04-03-77	1.426	997	CVP-PSB-VLD-PRL-RW
21	Tindemans III	06-03-77	18-04-77	427	43	CVP-PSB-VLD-PRL
22	Tindemans IV	03-06-77	11-10-78	1.472	495	CVP-PSB-PSB/BSB-FDF-VU
23	Vanden Boeynants II	20-10-78	18-12-78	948	59	PSB-CVP-PSB/BSB-FDF-VU
24	Martens I	03-04-79	16-01-80	1.412	288	CVP-PSB-PS-FDF
25	Martens II	23-01-80	09-04-80	1.117	77	CVP-PSB-PS-SP
26	Martens III	18-05-80	07-10-80	1.001	142	CVP-PSB-PS-SP-VLD-PRL
27	Martens IV	22-10-80	02-04-81	854	162	CVP-PSB-PS-SP
28	H. Eyskens	06-04-81	21-09-81	690	166	CVP-PSB-PS-SP
29	Martens V	17-12-81	14-10-85	1.432	1.397	CVP-PSB-VLD-PRL
30	Martens VI	28-11-85	19-10-87	1.473	690	CVP-PSB-VLD-PRL
31	Martens VII	21-10-87	14-12-87	781	54	CVP-PSB-VLD-PRL
32	Martens VIII	09-05-88	29-09-91	1.371	1.238	CVP-PSB-PS-SP-VU
33	Martens IX	29-09-91	25-11-91	133	57	CVP-PSB-PS-SP
34	Dehaene I	07-03-92	21-05-95	1.415	1.170	CVP-PSB-PS-SP
35	Dehaene II	23-06-95	13-06-99	1.486	1.451	CVP-PSB-PS-SP
36	Verhofstadt	12-07-99	19-05-03	1.490	1.407	VLD-HR-PS-SP-E-R
37	Verhofstadt II	12-07-03	11-06-07	1.467	1.484	VLD-HR-PS-SP-R
38	Verhofstadt III	21-12-07	20-03-08	1.325	90	CDRB-VLD-HR-PS-CDH
39	Letenne I	20-03-08	30-12-08	1.235	285	CDRB-VLD-HR-PS-CDH
40	Van Rompuy	30-12-08	25-11-08	950	340	CDRB-VLD-HR-PS-CDH
41	Letenne II (Letenne III)	25-11-08 (14-6-2011)	13-6-2010 (6-12-2011)	610 --	565 (541)	CDRB-VLD-HR-PS-CDH CDRB-VLD-HR-PS-CDH
42	Di Rupo	6-12-2011	25-5-2014	978	--	CDRB-VLD-HR-PS-CDH-SF-R
GEWIDDELE DOOR (41 REGERINGEN)					542	

10 From puzzles to prospects for coalition theory

Rudy B. Andeweg

analysis into a case study. The authors of the case studies painstakingly reconstructed the formation of the 'deviant' coalitions, using secondary sources, but also interviews with key actors, and in some cases even minutes of internal party meetings. Each case study explained why it is puzzling, confronting the particular coalition formation with the most likely explanations drawn from the literature, before going on to determine the most likely causes of the deviation from theoretical expectations. As there are seven chapters devoted to a total of 12 formations, obviously we cannot generalize. Our aim is more modest. If our puzzles can only be accounted for by highly idiosyncratic factors or exceptional circumstances, the challenge to existing coalition theory is minimal. After all, these are not deterministic but probabilistic theories, and some random 'noise' is to be expected. If, on the other hand, potential causes can be identified that, in principle, can be generalized, we can draw lessons from our puzzles, and either incorporate complementary factors into existing theories, or even replace those theories, depending on whether these potential causes can be fitted into the dominant rational-choice paradigm or not.

