



Universiteit  
Leiden  
The Netherlands

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

Vonno, C.M.C. van

### **Citation**

Vonno, C. M. C. van. (2016, March 2). *Achieving party unity : a sequential approach to why MPs act in concert*. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/38275>

Version: Not Applicable (or Unknown)

License: [Licence agreement concerning inclusion of doctoral thesis in the Institutional Repository of the University of Leiden](#)

Downloaded from: <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/38275>

**Note:** To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).



Cover Page



Universiteit Leiden



The handle <http://hdl.handle.net/1887/38275> holds various files of this Leiden University dissertation

**Author:** Vonno, Cynthia M.C. van

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

**Issue Date:** 2016-03-02



## **Chapter 6**

# **Changes over time: party group unity and MPs' decision-making mechanisms in the Dutch national parliament over time**

### **6.1 The one- or two-arena model**

Chapter 2 describes the changes in both the practice and theory of representation over time as outlined by Manin (1997). Whereas parliamentarianism holds the individual MP to be the main representative actor in both theory and in practice, the political party is the central representative actor in party democracy. However, the decrease in the number of party members (Katz et al., 1992; Mair and Van Biezen, 2001; Van Biezen et al., 2012) and party identifiers in many advanced industrial democracies (Dalton, 2000, 25-27), as well as the increase in electoral volatility (Dalton et al., 2000, 38-48), cast doubt on political parties' ability to maintain their role as main representative actor. Manin predicts that audience democracy, which is associated with increased electoral volatility and partisan dealignment, will lead to the return of the individual MP (especially the party leader) in the electoral arena, but he is less clear about the effects of these changes on the relationship between MPs and their parties in the legislative arena in general, and party group unity in particular.

Some authors argue that electoral volatility and partisan dealignment do have consequences for party group unity in the legislative arena (André et al., 2013; Kam, 2009). Kam (2009, 73-74), for example, argues that dealignment and MPs' dissent 'appear to travel together'. In his analysis of MPs' voting behavior in four Westminster systems between 1945 and 2005, he finds that the differences in electoral dealignment are likely to explain the different development of voting dissent between the United Kingdom



### 6.1. The one- or two-arena model

and Canada (where dissent became more frequent and extensive over time) and Australia and New Zealand (where dissent remained a rare phenomenon). In the former two countries, party identification and party popularity among voters decreased over time, whereas in the latter two countries this was much less the case.

The arguments by those who contend that electoral volatility and partisan dealignment affect MPs' dissent and party group unity in the legislative arena are generally in line with the 'two-arena model' (Mayhew, 1974), which holds that MPs are primarily vote-seeking, and that their behavior in the legislative arena is determined by institutions and incentives in the electoral arena. Thus, party group unity in the legislative arena is "seen as a consequence of the need to fight and win elections" (Bowler, 2000, 158); the utility of acting in concert with the other members of the party group is determined by its benefits in the electoral arena. According to the two-arena model, if the political party label as a decisive cue for voters decreases in importance, candidates are more likely to use individualistic strategies to appeal to the electorate. Dissenting from the party group line in the legislative arena may be one of these strategies. Indeed, Kam (2009, 128) finds that in both the United Kingdom and New Zealand, dissent tends to earn MPs more name recognition and approval, mainly among non-partisan and weakly partisan voters.<sup>1</sup>

Bowler (2000), however, finds little evidence of a decline in party group unity over time. If anything, MPs in European parliaments tend to stick to the party group line more, rather than less (with the exception of the United Kingdom).<sup>2</sup> Bowler thus argues that MPs and their party groups in the legislative arena may be insulated from changes in the electoral arena. In other words, MPs and parties 'compartmentalize' their legislative and electoral roles (Norton and Wood, 1993, 38; Kam, 2009, 128). This is in line with the 'one-arena model', which holds that in the legislative arena MPs are not predominantly vote-seeking but instead care primarily about policy, and secondarily about office resources that allow them to pursue policy more effectively (Bowler, 2000, 163; Thies, 2000, 250). Party group unity is thus generated by institutions and incentives in the legislative arena itself (Cox and McCubbins, 1993). According to the one-arena model, as long as within parliament party groups consist of relatively like-minded politicians who care about policy (Thies, 2000, 251), and being a member of a party group offers procedural advantages that are beneficial to MPs' pursuit of policy, and the party group (leadership) is granted the tools to solve collective actions problems among its members, MPs have an incentive to act in concert.

As highlighted by Bowler (2000, 159-160), the discussion of the one-arena and two-arena model "suggests a (deceptive) straightforward line of empirical attack". In order to ascertain which of the two models is correct, one could simply correlate party (roll call) voting unity in the legislative arena with electoral volatility or partisan dealignment in the electoral arena. The reliance on roll call votes specifically could be problematic in a comparative analysis, however, because voting procedures differ between legislatures and

---

<sup>1</sup> Kam (2009) bases his analysis on the 1997 British Election Study and the 1993 New Zealand Election Study.

<sup>2</sup> Bowler (2000) looks at party group voting unity during the 1980s and 1990s in France, Germany, Norway and Switzerland. He also presents statistics on voting dissent for Denmark and the United Kingdom.



over time (Owens, 2003), and in some parliaments their summons may be endogenous to parties' procedural advantages in the legislative arena, which would make correlation with changes in the electorate spurious.

Moreover, as pointed out by Kam (2009, 73-74), aggregate level analyses of voting behavior do not allow one to determine why an MP is more or less likely to toe the party group line, i.e., which decision-making mechanism is affected by changes in the electorate (two-arena model), or is influenced by parties' procedural advantage over MPs in the legislative arena (one-arena model). Whereas Kam contends, in line with the two-arena model, that casting a dissenting vote could be an electoral strategy, one could argue (as André et al., 2011 do) that the mechanism that is affected here is party group loyalty, because when in disagreement with the party group line, the MP chooses to let his loyalty to a competing principal, i.e. (potential) voters, trump his loyalty to the party group (see also Carey, 2009). Alternatively, Krehbiel (1993, 259-260) argues that MPs' preferences are largely exogenous to the legislative arena, and that legislative party groups may have become more heterogeneous as a consequence of the influx of those who have also been affected by the social changes underpinning partisan dealignment. If party groups are more heterogeneous in terms of their MPs' policy preferences, this makes it more likely that MPs will disagree with each other in the first place. From the perspective of the one-arena model, which emphasizes the procedural advantages of party groups, and specifically their leaders, over MPs, aggregate levels of voting behavior do not allow one to pinpoint whether party group leaders use their control over access to policy making (agenda-setting power, for example) and selective benefits (such as committee assignment and removal) in the parliamentary arena as a positive or negative sanction to elicit party group unity through obedience.

As admitted by Bowler (2000, 159), "neither view on its own offers a complete explanation for the presence of parties inside chambers". The debate over party group unity as originating inside ('parties in office') or outside ('parties in the electorate') of the legislature tends to overlook the fact that 'parties as organizations' may play an important role as gatekeepers, and that parties' procedural advantage over individuals extends beyond the legislative arena into the electoral arena through candidate selection procedures (Bowler, 2000, 177-178). Whereas Kam seems to hint that dealignment will cause MPs to be less loyal to their party, and Krehbiel expects that the social changes underpinning partisan dealignment may lead to more heterogeneous party groups in terms of MPs' policy preferences, party leaders' control over candidate selection procedures may allow them to minimize, or even counteract, the effects of these changes, by ensuring that only loyal candidates whose policy preferences match those of the party are nominated. Moreover, candidate selection procedures can also help limit MPs' defection by serving as potential disciplining mechanisms as well. As parties' procedural advantages obtained through candidate selection are located outside the legislative arena, and institutionalized within the electoral systems, some have argued that the explanations of party group unity offered by the 'parties as organizations' perspective fall under the two-arena model (Linek and Rakušanová, 2005, 427). On the other hand, 'parties as organizations' also act within the legislative arena through the creation and maintenance of informal party group rules that reach beyond the power granted to parties by



### 6.1. The one- or two-arena model

the legislature's formal institutions and rules. An example is the application of a strict division of labor among its group members, which spurs MPs to engage in cue-taking when they themselves lack the time or expertise to form an opinion on a matter put to a vote (although this is in part encouraged by a parliament's committee system). In other words, 'parties as organizations' act in both arenas.

According to the 'parties in the electorate' perspective, we would expect party group unity to decrease over time because partisan dealignment and electoral volatility would bring forth MPs who are more likely to frequently disagree with their party group, and who are less likely to vote according to the party group line out of loyalty in the case of disagreement.<sup>3</sup> In this case, parties' procedural advantages in the legislative arena are not enough to counteract these changes. Alternatively, according to the 'parties in office' perspective, we would expect no decrease in party group unity over time. We may still see an increase in party group preference heterogeneity and MPs' disagreement with the party group's position, and a decrease in party group loyalty among MPs, but the effects of these changes on party group unity would be contained by parties' procedural advantage over MPs and their ability to solve collective action problems among their members within the legislative arena. Finally, if party group unity remains unchanged, and some of the pathways to party group unity seem negatively affected by changes in the electorate whereas others have been strengthened, this points in the direction of the 'parties as organizations' thesis. This would entail that within the legislative arena political parties have taken measures to control the behavior of their MPs beyond those formally accorded to them by the rules of parliament, and parties' procedural advantages over individuals extend beyond the legislative arena into the electoral arena through candidate selection procedures. In other words, 'parties as organizations' have actively taken measures to curtail and thus neutralize the effects of electoral volatility and partisan dealignment in the electoral arena.

