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Achieving party unity : a sequential approach to why MPs act in concert

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Achieving Party Unity

A Sequential Approach to Why MPs Act in Concert

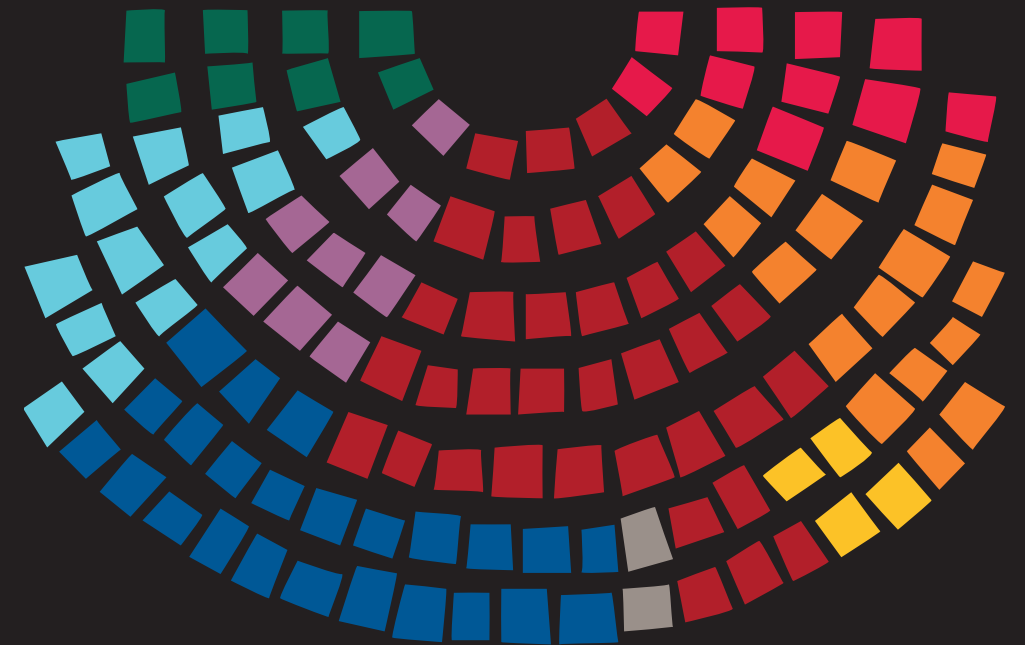
When it comes to voting in parliament, party group unity is the rule rather than the exception in most (European) parliamentary democracies. But how do individual MPs come to their decision to vote according to the party group line?

This book introduces a theoretical model of MP decision making in which the main decision-making mechanisms, derived from the existing literature on the pathways to party group unity – cue-taking, agreement, loyalty and obedience –, are placed in a particular sequential order. The three empirical studies in this book assess the relative role of each of the mechanisms, both independent and when possible as a part of the sequential model, in getting MPs to toe the party group line and contribute to party group unity, and explore whether this varies not only between parliaments (chapter 4), but also by levels of government (chapter 5), and through time (chapter 6).

All three studies reveal that parliamentary party groups can almost always count on their MPs' voluntarism. Most MPs are likely to vote with the party group of their own accord because they lack a personal opinion and thus rely on cue-taking or, if they do have an opinion, because they simply agree with the party's position or, if in disagreement, because they subscribe to the norm of party loyalty. Contrary to what is often (implicitly) assumed, party discipline, which entails that MPs vote according to the party group line involuntarily out of obedience under promise or threat of sanctions, is seldom necessary to get MPs to fall in line. In other words, an individual MP's freedom and party group unity are not mutually exclusive.

Achieving Party Unity

A Sequential Approach to
Why MPs Act in Concert



Achieving Party Unity | Cynthia M.C. van Vonne

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