Puzzles

From the beginning, the notion that minimal winning coalitions should form has dominated the literature (see the Introduction to this book). Even when the emphasis shifted away from policy-blind theories, many new models kept this criterion. Yet, of the 176 government formations in the quantitative analysis discussed in the introductory chapter, only 69 (39 per cent) resulted in a minimal winning coalition. This figure is similar to the one mentioned in an earlier study by Laver and Schofield: 'the best policy blind theory, minimal winning theory, is more often wrong than right about which coalition will form (making correct predictions in about 40 per cent of all situations in which no party has a legislative majority' (Laver and Schofield 1990: 96). Like Laver and Schofield we included only government formations in cases where no single party controlled a majority of the seats in parliament. If such a single majority party nevertheless went into opposition or formed a coalition with other parties, that would also be puzzling, but outside the purview of this book. However, if we had included all governments formed (regardless of whether the elections resulted in a single party majority or not) the figures would not be much kinder to classical coalition theory. Gallagher *et al.* (2006: 401) report that less than half (46 per cent) of 518 governments formed after democratic elections in Western and Eastern Europe between 1945 and 2003 were minimal winning (single party or coalition). Similarly, Mitchell and Nyblade (2008: 207) calculate that only 44 per cent of 406 governments formed between 1945 and 1999 in 17 West European countries can be classified as minimal winning (whether single party or coalition).

Minority governments clearly present a puzzle from this perspective, although some advances have been made in isolating institutional and political factors that increase the probability of the formation of an 'undersized' government (e.g. Strøm 1990). Of the 176 government formations analysed in the introductory

Introduction

When it comes to the formation of governing coalitions, the state of the discipline is not particularly encouraging for three reasons. (1) Coalition theory has focused more on predicting the outcome of coalition formation than on understanding the process. In particular, the differences between purely office-seeking theories, purely policy-seeking theories, and theories assuming that parties are both in equal measure move the explanation to the preferences of the actors. Rational-choice based theories are either silent on the question of preferences, or answer the question by assumption, thus leaving a black box, or a black hole, in our understanding of coalition formation. (2) It is rare for existing coalition theories to arrive at a unique prediction. Usually, several potential coalitions meet the criteria of a theory, and the theory apparently leaves it to fate which of these coalitions eventually forms. (3) Even then, the combined range of coalition theories only accounts for about half of all governments formed in recent decades (Martin and Stevenson 2001). It is this last problem that has formed the focus of this book. Our case studies are not about government formations that were within the set of predicted coalitions, but nevertheless hard to understand. Neither are they about the emergence of the 'winner' from a set of equiprobable potential coalitions. The 'coalition puzzles' selected for this volume deal with the hardest cases: the formation of governing coalitions that seemingly defy theory. The 'usual suspects' from classical coalition theory were lined up and confronted with the outcome of 176 government formations following parliamentary elections in which no party won a majority of seats in Western Europe between 1970 and 2005. The results of that analysis very much confirm the conclusions drawn from similar studies in the recent literature, but replication was not our primary aim. Instead, these results form the baseline for the selection of government formations the outcome of which was least likely from the perspective of classical coalition theory.

This volume dealt with these selected puzzles not by designing alternative formal models, nor by quantitative analysis of the residuals. Instead, we deliberately aimed for a mixed methods design involving a qualitative, inductive approach, turning each individual puzzle selected by way of a quantitative

chapter, 66 (38 per cent) resulted in minority government, almost as many as the number of minimal winning coalitions. Laver and Schofield (1990: 70) report 37 per cent minority governments in situations without a majority party. If we also include situations in which a single party did emerge from the elections with a parliamentary majority, the percentage of undersized governments is 28 per cent in the dataset of Gallagher *et al.* (2006: 401) and 35 per cent in the dataset used by Mitchell and Nyblade (2008: 207).

'Oversized' or surplus-majority coalitions deviate in the opposite direction; they are puzzling because they include political parties that are not necessary to obtain a majority in parliament. Compared with minority governments, even less is known about oversized coalitions (see for instance Carruba and Volden 2004). Such coalitions make up over 23 per cent of the coalitions in our dataset, and 24 per cent in the set of minority situations analysed by Laver and Schofield (1990: 70). Including government formations that follow elections that produced a majority party sets the occurrence of oversized coalitions at 22 per cent (Mitchell and Nyblade 2008: 207) or 26 per cent (Gallagher *et al.* 2006: 401).

These figures are robust in the sense that different collections of countries, different time periods, and even the inclusion of majority situations do not significantly alter the pattern observed. The figures indicate that oversized and oversized governments may be theoretical deviations, but they are far from empirical exceptions. Our case studies deal with these two puzzles: minority governments in Norway, Sweden and Spain – countries in which such governments are formed frequently – and Austria, a country that experienced only one minority government; and surplus-majority coalitions in Belgium and The Netherlands where such governments have taken office regularly, and in Finland, where about half of the governments have been oversized.