Solving this puzzle necessitates a case which displays high electoral volatility and partisan dealignment, and for which we have behavioral data that enables us to measure party group unity, and survey data that allows us to gauge potential changes in the use of these different decision-making mechanisms, all over an extensive period of time. Unfortunately, there are few parliaments for which this data is available over the necessary time span (Owens, 2003). The Dutch case offers a unique opportunity, however, because we have both data on MPs' party group defections and voting behavior (both regular and roll call) over a long period of time (1945-2010), as well as MPs' responses to surveys held at five points in time (the 1972, 1979, 1990, 2001 and 2006 Dutch Parliamentary Studies). We also present data from the Dutch part of the 2010 PartiRep MP Survey. However, because the formulation of some of the questions and answering categories differ quite a bit from those in the Dutch Parliamentary Studies, we only include the 2010 PartiRep MP survey in our longitudinal analyses when these are the same as in the Dutch Parliamentary Studies.

---

<sup>3</sup> Partisan dealignment and electoral volatility are likely to have a stronger effect on MPs' group loyalty when electoral institutions are candidate-centered than when electoral institutions are party-centered.



Table 6.1: Average electoral volatility and second order personal votes in the Second Chamber of the Dutch Parliament 1946-2012

Election	Parties represented in parliament (n)	Volatility (% of seats)	Personal votes (% of cast votes)
1946	7	-	3.1
1948	8	4.0	3.2
1952	8	5.0	4.4
1956	7	7.0	3.4
1959	8	5.3	6.6
1963	10	6.0	9.6
1967	11	10.0	10.8
1971	14	13.3	11.5
1972	14	13.3	10.5
1977	11	12.7	8.3
1981	10	9.3	7.5
1982	12	10.0	9.6
1986	9	11.3	17.4
1989	9	5.3	11.0
1994	12	22.7	19.4
1998	9	16.7	21.3
2002	10	30.7	27.1
2003	9	16.0	18.5
2006	10	20.2	22.8
2010	10	22.7	15.9
2012	11	15.3	18.9
Mean	10	12.84	12.42

*Note:* For electoral volatility the Pedersen Index (1979, 3) is used, which defines electoral volatility as ‘the net change within the electoral party system resulting from individual vote transfers’. It is measured as the aggregate seats gained (or lost) of all winning (or losing) parties in an election.

## 6.2 The Dutch case

### 6.2.1 The electoral arena

The Netherlands is a representative case in terms of the changes in the electorate described above, which according to the two-arena model should lead to lower levels of party group unity in the legislative arena. During the 1950s and 1960s, Dutch society was strongly segmented (pillarized) and the voters in each of the different pillars (*zuilen*) were tied to particular political parties through a strong sense of identity and loyalty, thus creating a highly structured and stable electorate. During this period



## 6.2. The Dutch case

of pillarization, the Social Democratic PvdA (*Partij van de Arbeid*) and the smaller left-socialist PSP (*Pacifistisch Socialistische Partij*) represented the socialist pillar, while the conservative-liberal VVD (*Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie*) represented the liberal pillar. The Catholic pillar was represented by the KVP (*Katholieke Volkspartij*). The Reformed (*Gereformeerd*) ARP (*Anti-Revolutionaire Partij*), the Dutch Reformed (*Nederlands Hervormd*) CHU (*Christelijk-Historische Unie*) and the smaller Orthodox Protestant GVP (*Gereformeerd Politiek Verbond*) represented the Protestant pillar. In 1980 the KVP, ARP and CHU formally fused together to form the Christian Democratic CDA (*Christen-Democratisch Appèl*). From the mid-1960s onwards a process of depillarization set in, and electoral volatility increased and party membership decreased in step with most other Western European countries. By the 1990s, however, electoral instability in the Netherlands was higher than in all other Western European countries, save Italy (Mair, 2008, 237-238; also see Table 6.1), making it a crucial case study.

Whereas electoral volatility increased over time, the electoral system itself remained quite stable (Van der Kolk, 2007, 271-273). Our focus is on the House of Representatives, or Second Chamber (*Tweede Kamer*),<sup>4</sup> which consists of 150 members (100 until 1956) elected every four years via a system of Proportional Representation introduced in 1917.<sup>5</sup> During national elections voters are presented with a ballot paper displaying lists of candidates as ordered by the political parties, and cast their vote for an individual candidate. The number of parliamentary seats obtained by a party is determined by the total number of votes for the party's candidates pooled nationwide. The electoral system (which uses the Hare quota) is therefore quite open; the threshold for gaining access to parliament for new and small parties is quite low, and the composition of parliament is very sensitive to changes in the electorate (Andeweg, 2005). Indeed, Mair (2008) ascribes the increase in electoral volatility to the fact that the openness of competition between parties was unable to constrain the electoral effects of the depillarization, secularization and individualization of Dutch society.

The degree to which the electoral system is party-oriented is of special importance with regard to party group unity. In order to obtain a seat on the basis of preference votes a candidate for the Dutch Second Chamber must cross a threshold of 25 percent (50 percent until 1996) of the electoral quota. Andeweg and Van Holsteyn (2011) do detect a trend in voters increasingly casting intra-party preference votes (those not cast for the party leader who is usually placed first on the list) between 1946 and 2012 (see Table 6.1), but voters tend to select candidates who would have been elected on the basis of their list position anyway. The number of candidates who obtain a seat in parliament on the basis of preference votes who would not have been elected on the basis of their parties' list ordering has increased since the change of the electoral quota threshold in 1996, but is still limited to only one or two per election (see Table 6.2). Although voters' increased use of personal votes (which Rahat and Sheafer (2007) consider a form of public behavioral personalization, see subsection 2.4.2 in chapter 2) has been offered

---

<sup>4</sup> The Dutch nomenclature differs from what is customary in the international literature, where the Lower House is called the First Chamber, and the Upper House is the Second Chamber.

<sup>5</sup> In 1970 compulsory electoral voting was abolished, which led to a decrease in voter turnout.



Table 6.2: MPs who entered the Second Chamber of the Dutch Parliament on the basis of preference votes who otherwise would have not have done so on the basis of their list position and the number of votes obtained by their political party 1946-2012

Election	Party	Name	Votes (n)
1959	KVP	Karel van Rijckevorsel	91,000
1972	KVP	Dolf Hutschemaekers	27,900
1986	VVD	Theo Joekes	250,000
1998	CDA	Camiel Eurlings	24,000
	CDA	Annie Schreijer-Pierik	17,400
2002	ChristenUnie	Tineke Huizinga-Heringa	19,800
2003	ChristenUnie	Tineke Huizinga-Heringa	19,650
	LPF	Hilbrand Nawijn	21,200
2006	D66	Fatma Koşer Kaya	34,564
2010	D66	Pia Dijkstra	15,705
	CDA	Sabina Uitslag	15,933
2012	CDA	Peter Omtzigt	36,750

*Note:* the number of votes are taken directly from the website of the Dutch Parliamentary Documentation Center (*Parlement & Politiek*, 2015e).

as an explanation for decreases in party group unity from the perspective of the two-arena model (Van Wijnen, 2000, 449; Krouwel, 2003, 79), in the Netherlands voters' use of personal votes seems to be embedded within the choice for a party (which Andeweg and Van Holsteyn (2011) term second-order personalization).

Thus, even though the Dutch list system is formally flexible, due to voters' own behavior preference voting it is generally ineffective, which leads Mitchell (2000) to categorize the Dutch electoral system as party-centered. Association with the political party label is therefore important to candidates and since the order of the list is difficult to overturn a candidate's position on the list has significant consequences for his chances of (re-)election (Marsh, 1985, 367). As an electoral strategy, an MP is better off convincing the party candidate selection committee to grant him a high position on the list than campaigning for preference votes amongst the electorate (Andeweg, 2005). On the other hand, voters' propensity to cast preference votes has increased over time,<sup>6</sup> and Van Holsteyn and Andeweg (2012, 177-178) show that MPs who do engage in individual campaigns tend to obtain more preferences votes than MPs who do not engage in individual campaigns, which indicates that preference votes campaigns can be effective in influencing voters.

<sup>6</sup> This, in combination with the fact that the electoral system has become slightly more candidate-centered, leads Karvonen (2010, 104) to categorize the Netherlands as mixed-positive in terms of personalization.



## 6.2. The Dutch case

### 6.2.2 The legislative arena

#### Constitutional & parliamentary rules

According to the one-arena model, MPs will act in concert regardless of changes in the electoral arena if the constitutional and parliamentary rules give MPs better access to policy making when they belong to a legislative bloc than if they were to act alone. There have been relatively few changes to the Dutch constitutional and legislative rules over time, entailing that any changes in party group unity are not likely to find their origins in the legislative arena.

At first glance, the procedural advantages granted to party groups in the legislative arena seem quite limited, and there are few formal constraints on individual MPs. The Dutch constitution clearly favors individual MPs, as most legislative rights with regard to policy making (such as the initiation of both regular and roll call voting, the submission of private member bills, amendments and resolutions (*moties*), and the asking of written and oral questions) belong to the individual MP. MPs also formally vote without a binding mandate (article 67.3),<sup>7</sup> but as is the case in most legislatures, the Dutch constitution requires that all decisions be made by majority vote (article 67.2),<sup>8</sup> meaning that in order to be effective in terms of policy making, MPs need to cooperate with each other, which is most likely to occur among MPs who belong to the same party group.

In contrast to many other European parliaments, there is little formal regulation of political parties and their parliamentary caucuses (Lucardie et al., 2006, 126), and the parliamentary party group is no more than a collective label for its individual MPs (Andeweg, 2000, 98). In fact, there is no mention of political parties in the Dutch constitution (Lucardie et al., 2006, 126; Van Biezen, 2008, 341; Van Biezen, 2012, 194; van Biezen and Borz, 2012, 331, 337) nor are there any special party laws, with the exception of those concerning party financing (Van Biezen, 2008, 341). Moreover, although in practice party groups have existed since the second half of the nineteenth century in the form of ad hoc parliamentary clubs (Elzinga and Wisse, 1988), they were also absent from the Second Chamber's Standing Orders (*Reglement van Orde van de Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal*) until the 1960s. Since 1966, the Standing Orders define a PPG (*fractie*)<sup>9</sup> as all Members of Parliament who were declared elected on the same electoral list (article 11.1). An MP is, however, under no legal obligation to give up his seat to his party if he is expelled from, or voluntarily leaves, his parliamentary party group. Seceded MPs need only to notify the Speaker of the House of their breakaway to be recognized as a

---

<sup>7</sup> Until the constitutional revision in 1983, MPs voted without both a binding mandate and consultation. It was, however, argued that this gave the impression that MPs were not allowed to consult their political party, their voters or other actors, which was considered an inaccurate reflection of political reality (Dölle, 1981). It can be argued, therefore, that this constitutional change was of limited impact on the relationship between MPs and their parties.

<sup>8</sup> A double majority in both the upper and lower House is required when it comes to changing the constitutions.

<sup>9</sup> Most party groups also have a board consisting of around three MPs (depending on the size of the party group), which is considered the party group leadership.



separate parliamentary party group, and there is no minimum number of seats to qualify as such.

There are, however, also a number of procedural advantages accorded to party groups specifically. The funding that party groups receive to hire staff, as well as plenary speaking time, and committee membership and chairs, are distributed roughly proportional to party group seat share, with special consideration for smaller party groups (Andeweg and Irwin, 2014, 168-169). Once speaking time is distributed, party groups are left to select their own spokespersons (Andeweg, 2000, 98). And although the Speaker of the House is formally responsible for committee appointment and removal (article 25), he acts on the proposals of the party groups (Franssen, 1993, 28), and party group leaders meet informally to discuss the distribution of committee chairs (Döring, 2001, 41). Thus policy spokespersonship and committee membership are in practice controlled by the party group (Andeweg and Thomassen, 2011b; Damgaard, 1995), and can be used by party (group) leaders as positive and negative sanctions to solve collective action problems among their members.

### Parliamentary party group rules

Some parties have elaborate statutes and parliamentary party group standing orders stipulating rules concerning MPs' behavior inside, but sometimes also outside, of parliament. These rules also often grant the party (group) leadership certain powers to solve collective action problems among their members. According to the Standing Orders of the Christian Democratic CDA (2003, article 82), for example, candidates are expected to sign a document declaring their assent to the party program and electoral manifesto. Similarly, in the Social Democratic party PvdA (2012, article 14.10) all party representatives are expected to commit themselves to promoting and achieving the objectives of the party. In both parties, the parliamentary party group Standing Orders further stipulate that MPs are bound by the decisions made during the weekly party group meeting, even if they were not present at the meeting. In most party groups the weekly parliamentary party group meeting, which all party representatives are expected to attend, is the highest party authority and most important decision-making arena. The meeting usually takes place at the beginning of the week and as a rule the discussions that take place during these meetings stay behind closed doors.

In most parties, if an MP wants to depart from the party group line when voting in parliament, he is expected to give due notice. In the CDA (2003, article 83) potential candidates do so before they are even taken into consideration for nomination in the form of a *gravamen*, which entails that candidates register their 'principled, insurmountable conscientious objections' (Voerman, 2002, 43, translation CvV) concerning specific parts of the party's electoral manifesto. However, according to the 1986 *gravamen* regulations (*gravamenreglement*), a *gravamen* cannot be used to stop the creation or continued survival of a government (Koole, 1992, 243-244) which arguably severely limits its utility to the individual MP. According to the PvdA's Standing Orders, MPs are expected to inform the other members of the party group at the weekly meeting of their (preferably previously announced) disagreement with the party's position before the vote takes place



### 6.3. Party group unity over time

in parliament (Lucardie et al., 2006, 130). Lucardie et al. (2006, 132-133) note that in *GroenLinks*, according to the party group communications officer, there is no formal requirement of party group unity during voting, although the party group does admit to try to reach unanimity prior to the vote as much as possible.

Some parties, such as the PvdA (2012, article 1.22.12), the Liberal Democrats (D66) (2002, article 2.8.5.j), the GreenLeft (*GroenLinks*) (2012, article 28.3) and the Socialists (SP) (2003, article 15.1) require their representatives to sign a document stating that they will give up their seat if they are asked to do so. This may occur if an MP is reprimanded by his party (group) (which may be a consequence of voting dissent) or if he voluntarily leaves the parliamentary party group. The Standing Orders of the Liberal VVD (2009) do not stipulate any such rules concerning the giving up of an MP's seat. There are, however, informal rules that call for the same procedure. When in 2006 MP Rita Verdonk was reprimanded for criticizing party leader Mark Rutte, for example, the political party board asked her to give up her seat in parliament or face expulsion from the political party. After first being expelled from the parliamentary party group, she kept her seat in parliament, and her party then ended her VVD membership (Benneker, 2007).

Some parties also try to control their MPs' use of other individual parliamentary rights. In the case of the CDA, PvdA and Social Christian party (*ChristenUnie*), for example, parliamentary questions, motions and amendments need to be put to the party group at the weekly meeting, or if pressed for time, to the party group leader or the head of relevant internal committee, before they are introduced in parliament (Lucardie et al., 2006, 129, 131; Van Schendelen, 1992, 80-81). The CDA and *ChristenUnie* also regulate contact between individual MPs and the media, as do most party groups.

All in all, many of these internal party rules make up for the lack of procedural advantage granted to parties by the formal rules of the legislature (although one should not underestimate the power of committee and spokesperson assignment). One could argue that these internal party rules and practices are unconstitutional given the individual MP's free mandate (Andeweg, 2000, 99). And indeed, a political party cannot take an individual representative to court for not voting according to the party group line or leaving the parliamentary party group without giving up his seat to his party. However, as argued by Elzinga and Wisse (1988, 184-189), an individual is allowed to voluntarily bind himself to the formal and informal party rules. *De jure*, MPs are free to follow their own opinion. *De facto*, however, MPs are politically and morally bound to follow the party group line, and political parties dominate the day-to-day life of MPs in parliament.<sup>10</sup>

## 6.3 Party group unity over time

According to the one-arena model, we would expect to see few changes over time in terms of party group unity; although MPs in the Netherlands have quite a few individual

---

<sup>10</sup> Elzinga and Wisse (1988), compare an MP's mandate to an individual's right to property; although the individual has a right to property, he is free to voluntarily give up, or refrain from exercising, that right. According to Elzinga and Wisse (1988) the same principle holds for MPs and their personal mandate.



rights, in practice party groups control committee membership and issue spokespersonship, and parties themselves have quite elaborate standings orders that aim to further control the behavior of their MPs beyond the formal rules of parliament. Little has changed over the past decades in regard to the party groups' procedural advantages and the availability of tools to solve collective action problems within the parliamentary arena. According to the two-arena model, however, MPs are predominantly vote-seeking, and we would expect a decrease in party group unity as a result of an increase in electoral volatility and partisan dealignment, regardless of parties' procedural advantages inside parliament. As in other countries (Karvonen, 2010), Dutch voters have increased their use of second order preference votes, albeit that the number of MPs who obtain a seat in parliament who would have not done so on the basis of their original list position remains limited. Nonetheless, this does not preclude MPs from using strategies (such as voting dissent) in an attempt to appeal to voters on an individual basis, which form an impediment to party group unity. Below, we rely on two measures of party group unity (party defection and party voting unity) in order to ascertain whether there have indeed been any changes over time.

#### 6.3.1 Party group defection

MPs' early departure (i.e. before the next elections) from their parliamentary party group is used as our first indicator of party group unity and MPs' dissent (Owens, 2003). Defection takes place when an MP leaves parliament and thus automatically gives up his seat, which the national Electoral Council then offers to the next eligible person on the MP's party's candidacy list from the previous election. According to the website of the Dutch Parliamentary Documentation Center (*Parlement & Politiek*, 2015e) on average around one-fifth of MPs (about 32) left parliament before elections per parliamentary term between 1956 and 2012, of which about half (on average 16) did so because they were appointed to government.<sup>11</sup> For the other half it is difficult to ascertain what motivated them to leave parliament early because the reasons officially forwarded (a job offer elsewhere or personal circumstances, for example) may be used as a guise to cover up factors related to party group unity. An MP may, for example, leave parliament voluntarily because he regularly finds himself at odds with the party group's position, and feels that he cannot be loyal despite disagreement. Recent examples of MPs who gave up their seats to their party are PvdA MPs Désirée Bonis and Myrthe Hilken, who in 2013 both took issue with their party group's position in parliament, which they argued was too heavily influenced by their party's coalition agreement with the VVD.

An MP may also be pressured by his party to give up his seat, or in the most extreme case, may be expelled from the party when in conflict. Although an MP is under no legal obligation to give up his seat when pressured or expelled, he may wish to honor the (informal) party rule to do so. Sometimes these conflicts between an MP and his party

---

<sup>11</sup> In the Netherlands there is a strict division of roles, responsibility and membership between the executive and parliamentary branch of government, and the position of (junior) minister is incompatible with the position of MP.



### 6.3. Party group unity over time

take place in the public sphere, but more often they are kept out of the eyes of the public, making it difficult to identify these cases. The Dutch Parliamentary Documentation Center (*Parlement & Politiek*, 2015e) lists a total of 11 MPs who left parliament early due to a conflict with their party since 1956.<sup>12</sup> In an earlier study of why Dutch national MPs leave parliament,<sup>13</sup> De Vos (1990, 42-43) finds that over half of the reasons forwarded for departure related to an MPs work in the Second Chamber and party group. Of these, only a few can be directly related to tensions between an MP and his party group when it comes to party group unity, however.