In the second-generation coalition theories, political parties were assumed to care about policy as well. Here two criteria dominate the literature. First, parties are assumed to govern with their closest neighbour, ideologically speaking, so as to minimize the policy concessions needed to join the coalition. Often, this criterion is operationalized as 'connectedness': when parties are positioned on the dominant ideological dimension, only 'closed' coalitions are formed. Second, the party that contains the median legislator on such a dimension (in shorthand: the median party) is always included in the coalition; after all: by definition, on that ideological dimension no connected majority can be found without the median legislator. In our own dataset, 26 per cent of the governments formed in minority situations were minimum-connected winning coalitions. Laver and Schofield (1990: 100) arrive at a slightly higher figure: 32 per cent. The figures for theories including policy considerations are less robust than for policy-blind theories, as the operationalization of the main ideological dimension, and the ordering of the parties on that dimension, often pose problems of validity and reliability. Including majority situations, Mitchell and Nyblade report 19 per cent minimum connected winning coalitions. If we look only at ideological connectedness, regardless of whether the coalition is undersized or oversized, 36 per cent of post-war West European governments can be characterized as such, but

if we add single-party governments (with or without a majority), the percentage goes up to 73 (Mitchell and Nyblade 2008: 210). The figures for inclusion of the median party in government are more robust. In our dataset on minority situations only, 76 per cent of all governments contained the party controlling the median legislator. Laver and Schofield's estimate is only slightly higher (84 per cent). If we broaden our scope to include majority situations, Mitchell and Nyblade calculate that 78 per cent of all governments include the median party on the most important ideological dimension.

When we confine our analysis to situations in which no single party commands a parliamentary majority, a majority of all governments are 'open' (or 'unconnected'), in the sense that they are not composed of neighbouring parties on the main ideological dimension, although there is less convergence on a specific proportion among various studies. Only the criterion of inclusion of the median party fares better. Nevertheless, more than a fifth of all governments formed are puzzling from the perspective of that prediction. Our cases of 'unconnected' coalitions come from Finland and the Netherlands. Two case studies look at coalitions that do not contain the median party: a minority government in Sweden and a majority government in Belgium. We might add the cases from the Netherlands, where two parties 'shared' the median position in parliament.

So far, our puzzles deal with the partisan composition of governments. One of our cases, from Norway, looks at the distribution of ministerial positions within the government. The expectation in the literature is that ministerial positions are distributed to the parties in the coalition in proportion to their contribution to the government's parliamentary majority. The index of disproportionality for 260 post-war West European coalitions is very low (0.1), regardless of whether the position of Prime Minister is given extra weight or not (Verzichelli 2008: 246). Proportional allocation of ministerial positions is observed so often that it is known as 'Gamson's Law' (after Gamson 1961). However, from a rational-choice perspective, Gamson's Law is actually puzzling in itself: one would expect portfolio allocation to be disproportional, with the proportion of ministerial positions varying according to a party's bargaining power rather than its size. For that reason, Verzichelli refers to it as 'the proportionality norm' (Verzichelli 2008: 238). Nevertheless, given the empirical regularity found, the deviation from the norm or law found in the Norwegian case is striking.

Solutions

Undersized government

A minority government can be defined as a government that is composed of one or more parties that together do not have a majority of the seats in parliament. Hence, such a government has to forge potentially different ad hoc majority coalitions for each of its policy propositions. However, both the Norwegian and Swedish cases make clear that the composition of the government is an imprecise concept. We need to differentiate between the composition of the cabinet and the composition

Table 10.1 Cases and coalition puzzles: an overview

Country/government	Coalition puzzle				
	Undersized	Oversized	Ideologically unconnected	Lacking median party	Disproportional allocation of portfolios
Austria/Kreisky I, 1970	X				
Belgium/Verhofstadt II, 1999		X	X	X	
Finland/Lipponen I, 1995		X	X		
The Netherlands/Kok I, 1994; Kok II, 1998		X	XX		
Norway/Bondevik II, 2001	X				X
Spain/Gonzales IV, 1993; Aznar I, 1996; Zapatero I, 2004, Zapatero II, 2008	XXXX				
Sweden/Persson II, 1998; Persson III, 2002	XX			X	