An MP can also defect from his party group but remain in parliament. Although in the Netherlands it is an MP's legal right to remain in parliament, he is likely to be accused of seat robbery (*zetelroof*). Theoretically, there are two types of defection applicable to the Dutch case that involve an MP remaining in parliament: an MP could form an independent group, or he could switch to another party group.<sup>14</sup> Most studies that deal with party defection focus on the latter (Owens, 2003, 18-20). In both cases, the fact that the MP remains in parliament can be interpreted a sign of conflict with the party group and therefore party group disunity, either due to intense and frequent disagreement with the party position, lack of loyalty or the party's application of sanctions. In contrast to an MP who gives up his seat to his party, an MP who remains in parliament does not have his party's best interest at heart, and ignores any internal party commitment he may have made pertaining to his seat. An MP is likely to defect from his party group if he considers the benefits (which may include a better ideological fit,<sup>15</sup> increased chances of re-election, legislative perks or even a cabinet post) to be higher than if he were to remain in his current party group, and if he perceives the transactions costs of defection to be low (Desposato, 2006).

Heller and Mershon (2008, 910-911) also consider defection a reaction to party discipline. If an MP votes against the party group line, or regularly finds himself (intensely) at odds with the party group position, and this disagreement often supersedes his loyalty to his party group, there is a good chance that he will face (the threat of) sanctions, including expulsion. In the case of expulsion, which parties are likely to only use as an *ultimum remedium*, his defection from the party group would be involuntary. Recent examples from the Dutch case include VVD member Rita Verdonk, who was expelled from her party in 2007, and Louis Bontes' expulsion from the right-wing PVV (*Partij voor de*

---

<sup>12</sup> The basis for these figures is unknown and the categorization is somewhat unclear. For the year 2013, for example, there are no cases listed under conflict. This means that the above mentioned examples of PvdA MPs Désirée Bonis and Myrthe Hilken are likely to fall under either the category 'health/personal' or 'other reasons'.

<sup>13</sup> A total of 104 MPs who left parliament were interviewed. These figures include MPs who, between 1972 and 1982, left parliament early, but also those who were not placed on the party's electoral list, or those who were selected but not elected, during the elections that followed (De Vos, 1990, 159-160).

<sup>14</sup> According to Shabad and Slomczynski (2004), party switching (both within and between parliamentary terms) can also be the result of 'structural factors', such as party dissolutions, party splits and party mergers (which all may be connected to intense party disunity).

<sup>15</sup> Studies show that when MPs switch parties they are likely to do so within the same ideological family (Heller and Mershon, 2008).



*Vrijheid*) party group in 2013. MPs may, however, also decide to ‘jump before they are pushed’, i.e., leave the party group before they are expelled (Jones, 2002, 177).

Since the Second World War there have only been 42 instances of an individual or group of MPs (involving a total of 58 MPs) who left and/or were removed from their party group and formed their own group in the Dutch parliament (see Table 6.3). Although the total number of defections is quite low, it has increased over time. Whereas there was only 1 (involving 4 MPs) case in the 1950s, there were 5 (6 MPs) in the 1990s, and 11 (12 MPs) in the first half of the 2010s. If we look more closely, however, we see that this type of defection usually occurs in new parties, represented in parliament for the first or second time. Two of the parties to have recently gained representation in parliament, the right-wing LPF (*Lijst Pim Fortuyn*) and the PVV, experienced quite a number of these defections, albeit for different reasons. Whereas the LPF lacked strong leadership (its party leader Pim Fortuyn was assassinated 9 days before the 2002 parliamentary elections), resulting in chaos in the party, the PVV is renowned for its strong leadership, which seemed to backfire in the Spring and Summer of 2012 with the defection of a number of MPs who remained in parliament as independents. One and a half year later three more MPs left the party group; Louis Bontes was expelled from the party group for criticizing the workings of the party group board, and both Ronald van Vliet and Joram van Klaveren defected in response to party leader Geert Wilders’ statements about Dutch Moroccans made on the evening after the municipal elections in 2014. Moving a bit further into the past, the pensioners’ party AOV (*Algemeen Ouderen Verbond*), represented in parliament between 1994 and 1998, experienced quite a few splits. And in the 1960s and 1970s, there were also a number of defections from the farmers’ party BP (*Boerenpartij*) as well.

Among the established parties in the Netherlands, however, party group defection did not occur very often, each party having experienced defection only two or three times over the entire period since the Second World War. Thus, the changes in the electorate, which include an increase in electoral volatility, in combination with the highly proportional and thus very open electoral system, do not seem to have affected the unity of established parties (as measure by party group defections), but have increased the number of defections through the introduction of an increased number of new parties in the Dutch parliament. That this type of defection usually occurs in new parties may be the result of both the MPs, as well as the party organization as a whole, being relatively new to politics and parliament. MPs who are new to politics, and do not have a history of party membership, are likely to be less socialized into the norm of party group loyalty than MPs. And new political parties probably have little experience recruiting and selecting candidates (and are likely to do so quite hastily as most new parties compile their electoral candidacy lists just before elections), which may lead to lower levels of homogeneity in terms of the policy preferences of their MPs, which makes it more likely that their MPs will frequently disagree with the party group’s position. Moreover, it may also be that new parties are less effective at controlling the behavior of their MPs through internal parliamentary party group rules.

By becoming an independent or forming an independent group an MP is freed from the restrictions of belonging to a party group (depending on the size of the indepen-



Table 6.3: Parliamentary party group defections in the Second Chamber of the Dutch Parliament 1946-2015

Date	MPs (n)	Former party group	Independent
14-04-1958	4	CPN	Group-Gortzak
13-12-1966	1	Boerenpartij	Group-Voogd
27-02-1968	3	KVP	Group-Aarden
27-06-1968	4	Boerenpartij	Group-Harmsen
12-12-1968	1	Group-Harmsen	Group-Kronenburg
14-05-1970	2	PvdA	Group-Goedhart
28-07-1970	1	PvdA	Veenendaal-van Meggelen (joined Group-Goedhart)
09-02-1971	1	Boerenpartij	Group-Verlaan
13-09-1971	1	NMP	Group-De Jong
30-03-1976	1	CHU	Group-Huijsen
22-06-1976	1	D'66	Group-Nooteboom
08-12-1983	2	CDA	Group-Scholten/Dijkman
05-12-1984	1	Centrumpartij	Group-Janmaat
23-04-1985	1	RPF	Group-Wagenaar
18-04-1985	1	Group-Scholten/Dijkman	Not applicable (Scholten joined PPR in parliament)
21-01-1986	1	PSP	Group-Van der Spek
21-09-1993	1	PvdA	Group-Ockels
11-10-1994	1	AOV	Group-Hendriks
30-05-1995	2	AOV	Group-Wingerden/Verkerk
06-09-1995	3	AOV	Group-Nijpels
31-03-1998	1	Group-Wingerden/Verkerk	Group-Verkerk
07-10-2002	2	LPF	Group-De Jong
13-10-2002	1	LPF	Group-Wijnschenk
03-02-2004	1	SP	Group-Lazrak
03-09-2004	1	VVD	Group-Wilders
23-06-2005	1	LPF	Group-Nawijn
07-07-2006	1	LPF	Group-van Oudenallen
16-08-2006	1	LPF	Van As (joined Group-Nawijn)
11-09-2006	1	Group-Nawijn	Group-Van As
06-09-2006	1	VVD	Group-Van Schijndel
20-09-2006	1	LPF	Eerdmans (joined Group-Van Schijndel)
14-09-2007	1	VVD	Member-Verdonk
20-03-2012	1	PVV	Member-Brinkman
03-07-2012	2	PVV	Group-Kortenoeven/Hernandez
06-07-2012	1	PVV	Member-Van Bommel
29-10-2013	1	PVV	Member-Bontes
21-03-2014	1	PVV	Member-Van Vliet
22-03-2014	1	PVV	Van Klaveren (joined Group-Bontes)
28-05-2014	1	50Plus	50Plus/Baay-Timmerman (returned to 50Plus)
06-06-2014	1	50Plus	Member-Klein
13-11-2014	2	PvdA	Group Kuzu-Öztürk
25-03-2015	1	VVD	Member-Houwers



dent group). He also obtains relatively better access to parliamentary resources than he had as a member of a (larger) party group because special consideration is given to small party groups in the distribution of finances to hire staff, plenary speaking time, and committee membership and chairmanship. If the defecting MP is on his own he also automatically becomes the party group chairman, which leads to an increase in salary.<sup>16</sup> He will, however, still have to work together with other party groups in parliament in order to attain his own policy goals. Moreover, becoming an independent is not a wise choice in terms of a future political career. Many party defectors do end up creating new parties which they enter into the next election,<sup>17</sup> of which only a few have gained representation in parliament. In 2006 the MP Geert Wilders, who left the VVD in 2004 but remained in parliament as an independent until the next election, gained representation in parliament with his right-wing PVV, and has been present since. The green-progressive PPR (*Politieke Partij Radikalen*), which was created in 1968 by a number of MPs who had split from the Catholic KVP, also had consistent representation in parliament from 1971 until 1989, when it first participated in elections under the flag of *GroenLinks* with the left-socialist PSP (*Pacifistisch Socialistische Partij*), the communist CPN (*Communistische Partij van Nederland*) and Christian-progressive EVP (*Evangelische Volkspartij*). Usually, however, the parties created by these independents are unsuccessful. That so many try might also be explained by the electoral system, which is highly proportional and affords even parties with a small electoral support access to parliament (Nikolenyi and Shenhav, 2009).