of the parliamentary coalition supporting the cabinet. When both are undersized, we have an ideal-type minority government. Narud and Strøm point out that most of Norway's minority governments actually conform to that ideal type. Apart from the 1981–1983 Willoch I cabinet, 'no Norwegian cabinet had had any formal agreement with the opposition. [...] Also [t] here had been no deals in which opposition parties had secured important parliamentary offices against promises to support the government or at least keep it afloat'. Our Norwegian case, the formation of Bondevik II, broke with that tradition by entering into negotiations with the populist Progress Party. In exchange for supporting the government for at least one year (which became an unprecedented entire term of office), the Progress Party received the chairs of two important parliamentary positions, and satisfactory answers to 54 policy questions it put to the coalition in the making. In Sweden, the combination of minority cabinet with a parliamentary majority has occurred so frequently that it was given its own label: 'contract parliamentarism' (Bale and Bergman 2006). The Swedish cases in this book, the formation of Persson II and Persson III, both deal with such situations. As Aylott and Bergman explain in their contribution to this volume, in 1998, Persson II was supported by the Greens and by the Left Party without ministers from these parties in the cabinet, but this agreement was still limited to five specific policy areas. Four years later, however, these same parties agreed to provide parliamentary support for at least two years to the minority Social Democratic cabinet in return for a detailed 121-point policy agreement from which only foreign policy (including defence, EU, security) issues were exempted, plus 'coordination offices' in the Ministry of Finance, each staffed by three party members, plus Green and Left political advisors in some other government departments, plus regular meetings for consultation between the parties in the parliamentary majority coalition. The Austrian case – the formation of the Kreisky I minority government – comes closer to a truly undersized government, but even here we find traces of 'contract parliamentarism' in the promise of electoral reform that Social Democratic leader Kreisky made after the elections to the Freedom Party. Müller argues in his case study that the Freedom Party must have realized that a Social Democratic minority government was their only hope to achieve that reform and eventually the party 'announced that it would be willing to support an SPÖ minority government, provided that its policy proposals were acceptable'. The evidence from the Spanish minority governments discussed by Reniu also shows the importance of distinguishing governmental and parliamentary minorities. Before 2008, all Socialist and Conservative minority governments survived their parliamentary investiture with a majority, because they received the support of one or more smaller regional parties. Such support was given in exchange for concessions, in 1993 and 1996 even written down in formal agreements. Only the formation of the Zapatero II minority government in 2008 seems to have been concluded without indications of support from other parties: it was the first time that the investiture vote was won on a plurality rather than a majority.

As mentioned before, our sample of cases does not allow us to generalize and conclude that truly undersized minorities are a rarity. According to Strøm (1990) just over 10 per cent of the minority governments that he looked at had

structural majority support in parliament. On the other hand, Bale and Bergman (2006) recently suggested a trend in this direction. What is clear, however, is that not all minority governments are based on minority coalitions. For coalition theory this implies that we should not assume a priori that the correlates of truly undersized governments are identical to those of quasi-undersized governments. The standard explanation for truly undersized governments is a combination of institutional arrangements that allow opposition parties to influence policy (e.g. strong parliamentary committees) and circumstances that increase the electoral risks of government participation for some potential governing parties. Assuming unchanged institutions, quasi-undersized governments raise the question why some parties join the coalition without joining the government. One answer could be that such an agreement gives a support party additional influence over policy without increasing the electoral risks (already suggested by Strøm 1990). In Austria, the Freedom Party may have calculated that any electoral punishment for having allowed a 'Red Chancellor' would be offset by the electoral benefits of the electoral reform that they received in exchange for their support. As soon as that reform was implemented, the arrangement ended and early elections were called. However, the best example of such strategic calculation is Spain. The party forming the minority government is a national party, whereas the support parties are predominantly regional parties. The support parties extract policy concessions from the minority government (or support for their own regional government) while their electoral risks (and opportunities) are concentrated on the regional level. However, multi-level government may not always protect regional support parties against electoral punishment for having supported the national government: in the 2008 national elections the regional parties that had supported the government lost heavily, and as a result, were unwilling to renew a formal support agreement.