When it comes to party switching, there are three instances of an MP joining an already existing independent group consisting of MPs who had previously left the same party, and one case of two MPs from different parties forming one independent group (in 2006 LPF member Joost Eerdmans joined Anton van Schijndel who had been expelled from the VVD). There is, however, only one case of an MP switching to another established parliamentary party group (i.e., a group of MPs declared elected on the same electoral list) within the same parliamentary term. Stef Dijkman entered parliament as a representative of the CDA in 1982 and joined the Political Party of Radicals (*Politieke Partij Radikalen*, PPR) party group in 1985. His switch was not direct, however, as he first formed an independent party group with Jan-Nico Scholten (who had also left the CDA) for two years before joining the PPR party group. Generally, political parties in the Netherlands are weary of accepting and promoting MPs who sat in parliament for another party, especially within the same parliamentary term.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Parliamentary party group chairmen (*fractievoorzitters*) receive an additional 1 percent of the compensation afforded to regular MPs, plus an additional 0.3 percent per member of their party group (*Parlement & Politiek*, 2015a).

<sup>17</sup> Although it is possible to start a new party while in parliament as an independent group or member, the independent group or member is not referred to by the name of the new party in the parliament. The new party must be formed outside of parliament and participate in elections and win its own seats in order to obtain the formal status of a parliamentary party group.

<sup>18</sup> There are only a few cases of MPs who leave parliament as a member of one party and return as a representative of another after elections. Margot Kranenveldt-van der Veen, for example, gave up both her seat and party membership of the center-right LPF (*Lijst Pim Fortuyn*) in the summer of 2006, and returned to



### 6.3. Party group unity over time

While in the comparative literature party defection is often considered to be motivated by MPs' (electoral) ambitions, it is questionable whether party defection in the Netherlands fits into this mold. Party group switching within parliament is very rare because established parties generally do not accept MPs from other parties, and forming an independent group may involve some short term legislative perks, but usually entails the end of the MP's (national) political career. Thus, in terms of an MP's (political career) ambitions, he is better off staying in his party, or leaving parliament voluntarily if the conflict with his party group becomes severe. An MP who does defect but stays in parliament, apparently feels that he is serving his voters (or his purse for the short term), or representing a particular group of party members, by staying in parliament as an independent. The fact that the number of individual or groups of MPs who left their party group but stayed in parliament as independents has increased over time means, however, that parliament is not insulated from changes in the electoral arena. But it is not the case that the party group unity (as measured by party group defections) of the established parties has suffered as a result of the changes in the electorate. Instead, the increase in electoral volatility in the relatively open Dutch electoral systems has resulted in an increase in the number of new parties that, likely as a result of their newness to politics and their lack of an institutionalized party organization, are more likely to experience party defections.

#### 6.3.2 Party group voting

##### Voting procedures

As mentioned above, in the Dutch parliament most decisions are taken by simple majority vote (Constitution of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, article 67.2). Voting is announced on the agenda which is published ahead of time as much as possible, and in the Second Chamber nowadays usually takes place on Tuesdays after the weekly question hour. In order to ensure that voting is valid, the Speaker of the House only opens the plenary meeting of the day when more than half of the 150 MPs are signed in as present in parliament's building.

According to the Second Chamber's Standing Orders, voting need only take place if one or more MPs (including the Speaker, who is a voting member) ask that it do so (article 69.1 and 69.4). In practice, however, the members of the Presidium Committee implicitly exercise their right as MPs to request that voting take place when they compile the plenary agenda.<sup>19</sup> The Speaker can also propose that decisions be taken without a vote (article 69.4). This is referred to as the gavel (*hamerslag*) procedure: the Speaker makes a statement which is registered in the parliamentary records and the proposal is accepted with a knock of the gavel (Wolters, 1984, 182-183). Before the knock, individual MPs and party groups may request that the parliamentary records show that they were

---

parliament the following year as a representative for the PvdA.

<sup>19</sup> The Presidium committee consists of a number of MPs from different party groups, including the Speaker and Deputy Speakers.



against the decision, ensuring that their opposing position is registered. If this happens, the proposal is assumed to be accepted with the support of the other members who are present. The gavel procedure is primarily used for procedural matters and for substantive matters if the opposing minority is considered to be small.<sup>20</sup>

There are two voting procedures parliament can follow: regular or roll call voting (articles 69.3 and 70.1).<sup>21</sup> For a regular vote the MPs who are present on the floor cast their vote by a show of hands and do so on behalf of all the members of their party group; the number of MPs physically present on the floor is not counted (*Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal* website, 2015a). Until 1969 the parliamentary records did not register the voting position of party groups, but only mentioned the outcome of the vote and the names of individual MPs who explicitly requested that their position be recorded (which for a regular vote is necessary if an MP wishes to dissent from his party group's position).<sup>22</sup> Since 1969, the rule is that the parliamentary records register the position of each individual party group as well (Wolters, 1984, 183).<sup>23</sup> This practice is evidence that party group unity in the Dutch parliament is quite high, as the procedures by default assumes that party representatives vote in unison.

In a roll call vote each individual MP verbally announces his position (aye or nay) (article 70.4). As the vote takes place at the individual level, the number of MPs physically present on the floor for the vote is important to meet the quorum for the vote to be valid (more than half of the 150 MPs need to be present) and for the outcome of the vote. The Speaker will sometimes adjourn the meeting and let the division bell in the building sound again in order for more MPs to make their way to the plenary hall, even allowing time for parties to rally their troops from outside the building if necessary. The Speaker may also close the meeting and call a new meeting at a later time (article 70.5). A roll call can also be requested when the results of a vote taken by the show of hands procedure are unclear, as long as the request comes before the Speaker accepts the vote (with a knock of the gavel) (article 70.2).

Before 1887, roll call voting was formally required for all parliamentary decisions. But already in 1851, the Speaker implemented the gavel procedure mentioned above

<sup>20</sup> Because strictly speaking voting does not take place during the gavel procedure, these votes are not included in the analysis. If these were included this would most likely result in higher party group voting unity scores.

<sup>21</sup> Written (and thus secret) voting is a third procedure voting, which is used when parliament votes on appointments (articles 74 to 86). This practice is, for example, nowadays used for the appointment of the Speaker of the House, for which it was first used in 2002 with the election of Frans Weisglas (VVD) as Speaker.

<sup>22</sup> For the years before party group positions were registered in the parliamentary records (*Handelingen der Staten-Generaal*) voting positions were inferred from party groups' (MPs' positions taken in the earlier debate. One drawback of this method is that it does not take into account that party groups may have changed their position between the debate and the vote, without affecting the outcome of the decision. This is quite unlikely, however.

<sup>23</sup> Both the gavel procedure and the regular voting procedure are usually categorized as anonymous voting in comparative studies on parliamentary voting procedures (Saalfeld, 1995, 532-533). Since 1969, however, the parliamentary records include the positions of party groups for regular votes, thus making the positions of party groups public. Furthermore, individual MPs' can request that their vote be registered, meaning that MPs can make their own position public if they wish to do so.



### 6.3. Party group unity over time

(Pippel, 1950, 364), presumably to save time. This practice was formalized in the constitution of 1887, with the inclusion of the clause that voting takes place if requested by any one MP. When exactly the practice of regular voting was implemented is unclear. In an earlier publication on the workings of parliament, Van Raalte (1959, 190) mentions that the method of rising in place, which constituted the 'regular' voting procedure at the time and is referred to as chamber gymnastics (*kamergymnastiek*),<sup>24</sup> was used only sporadically until the increase in the number of parliamentary seats from 100 to 150 in 1956, which made the use of the roll call voting procedure even more time-consuming than before.<sup>25</sup> The method of rising in place was formalized as the regular voting procedure in the Second Chamber's Standing Orders in 1967 (Wolters, 1984), and was itself formally replaced by the show of hands procedure in 1983.

The parliamentary records (*Handelingen der Staten-Generaal*) include almost 60,000 substantive matters that were put to a vote between 1946 and 2010, including amendments (31 percent), bills (8 percent) and motions (56 percent). The changes in voting procedures described above in part can account for the decrease in the number and relative share of roll call votes between 1946 and 2010: in the earlier parliamentary terms, around half of all votes were taken by roll call (see Table 6.6). In total, however, only about 1,750 votes (3 percent of all votes) were taken by roll call since the first election after the Second World War, out of which 1,107 took place before the formalization of the method of rising in place in 1967, and a total of 1,464 before 1983 when the show of hands procedure was implemented. Since then, the percentage share of roll call votes per parliamentary term dropped to around one percent or less, although in absolute terms, the number of roll call votes taken per parliamentary term increased again slightly since the second half of the 1990s.

#### A word on absence

As mentioned in chapter 3, abstention and absenteeism (non-voting) are generally ignored in studies of party group unity (but see Carey (2007, 2009) for exceptions). Abstention is formally not possible when voting in the Dutch parliament. MPs can implicitly abstain by not showing up in parliament or a voting session, or by leaving the floor during a particular vote (Bovend'Eert and Kummeling, 2010, 526). This type of 'abstention' is often of a symbolic nature: an MP may not agree with his party group's position on a particular vote, but not disagree enough to actually vote against his group, or may even have been requested by his party group to leave the floor rather than publicly vote against the party line.<sup>26</sup> For a vote held by the regular show of hands procedure these purposive absences have no effect on the end result because the MPs who are present

---

<sup>24</sup> This is still the official procedure in the Dutch Senate (*Eerste Kamer*) (Bovend'Eert and Kummeling, 2010, 526).

<sup>25</sup> Bovend'Eert and Kummeling (2010, 528) note that a roll call vote takes between six and eight minutes. This does not include the time it takes for MPs to make their way to the floor.

<sup>26</sup> It is, however, difficult to distinguish between symbolic absenteeism and absence brought about by, for example, MPs who leave the floor to attend to a phone call or visit the restroom.



on the floor are held to vote for all the members of their party group, and voting is registered per party group. For roll call votes, however, absences can influence the end result of a vote, since a majority of the total number of MPs signed in as present in the building is required for the vote to pass.<sup>27</sup>

Sometimes roll call votes are requested purposely when the absence of MPs is known to other party groups. In 1994 during the formation of the first Purple coalition, for example, the opposition parties *GroenLinks*, VVD and D66 asked for a roll call on a motion that prohibited the caretaker Minister of Internal Affairs (Ed van Thijn, PvdA) and the caretaker Minister of Justice (Ernst Hirsch Ballin, CDA) to continue their involvement with the Interregional Criminal Investigation Team (*Interregionaal Recherche team*, IRT) for the remainder of the cabinet formation period (Boom and Voorn, 1994). That evening, a number of MPs were participating in the filming of the amusement program ‘Star Battle’ (*Sterrenslag*) and were called back to parliament for the vote. Of the MPs who were on the set of the TV program, two VVD MPs, Robin Linschoten and Anne Lize van der Stoep, and one from *GroenLinks*, Marijke Vos, did manage to make it to parliament in time for the vote. The PvdA MPs Henk Vos and Evan Rozenblad, however, arrived in parliament after the vote had already taken place. The motion was accepted (61 against 59 votes) and led to the resignation of both caretaker ministers.

Absence during roll call voting can further be used to stall for time. In 1955, for example, the Communist party was able to prevent a vote from taking place by first requesting a roll call vote, and then having all its MPs stand behind the green curtain at the back of the plenary hall, thereby ensuring that the vote could not take place because the quorum of MPs for the vote to be valid was not met (Van Raalte, 1959, 189). A more recent example is that of the PVV in 2012, when its party leader Geert Wilders requested a roll call vote because he wanted to delay voting on the European Stability Mechanisms (ESM) pending a court case (NOS, 2012). There are, however, very few cases of recorded absences during roll call votes. This might indeed be because absenteeism is used to stop a vote from taking place by not meeting the necessary quota (and therefore there is no record of the vote), or MPs might not even sign in to parliament on the day they plan to symbolically abstain. Both seem unlikely to occur frequently, however.

Of all votes included in the data set based on the parliamentary records, there are about 1,000 recorded absences. Of these absences, 90 percent were recorded during a single parliamentary term (1982-1986). Those mainly responsible for these absences during that period are Hans Janmaat (40 percent), who was the only representative for the Center Party (*Centrumpartij*), the independent Jan-Nico Scholten (25 percent) and, to a lesser extent, Cathy Ubels (12 percent) from the Christian-progressive EVP (*Evangelische Volkspartij*) and Gert Schutte (12 percent) from the Orthodox Protestant GVP (*Gereformeerde Politiek Verbond*). As a rule, therefore, absences that are recorded are a characteristic of small party groups consisting of only one, occasionally two, MPs. This makes sense since if these MPs are not present on the plenary floor themselves there is

<sup>27</sup> There are also cases of the informal practice of ‘pairing’ between government and opposition MPs who cannot be present in parliament during a roll call vote. It is, however, not possible to ascertain whether pairing occurred during a particular vote because there is no formal record of the practice.



### 6.3. Party group unity over time

no one to cast a vote for their part group, and therefore the parliamentary records show that they (and their entire party group) are absent. As parliamentary party groups consisting of only one member are not included in the calculation of party group unity and dissent scores below (because there is always perfect party group unity in a group consisting of only one representative), absenteeism can safely be ignored for the purpose of this study.

#### Frequency of MPs' dissent

Previous studies on voting in the Dutch Second Chamber, of which there are only a few, show that party voting unity is high, even near complete (Andeweg and Thomassen, 2011a, 4). One of the earliest analyses of roll call votes was conducted by Tazelaar (1974) who covered the end of the period of pillarization, and estimated that for the six largest parties during the De Jong Cabinet (1967-1971) party group unanimity varied between 92 and 98 percent (cited in Wolters, 1984, 183). Visscher (1994) also looked at party group unity in the period between 1963 and 1986, and concluded that although there was slightly higher disunity during the Den Uyl Cabinet (1973-1977), unity was almost complete during the rest of the period, especially in the larger parliamentary party groups. Andeweg and Thomassen (2011a, 658) provide information on voting between 1998 and 2008. During this period parliament voted a total of 14,532 times out of which there were only 67 votes (0.46 percent) in which at least one MP (1.37 on average) deviated from the party group line.

Table 6.4 shows the percentage of votes in which at least one MP voted differently than the majority of his party group, for all groups combined (excluding those with only one seat) in each parliamentary term since the first election after the Second World War.<sup>28</sup> On average, dissent occurs quite infrequently in the Dutch parliament; in less than 1 percent of all votes did at least one MP vote against his party group. The frequency of dissent also decreased over time. Starting at around 8 percent in the 1946-1948 parliamentary term, the frequency of dissent increased slightly during the parliamentary terms in the first half of the 1960s, but dropped to around 2 percent at the start of the 1970s, and continued to decrease to even less than 0.1 percent as of the end of the 1990s.

The average frequency of dissent is higher for the roll call votes (about 8 percent) than regular votes (less than 1 percent). For roll call votes, there are two noteworthy outliers. During the 1963-1967 term at least one MP deviated from the party group line in 21 percent of the 127 roll call votes held. Roll call vote dissent occurred most frequently in three parties during this term: the KVP (43 times), the ARP (25 times) and PvdA (22 times) (not shown in Table 6.4). The KVP managed to bring down two governments led by prime ministers from its own party during that period. The first, the

---

<sup>28</sup> There is no statistically significant relationship between the types of proposals (amendments, bills or motions) and party voting unity, therefore the analysis below only focuses on the differences between the method of voting, regular and roll call. Furthermore, four percent of proposal types are unknown, and there are a few votes that took place for which the method of voting is unknown. These are excluded from the analysis.



### 6.3. Party group unity over time

Table 6.4: Percentage of votes in which party group unity was not complete in the Second Chamber of the Dutch Parliament 1946-2010 (%)

Start term	Parties (n)	All votes	(n)	Regular votes	(n)	Roll call votes	(n)
1946	7	8.3	88	0.6	1	9.8	87
1948	8	5.2	202	3.5	51	6.2	151
1952	8	5.2	196	2.6	60	8.2	136
1956	7	6.5	106	3.3	27	9.9	79
1959	8	10.0	189	5.0	40	13.8	149
1963	10	8.2	166	3.7	35	21.0	131
1967	11	2.5	363	1.8	239	7.2	124
1971	14	2.2	152	1.8	119	11.3	33
1972	14	2.6	746	2.3	640	7.6	106
1977	11	0.7	226	0.7	211	5.7	12
1981	10	0.4	32	0.4	32	0.0	0
1982	12	0.2	95	0.2	89	5.5	6
1986	9	0.3	40	0.2	31	18.8	9
1989	9	0.2	77	0.3	75	2.6	2
1994	12	0.2	76	0.1	57	4.0	19
1998	9	0.1	47	0.1	42	1.0	5
2002	10	0.1	14	0.0395	4	6.8	10
2003	9	0.1	78	0.1	69	2.3	9
2006	10	0.0159	12	0.0133	10	0.6	2
2010	10	0.0078	5	0.0	0	1.1	5
Mean / total	10	0.6	2,910	0.4	1,832	7.6	1,078

$$\chi^2 (1) = 12376.290, \text{ sig.} = .000; \phi = -.157 \text{ sig.} = .000$$

(total votes, regular versus roll call)

Marijnen Cabinet, fell because of inter-party and intra-party disagreement about the government's public broadcasting policy and advertisement revenues from public channels (Van der Heiden, 2010).<sup>29</sup> The Cals Cabinet, which was formed near the end of 1965, was brought down by its own party group leader Norbert Schmelzer during the 1966 parliamentary budget debates (*Algemene Beschouwingen*), when he introduced a motion asking the government to take additional measure to decrease government expenditure. The motion was interpreted as a motion of no confidence by Prime Minister Jo Cals, who resigned that same evening (known as the 'Night of Schmelzer') (Van Kessel,

<sup>29</sup> The motion-Baeten, introduced by a KVP MP, called the Marijnen Cabinet to make haste in making its position on the matter public, which indirectly led to the fall of the Cabinet (Van der Heiden, 2010, 155-166).



### 6.3. Party group unity over time

Table 6.5: Percentage of votes in which party group unity was not complete in the Second Chamber of the Dutch Parliament 1946-2010: CDA, PvdA and VVD averages only (%)

Party	All votes	(n)	Regular votes	(n)	Roll call votes	(n)
CDA*	2.1	1,366	1.2	720	13.9	646
PvdA	1.0	557	0.7	373	10.5	184
VVD**	0.6	331	0.3	182	8.5	149

\* Figures before 1977 include voting by the CDA's predecessors, the ARP, CHU and KVP.

\*\* Figures before 1948 include voting by the VVD's predecessor, the PvdV (*Partij van de Vrijheid*).

2010). In both cases, the KVP parliamentary party group leadership turned against the government's position, forcing MPs to choose between the two.