Another explanation is that the support parties actually prefer to join the government, but are kept out without having alternative options. In 2002, for example, the Swedish Greens announced that they wanted to join the government and talked with both the bourgeois parties and with the Social Democrats, but they were snubbed by the Social Democrats, who calculated (correctly) that the Greens had become a leftist party and would not dare to take the electoral risk of actually joining a right-wing government. Given such a weak bargaining position, the Greens had no option but to settle for a renewed support role in return for policy concessions.

Finally, the outcome can sometimes be explained by differential bargaining skills. In Austria, the Christian Democrats overestimated their bargaining position and never seriously considered the possibility of a Socialist minority government, while the Socialist leader Kreisky showed, in Müller's words, 'all the skills that have made him the most successful Austrian politician in the post-war period'. Narud and Strøm likewise conclude that, after the Norwegian elections of 2001, 'shrewd political veterans like Kjell Magne Bondevik and Carl I. Hagen manoeuvred more skilfully than the less experienced Conservative leaders'.

Oversized government

If a governmental coalition contains one or more parties that are not needed for a parliamentary majority, the government is regarded as oversized (or surplus-majority). The assumption is that a majority of 50 per cent plus one always suffices. If the situation or the parties' ambitions require legislation for which a qualified majority is needed (e.g. for changing the constitution), a seemingly oversized coalition may actually be a minimum-winning coalition. Potentially, this could help account for the occurrence of oversized coalitions in Belgium, where constitutional reform regularly features on the political agenda, but Dumont shows that this offers no explanation for the 1999 formation of the Rainbow coalition: state reform was deliberately kept off the agenda, and the government's oversized parliamentary majority would not have been sufficient for the required qualified majority anyway. In the past, the need for qualified majorities could also help explain the high frequency of oversized coalitions in Finland, but such provisions were mostly abolished at the time the Rainbow coalition was formed. In the Dutch case too, the surplus majority government was truly oversized. Other usual explanations for oversized coalitions do not seem to apply either. There are, for example, no indications in our cases that fear of fractionalized or undisciplined governing parties prompted them to invite a supermajority party to provide a safety margin.

Jungar points out that the puzzle of oversized government implies two questions: why are so many parties willing to join a government in which they are not needed, and why are they invited? The eagerness to join the government stands in contrast to the coalition avoidance that is often cited as an explanation of undersized government. In her account of the 1995 formation of the Finnish Rainbow coalition, Jungar points to an institutional difference: if the institutional arrangements maximize the difference in policy influence between being in opposition and being in government, government office is more attractive. This played a role in Finland, but for some parties joining an oversized government was also attractive as an opportunity to establish their *Regeringsfähigkeit*. At some point in time, 'new' parties may consider that staying in opposition is not always electorally rewarding and decide that they should seek government participation even if the conditions are not ideal. Interestingly, this also seems to have influenced the Norwegian Progress Party's decision to support a minority cabinet without getting ministerial positions: proving to be *Koalitionsfähig* now in order to be considered *Regeringsfähig* in future. In the Netherlands, the institutions allow for considerable opposition influence over policy, but in 1998 a similar situation nevertheless arose. Constitutional reform was the main prize D66 had extracted from its partners in the previous government, but as it requires a second reading after elections, D66 needed to continue in office as an unnecessary party, in order to prevent its two coalition partners from dropping the proposal.

One answer to Jungar's second question – 'why are unnecessary parties invited?' – is that the inviting parties seek to spread responsibility, 'to mitigate losses in the future vote'. In the Belgian, Dutch and Finnish cases this appears to

have been a major consideration, in particular by including unnecessary parties that are the closest electoral competitor of the inviting parties, a phenomenon referred to as the 'Absalom syndrome' in the Dutch chapter. A second answer is the desire of inviting parties to create a more balanced coalition in terms of policy. This has been a factor in the formation of the Finnish Rainbow coalition, but does not help to account for the formation of the Dutch purple coalition. The Belgian Rainbow coalition provides an interesting combination and variation: the French-speaking Socialists preferred to have the French-speaking Greens in the coalition for policy reasons, but the same demand also came from the Flemish Greens, and their support was needed to obtain a majority within the Flemish linguistic group. The inclusion of the numerically unnecessary Greens therefore owed much to the multi-level nature of Belgian politics.