Over the entire time period, the KVP is the party that suffered from the most frequent dissent during roll call votes. Dissent by at least one KVP MP occurred 278 times between 1946 and 1977, the year that the party first participated in elections under the flag of the CDA together with the ARP and the CHU. This may, in part, account for the high percentage in the frequency of dissent in the CDA over the entire period (13.9 percent, see Table 6.5) which includes the dissent within its predecessors. If only the parliamentary periods after the electoral merger of the three Christian parties in 1977 are included, the frequency of dissent during roll call votes for the CDA drops to 7.6 percent (6.3 percent for the PvdA and 3.4 percent for the VVD after 1977, not shown in Table 6.5), totaling 20 cases of dissent, of which 11 occurred during the first period after the electoral fusion.

A final noteworthy outlier shown in Table 6.4 is that during the 1986-1989 term there was dissent in almost 19 percent of roll call votes. Only nine roll call votes were held in total, however. Of these nine votes, MPs from the CDA and D66 did not vote in unison on one vote each, the PvdA did not vote as a unified bloc on three votes and the members of the VVD did not vote together on four votes. One of the issues that led to disunity in the PvdA and VVD was the continuation of the state-paid pension to the families of former MPs, brought about by the controversial case of the 'black widow', Florrie Rost van Tonningen-Heubel, whose husband had been an MP for the Nationalist-Socialist movement (*Nationaal-Socialistische Beweging*, NSB) before the Second World War.

In sum, the percentage of votes for which at least one MP voted differently from the majority of his party group is quite low, entailing that dissent occurs quite infrequently in the Dutch parliament. Moreover, the frequency of dissent has actually decreased over time, which is not what would be expected if the changes in the electoral arena had affected MP behavior in the legislative arena as predicted by the two-arena model.



### Rice scores

The most common party group unity score is the Rice score, named after Stuart Rice (1925), which is calculated per party group (i) per vote (j) by taking the absolute difference in the percentage of votes for and votes against. The Rice score can range from 0 (when an equal number of MPs from the same party group vote Aye and Nay, in other words, the party is split on the vote) to 100 (all MPs from the same party group vote the same).

$$RICE_{ij} = \frac{|\%Aye_{ij} - \%Nay_{ij}|}{\%Aye_{ij} + \%Nay_{ij}}$$

As suspected, party group unity has always been high in the Netherlands, with the average Rice scores for all votes starting out at 96.32 percent during the 1946-1948 parliamentary term, and averaging at 99.81 percent for the entire period (see Table 6.6). One can still detect an increase in party group unity, however, as at the end of the 1960s party group unity for all votes increased to above 99 percent, after which it continued to increase, reaching over 99.99 percent in the latest term investigated (2006-2010). The only political party to go below 99.90 percent since the turn of the century is the LPF (99.78 percent in 2002-2003 and 99.88 percent 2003-2006, not shown in Table 6.6).

When it comes to regular votes, new and small party groups have relatively low Rice scores. The party with the lowest Rice score for regular votes (85.11 percent) is the NMP (*Nederlandse Middenstandspartij*), a party aimed at representing the interests of business owners and entrepreneurs, which was only in parliament for one short term between 1971 and 1972. The party group consisted of two MPs of whom one (De Jong) defected and became an independent in 1971 (see Table 6.3). The left-socialist PSP (*Pacifistisch Socialistische Partij*) comes second in terms of the lowest Rice score for regular votes, scoring 92.53 percent in its first parliamentary term in 1959-1963, and together with the Reformed SGP (*Staatkundig Gereformeerde Partij*) (97.31 percent, three seats) and the communist CPN (*Communistische Partij van Nederland*) (95.50 percent, three seats) pulls down the average for the 1959-1963 parliamentary period. (Interestingly, these three parties score the highest Rice scores for roll call votes during this period.) Starting in the 1977-1981 period, no party group, large or small, has scored below 99.76 percent for regular votes (not shown in Table 6.6). Thus, although the introduction of more new parties, which could be ascribed to the increase in electoral volatility and partisan dealignment, has led to an increase in the number of MPs who leave their party but stay in parliament since the 2000s (see subsection 6.3.1), it does not seem to have had an effect on party group voting unity.

There is a statistically significant difference in average party group unity between roll call and regular votes. Over the entire period, party group unity averaged 97.06 percent for all roll call votes and 99.89 percent for all regular votes. The difference is greatest during the 1986-1989 period, the only time when the average Rice score for all party groups combined dipped below 90 percent for roll call votes (of which there were 8 that period). D66 (93.75 percent), the PvdA (79.87 percent) and the VVD (65.00 percent) score their lowest average Rice score for roll call votes in this period, the VVD's



### 6.3. Party group unity over time

Table 6.6: Average party group unity in the Second Chamber of the Dutch Parliament 1946-2010 (Rice score)

Start term	Parties (n)	All votes	(n)	Regular votes	(n)	Roll call votes	(n)
1946	7	96.3215	162	99.8918	24	95.6484	138
1948	8	97.8546	587	98.5462	210	97.4426	377
1952	8	97.9735	526	98.9185	289	96.6750	237
1956	7	97.8219	234	98.9612	114	96.6442	120
1959	8	96.2602	256	97.9663	102	94.9957	154
1963	10	96.9950	236	98.8805	105	95.3674	131
1967	11	99.2239	1,187	99.4835	1,034	97.2668	153
1971	14	99.2463	588	99.4141	562	95.3699	26
1972	14	99.1685	2,247	99.2769	2,137	96.9910	110
1977	11	99.8671	4,629	99.8807	4,589	98.2127	40
1981	10	99.9288	806	99.9283	802	100.0000	4
1982	12	99.9679	5,953	99.9733	5,941	97.2676	12
1986	9	99.9140	2,644	99.9494	2,636	88.2493	8
1989	9	99.9669	4,255	99.9674	4,244	99.7852	11
1994	12	99.9508	4,078	99.9678	4,033	98.2537	45
1998	9	99.9831	5,054	99.9838	4,995	99.9120	59
2002	10	99.9668	952	99.9951	937	98.0039	15
2003	9	99.9763	5,933	99.9792	5,890	99.5749	43
2006	10	99.9981	7,541	99.9982	7,505	99.9627	36
2010	10	99.9985	6,304	100.0000	6,256	99.7911	48
Mean / total n	10	99.8163	54,172	99.8973	52,405	97.0630	1,767

*F-test = 45,868.456 (sig. = .000);*

*t-test (df = 14,243.430) = 26.449 (sig. = .000)*

*(total votes, regular versus roll call votes means, equal variance not assumed)*

score being the lowest average party group unity score for roll call votes in the Dutch parliament in the entire period under study. The CDA's score on roll call votes in 1986-1989 period (91.00 percent) also comes close to its lowest score (89.69 percent in 1977-1981, the first parliamentary term after its electoral fusion) (not shown in Table 6.6). If the CDA's and VVD's predecessors are included in the calculation of its average Rice score for the entire period since the first election after the end of the Second World War, their party group unity scores are pulled down (see the bottom of Table 6.6). If only the period after the electoral fusion of the CDA in 1977 is considered, the party group unity scores of the three largest parties is well above 99 percent for roll call votes (99.94 for both the CDA and the PvdA, and 99.96 for the VVD).



Table 6.7: Average party group unity in the Second Chamber of the Dutch Parliament 1946-2010: CDA, PvdA and VVD only (Rice score)

Party	All votes	(n)	Regular votes	(n)	Roll call votes	(n)
CDA*	99.3626	66,192	99.7294	61,556	94.4926	4,636
PvdA	99.8099	54,157	99.8976	52,404	97.1905	1,753
VVD**	99.8236	53,995	99.9301	52,404	96.6356	1,751

\* Figures before 1977 include voting by the CDA's predecessors, the ARP, CHU and KVP.

\*\* Figures before 1948 include voting by the VVD's predecessor, the PvdV.

At first glance, the difference in party group unity between regular and roll call votes does seem to hint that roll call votes are requested strategically when MPs or party groups suspect disunity in other groups, as suggested by Depauw and Martin (2009). When one looks closely at the parliamentary records, however, it is often the Speaker of the House who asks for the vote to take place by roll call. This request by the Speaker usually coincides with a prior debate in which it is clear that there are MPs who wish to vote differently from the other members of their party group, or immediately after a regular vote has already taken place for which the result is unclear. These differences in voting unity between regular and roll call votes provides evidence for the claim by Carubba et al. (2008) and Hug (2010) that relying only on roll call votes to gauge party group unity may lead to selection biases. Most important for the study at hand, however, is the finding that in terms of their Rice-scores on both regular and roll call votes, parties' voting unity is very high in the Dutch parliament, and has actually increased over time.

### Number of dissenting MPs

Table 6.8 the depth of dissent, i.e., the number of MPs who vote differently from the majority of their party group (Kam, 2009), per parliamentary term. Dissent is usually limited to one MP, and the general trend is that the depth of dissent also decreased over time. Whereas the depth of dissent for roll call votes was highest in the terms before 1971, for regular votes dissent was deepest during the terms between 1967 and 1977.