This example also shows the importance of normative considerations: constitutionally, to have a majority in both linguistic groups in Belgium is not required. Neither is the norm that Belgian coalitions should be symmetrical, that is, including or excluding both the francophone and the Flemish party of a party family. In Finland, an informal rule requires that the left-right balance in parliament should be reflected in the cabinet. That D66 was retained in the second Dutch Purple coalition despite no longer being necessary, is attributed by Andreweg to the norm of fairness or 'do-no-harm' discussed in Van Beest's contribution to this volume.

Unconnected government

The cases from Belgium, Finland, and The Netherlands are also ideologically unconnected, or open. Any such diagnosis is based on the parties' positions on an ideological dimension, but party systems are rarely purely one-dimensional. In the Netherlands, for example, the Purple coalitions were unconnected on the socio-economic left-right dimension, but the three Purple parties were ideological neighbours on the secular-religious dimension. However, in that particular case it is clear that the secular-religious dimension was not as salient as the socio-economic dimension. The Finnish and Belgian Rainbow coalitions are also classified as truly unconnected. Decreasing ideological differences between parties do not seem to have rendered the criterion of ideological connectedness obsolete. Dumont observes decreasing policy distance between the francophone Socialists and Liberals, but not between their Flemish counterparts. Jungar agrees that policy differences have decreased in Finland, but she lists important remaining conflicts about the EMU, budget cuts and taxes, and concludes that a lack of policy differences between the parties cannot account for the unconnectedness of the Rainbow coalition. Only for the Dutch Purple coalition, a study of MPs' policy positions indicates that, in a two-dimensional ideological space, the surface of the triangle between the Purple parties is smaller than that of any alternative three-party coalition.

Normative considerations appear to have played a role, at least in the Belgian and Dutch cases. In both countries the Christian Democrats and the Social

Democrats had suffered heavy losses in the elections preceding the formation of the open coalitions, and in both countries the ideological 'gap' in the coalition is caused by the exclusion of the Christian Democrats. Including both the losing Social Democrats and the losing Christian Democrats was regarded by most actors and commentators as going against the verdict of the voter. The notion that a coalition of losers is more difficult to defend may mimic Westminster systems, where accountability (throwing the rascals out) is more easily achieved. From the perspective of democratic theory, however, it is a questionable norm, as it implies that votes cast for a growing or stable party should weigh more heavily than votes cast for a shrinking party. Moreover, this norm of paying heed to electoral dynamics in coalition formation may also be a rationalization of other concerns. In the Netherlands, for example, *formateur* Kok was privately concerned that the traumatic election results of the long-term plurality Christian Democrats would cause intra-party instability and make the party a less reliable coalition partner. Whatever the reasoning behind this 'norm', it will be interesting to test Dumont's hypothesis that the proportion of losers in a potential coalition negatively affects the probability of that coalition actually forming.

The excluded median party

However, the explanation for the open coalitions in Belgium and the Netherlands is still not complete. After all, both the Social Democrats and the Christian Democrats lost heavily in these countries, and only the Christian Democrats were excluded. Moreover, the Christian Democrats controlled the median legislator in Belgium and shared that position in the Netherlands (the Dutch Lower House has 150 seats; in 1994 and 1998 the borderline between 75 seats counted from the left and 75 seats counted from the right ran between CDA and D66). Exclusion of the Social Democrats rather than the Christian Democrats would have led not only to an ideologically connected coalition, but also to the inclusion of the median party. To explain that choice, both case studies refer to differential bargaining skills, or at least bargaining positions. In Belgium, the leader of the French-speaking Liberals, Michel, had adroitly manoeuvred to increase his party's governing prospects after a long spell in opposition. When a pre-election coalition with the French-speaking Christian Democrats failed, he turned to the other governing party, the Social Democrats, and formed a pre-election pact with them. The plan could still have foundered if the Flemish Christian Democrats had not been in such disarray after their electoral haemorrhage. Although still the largest party, it did not make use of its 'right' to take the lead in the formation of the Flemish coalition. That proved to be a costly mistake as the initiative was then taken by the Flemish Liberals, which facilitated the formation of coalitions without the Christian Democrats in Flanders, in Wallonia, and at the federal level. In the Dutch case the decisive factor that led to the exclusion of the median party was not so much bargaining skills, but the bargaining advantage that Social Democratic leader Kok received when the Queen appointed him, and not a conservative Liberal, as *informateur*.

The Swedish exclusion of the median party, the Greens, and the Spanish exclusion of the Catalan CiU in 1996 are even more puzzling as they concern minority governments. In the case of Spain, however, it may be argued that CiU should be positioned on another dimension (of regionalism v. centralism). In the Swedish case, as we saw above, the policy distance with the parties to the Greens' right was so large that the party's threat to join the bourgeois parties in a coalition if the Social Democrats would not accept them as a full partner was not credible. Their high degree of internal party democracy made policy-seeking considerations more important than office seeking for the Greens, and allowed the Social Democrats to call the Green leaders' bluff.

Disproportional allocation of portfolios

In the 2001 formation of the minority coalition government in Norway, the Conservatives came to the negotiating table as the biggest winners in the elections, providing nearly two-thirds of the governing parties' MPs. Yet, they received only ten of the 19 cabinet posts. The Liberals on the other hand, entered the government with three ministers, having only two MPs. The poor share of the Conservatives cannot be explained by the weight of the ministerial portfolios: the third governing party, the Christian Democrats provided the Prime Minister. The rational-choice rival of Gamson's Law states that ministerial posts should be allocated on the basis of bargaining strength. As a relative policy outlier, the Conservatives had few alternative options, and the Christian People's Party controlled the median legislator. On the other hand, however, the Christian People's Party gave away that advantage when the Social Democrats communicated to them their willingness to break the two-bloc mould of Norwegian politics and they turned them down. Moreover, as the largest party, the Conservatives could take the lead in the bargaining process.

Narud and Strøm offer additional explanations. First, the popularity and the experience of the Christian leader, former Prime Minister Bondevik, made it difficult for the Conservatives to maintain their own claim to that position without potential electoral costs. Second, differential bargaining skills and the dynamics of the coalition formation process played a role. The Conservatives' high-handed approach in the initial talks with the Christians and the Liberals led to their breakdown. The Conservatives then turned to the Progress Party, but were turned down. Left without other options, they returned to the negotiation table with the Christian People's Party and the Liberals with their bargaining strength considerably weakened.

Prospects

If our puzzles are solved primarily by ad hoc factors and circumstances, our exercise gives us no clues as to how coalition theory can be amended to strengthen its explanatory power. The case studies do indeed point to some factors that would be difficult to include in any model of coalition formation. This is the case, for

example, with external events, such as the scandal and food crisis in Belgium at the time of the formation of the Rainbow coalition. A factor that was mentioned repeatedly is the difference in bargaining skills of the party leaders involved in the negotiation process: in Austria, Norway, and Belgium, it appears to have played a major role. Our approach – process tracing in case studies – may bias the result somewhat in overestimating agency at the expense of structure. Historical accounts of political developments also emphasize the role of 'great men' more than political science analyses. Nevertheless, it is hard to deny that personal skills can make a difference. Rational choice often makes use of the analogy with games, and inevitably players will sometimes miscalculate, and skilled opponents can exploit such mistakes. Miscalculating can happen to election losers (the Flemish and Austrian Christian Democrats, after losing their plurality status), but also to winners (the Norwegian Conservatives) and is hard to predict in advance. It is also clear that personal relations between key actors may play a role in the negotiations: 'personality clashes' were reported in Norway, 'personal antagonism' in Spain, 'irritation' with some party leaders by the Dutch Queen. Such factors are also difficult to model in advance, but two suggestions can be made. First, factors such as personal skills and personal relations are likely to have a bigger impact as the bargaining complexity and information uncertainty increases. As Stefuriuc argues with respect to one such situation, that of multi-level systems: 'it appears that the role of personal relations both within parties at different governing levels and between parties at the same level is also highly important, as multi-level settings are characterized by great complexity and interpersonal trust or adversity are useful devices that reduce the information costs related to striking coalition agreements' (Stefuriuc 2009: 2). At an even more abstract level, it would seem that the dynamics of the coalition formation process do affect the bargaining strengths of the actors, as illustrated by the Norwegian case study in this book. The fact that about a third of all government formations require more than one bargaining round (involving different parties) (De Winter and Dumont 2008: 129) points to a need to pay more attention to such dynamics.

Other factors that emerge from our case studies may complicate existing explanations, but they do not challenge the core assumptions of the rational choice paradigm that dominates coalition theory. First, the category of undersized government is too imprecise and needs to be broken up into true minority government and quasi-minority government, in which a minority government has structural support from a majority coalition in parliament. Most studies currently do not distinguish between these two outcomes. The explanation for quasi-minority government is likely to be different from the explanation of the better known true minority government. Moreover, if we turn from the formation to the life of the coalition, the dynamics of intra-governmental decision making and executive-legislative relations are bound to be very different if the minority government has no need to assemble ad hoc majorities in parliament for individual legislative proposals.

Second, the already existing development within coalition theory from looking at the attributes of the (potential) coalition as such (minimum winning, policy connectedness, etc.), to the attributes of individual parties (with different

bargaining strengths) receives support from the case studies. Of particular relevance are the differences between parties as a result of multi-level governance (e.g. national versus regional parties in Spain, the split party system of Belgium). Both the nested nature of these coalition games, and the fact that parties may have different utility at different levels, need to be addressed.

Third, coalition theory still overemphasizes the benefits of government (primarily in terms of office or policy) and pays insufficient attention to its costs (mostly in terms of votes). Explanations of minority government form an exception, at least with regard to truly undersized government. However, electoral anxiety can also explain why parties in a potential minimum-winning coalition invite unnecessary parties. In particular, when the unnecessary parties are perceived to be their closest electoral competitor, it may be rational to sacrifice some ministerial posts or policies if that is necessary to make the competition dirty its own hands rather than allow it to act as Absalom at the gate of Jerusalem, gathering the support of every disgruntled citizen. With electoral volatility increasing in most established democracies, and with governing parties increasingly being more likely to lose than to gain votes (Narud and Valen 2008), coalition negotiations may be framed more frequently as situations of potential losses rather than as situations of potential gains. As a consequence, parties may become more and more likely to try to limit their electoral liability. If true, we may expect both undersized and oversized governments to be formed even more often in future.

These are situations in which the parties' strategies still follow a logic of rationality, but in order to pursue preferences that are better understood in psychological terms (framings, loss avoidance, etc.). In addition, the case studies have also identified explanatory factors that are even less easily reconciled with the ruling paradigm. The clearest example is the adherence to informal norms in many cases: giving the plurality party the right to make the first move, preventing pariah parties from entering government, extending the parliamentary distribution of seats into government, etc. Some of these informal norms are so commonly adhered to that their normative character tends to be forgotten, even by rational choice theorists: Gamson's Law is a clear example. The problem, obviously, is to distinguish informal norms from behaviour: the 'norm' that Belgian coalitions should be symmetrical was eventually put aside. Practical conventions should therefore not be confused with 'norms' that have a clear 'normative' background, such as Gamson's Law. Dumont's proposition that parties avoid joining coalitions largely consisting of parties that have lost the elections is clearly also a 'normative' norm, as it appeals to democratic propriety (however inappropriately). Adherence to such norms can have a psychological background: in a variety of his hypothesis regarding coalitions of losers, Dumont also mentions the motive of revenge against a long-dominant party that has just lost its plurality status. Such a combination of normative and psychological explanations is also the core of Van Beest's proposition that people are reluctant to exclude others if that would harm those others. Preliminary evidence of such a 'do-no-harm' principle was found in the case study of the Dutch oversized Purple coalition. While it is true that rational choice-based coalition theory and

explanations involving normative concerns are different, they are not mutually exclusive. Indeed, a promising avenue of research would be to establish in what circumstances normative concerns become more prominent.

In conclusion: yes, some of the failures of coalition theory can be put down to 'noise': to exceptional circumstances, human (lack of) talent for politics, and personal relations. Other failures can be attributed to the often extreme parsimony of coalition theories: the categories are too broad (e.g. 'minority government'), the different positions of parties are insufficiently incorporated (as in multi-level government), too little attention is paid to the costs compared with the benefits of assuming government responsibility. Even then, a few puzzles remain that can only be solved by relaxing the assumption of utility maximization: where a mixture of normative concerns and psychological drives are involved, where a 'logic of appropriateness' seems to outweigh the 'logic of consequentiality'. Both improving coalition theory within the dominant paradigm and developing alternatives to it form an exciting agenda for future coalition studies.

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