Over the entire period, the cases of deepest dissent occurred in the KVP, with 48 cases of six or more MPs dissenting on regular votes in the period before 1977, and 85 cases of six or more MPs voting against the party group on roll call votes (not shown in Table 6.8). Of the latter, 38 occurred in the 1972-1977 parliamentary term, during which the KVP participated in government together with the ARP, PvdA, PPR and D66. The KVP and ARP had, however, already committed themselves to formation of the CDA with the CHU, which was left out of the cabinet. Whereas the PvdA and D66 considered the cabinet to be a parliamentary cabinet (which entails that there is a detailed coalition agreement that is influenced by, and can count on the support of, the parliamentary



Table 6.8: Number of dissenting MPs in the Second Chamber of the Dutch Parliament 1946-2010

Regular votes (n)										Roll call votes (n)						
Start term	1	2	3	4	5	6+	Split	Total	1	2	3	4	5	6+	Split	Total
1946	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	38	18	9	5	3	7	7	87
1948	33	7	1	1	0	1	8	51	69	33	17	8	2	19	3	151
1952	37	15	2	1	0	0	5	60	58	32	13	8	8	8	9	136
1956	18	7	1	0	0	1	0	27	39	10	7	5	3	15	0	79
1959	27	4	4	2	0	0	3	40	56	21	18	13	10	27	4	149
1963	25	2	6	1	0	1	0	35	40	23	17	12	7	25	7	131
1967	109	53	20	22	11	23	1	239	45	20	18	12	6	17	6	124
1971	58	24	13	10	8	5	1	119	10	7	3	2	4	7	0	33
1972	309	120	73	41	15	78	4	640	55	17	7	4	7	13	3	106
1977	85	41	32	3	8	42	0	211	4	0	2	2	0	7	0	12
1981	14	9	3	1	2	3	0	32	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1982	39	21	7	3	3	16	0	89	1	0	1	0	0	2	2	6
1986	12	1	3	0	0	15	0	31	1	1	0	0	0	7	0	9
1989	56	5	5	2	1	6	0	75	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	2
1994	41	14	1	1	0	0	0	57	9	5	1	0	0	3	1	19
1998	32	8	2	0	0	0	0	42	4	0	1	0	0	0	0	5
2002	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	6	1	2	0	0	1	0	10
2003	61	5	1	2	0	0	0	69	6	1	0	1	1	0	0	9
2006	8	1	0	0	0	1	0	10	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
2010	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	1	0	0	0	0	5
Total %	52.9	18.4	9.5	4.9	2.6	10.5	1.2	100	41.6	17.6	10.9	6.7	4.7	14.7	3.9	100
Total n	969	337	174	90	48	192	22	1,832	448	190	117	72	51	158	42	1,078



party groups), the Christian parties ARP and KVP viewed the Den Uyl Cabinet as extra-parliamentary (because there was no real coalition agreement, but a coalition program to which the parliamentary party groups were not bound) (*Parlement & Politiek*, 2015b, 2015c).

In this first parliamentary term after the electoral list fusion of the Christian parties 1977, dissent occurred both frequently and deeply in CDA party group, with in total almost 100 cases of dissent (86 during regular voting and 11 during roll call) of which there were 24 occurrences of more than six MPs dissenting (18 on regular votes and six roll call votes) (not shown in Table 6.8). During the 1980s, the frequency and depth of dissent in the CDA subsided. Since the 1990s, the CDA has joined the VVD as one of the two (large) parties with the deepest dissent.

Since the turn of the twenty-first century, the depth of dissent is very limited in the Dutch parliament. The deepest case of dissent has involved the PvdA party group.<sup>30</sup> In 2003, four PvdA MPs voted against their party group's position that favored sending troops to Iraq. Several PvdA MPs also voted against their party's position on the introduction of an automatic organ donor registration system. A recent outlier is the 2003-2006 parliamentary term, during which there were a total of 69 cases of dissent (including those in the PvdA mentioned above). 18 of these cases occurred in the relatively young and troubled LPF, which suffered from a few party group defections as well (see subsection 6.3.1). Finally, VVD MP Stef Blok was responsible for six of these recent cases of dissent because he repeatedly voted against his party group on the day that the final report 'Building Bridges' (*Bruggen slaan*) of the parliamentary committee investigating the integration of ethnic minorities in the Netherlands was voted on in parliament in 2004. Stef Blok was the chairman of the committee.

Finally, whereas dissent by one or two MPs is, if it occurs, generally a characteristic of large parties in the Dutch parliament, party groups splitting on a vote (when half the party votes yea and the other half votes nay) is a characteristic of small parties with fewer than six legislative seats (not shown Table 6.8 ). The CHU, a medium sized party, the seat number of which ranged from eight to thirteen between 1946 and 1977, also managed to split on twelve roll call votes. All in all, however, the number of MPs who dissent is usually limited, and the number of cases in which more than one MP dissents from the majority of his party group has decreased over time.

The descriptive statistics above show that party group unity in the Netherlands has not only remained strong over time, but that it has actually increased in strength. There are very few cases of MPs leaving their party but remaining in parliament (we can say little about those who left parliament, however), and although there seems to be an increase in the number of party group defections over time, these defections have generally been limited to a number of new parties represented in parliament since the 2000s. We see this same pattern in terms of the difference between new and established parties in party groups' Rice scores, albeit that the pattern is limited to an earlier period in time; since the end of the 1970s, party group unity has almost always been above 99.9

<sup>30</sup> Overall the PvdA comes in second in terms of the depth of dissent over the entire period of study, with 46 roll call and 85 regular votes in which more than six MPs dissented.



## 6.4. Expectations

percent, and both the frequency and depth of dissent have decreased over time.

### 6.4 Expectations

Given our findings above, it would seem that the legislative arena is insulated from changes in the electoral arena, since electoral volatility and partisan dealignment seem to have had little effect on party group unity in terms of defections and legislative voting, especially when it comes to established parties. It could also be that the changes in the electorate have affected some of the pathways to party group unity (i.e., the legislative arena is not insulated from the electoral arena), but that party groups' procedural advantages within the legislature are strong enough to elicit party group unity anyway. From the perspective of political parties, however, one could argue that relying solely on the rules in the legislative arena would be a risky strategy. It seems more likely that parties have actively taken measures, in both the legislative and electoral arena, to counteract the effects of electoral volatility and partisan dealignment on their MPs' legislative behavior. Taking the perspective of 'parties as organizations', we hypothesize how parties have tried to strengthen each of the pathways to party group unity, and thus influence the associated MP decision-making algorithm that is central to this book. We then test these expectations using the 1972, 1978, 1990, 2001 and 2006 Dutch Parliamentary Studies, and the Dutch data from the 2010 PartiRep survey.

#### 6.4.1 Division of labor

Andeweg and Thomassen (2011a) contend that cue-taking is encouraged by the Dutch parliament's specialized committee system. As mentioned above, committee membership is distributed proportionally to party groups (with special consideration paid to smaller party groups), and thus within each party group MPs specialize in, and/or act as spokespersons for, the issue areas dealt with in their parliamentary committee(s). Larger party groups usually also have their own internal system of committees, often mirroring those in parliament. This entails, however, that MPs are more likely to rely on their fellow party group members for voting advice when it comes to issues outside of their own portfolio (and those not included in the party program, or in the case of government participation, the coalition agreement). Moreover, MPs may be encouraged to not interfere with the policy areas of their fellow party group members in exchange for more independence and freedom in their own issue area, as part of a tacit tit-for-tat agreement within the party group (Andeweg and Thomassen, 2011a).

Even though the number of specialized committees was reduced from 29 permanent committees in 1990 to only 13 in 2006 (Oldersma, 1997, 147-148; Van Vonna, 2012, 131) there has been an overall increase in the number of committee meetings over time, whereas the number of plenary meetings has remained relatively stable since the 1970s (see Table 6.9). This means that MPs spend more time working within their own committees, thus strengthening the division of labor in parliament as a whole, but also within party groups. This also means that MPs are likely to be increasingly reliant on



Table 6.9: Use of parliamentary rights in the Second Chamber of the Dutch National Parliament 1956-2012

Period	Meeting		Legislation		Amendments	Written questions	Oversight	
	Plenary	Committee	Government bills	Private member bill			Urgent debates	Resolutions
1956-1960	74	273	258	0	101	228	6	-
1960-1964	79	354	251	1	187	268	5	20
1964-1968	58	368	281	1	130	621	3	63
1968-1972	87	639	269	7	262	1389	15	171
1972-1976	100	597	271	3	493	1498	12	249
1976-1980	94	736	298	5	728	1532	15	639
1980-1984	96	1124	318	4	1483	1305	15	831
1984-1988	102	1286	259	7	1460	1011	15	597
1988-1992	99	1078	261	3	1085	736	12	872
1992-1996	100	1051	270	6	1030	990	9	535
1996-2000	103	1429	248	6	1188	1571	8	898
2000-2004	97	1367	259	10	na	1692	9	1118
2004-2008	102	1475	249	13	na	2147	37	1470
2008-2012	107	1594	240	11	510	2902	61	2643

Source: Andeweg and Irwin (2014, 172)



## 6.4. Expectations

their fellow party group members for voting advice when it comes to issues dealt with in other committees. As there have been no changes in the parliamentary rules in terms of the number of required committee meetings, the increase in the number of committee meetings has probably been initiated by MPs and their party groups themselves. In addition, even though the number of government and private member bills has remained relatively stable, the total number of amendments and resolutions has increased over time, entailing that more votes are taken in parliament.<sup>31</sup> MPs are thus required to vote on more topics, and again, the majority of these votes will probably be about issues that do not fall within their area of specialization. Add to this the fact that MPs spend more time in their committees, and therefore have less time to form an opinion on all matters that fall outside their own portfolio, it is likely that MPs increasingly rely on the cues given to them by their fellow party group members. The hypothesis is therefore that *cue-taking as a result of the division of labor in the Dutch national parliament has increased over time (H1)*.

### 6.4.2 Party agreement

Whereas cue-taking as a decision-making mechanism is relevant under the condition that MPs do not always have the time or resources to form their own opinion, party agreement, as a determinant of party group unity, involves MPs voting together on the basis of shared ideological and policy preferences (Andeweg and Thomassen, 2011a; Kam, 2009; Krehbiel, 1993). In other words, there are issues, usually ideologically charged, on which MPs simply agree with each other and with the position of their party as a whole and their party group in particular. Since this is a relatively 'easy' pathway to party group unity, the expectation is that political party (group) leaders prefer to maximize the homogeneity of policy preferences of their (candidate) MPs in order to decrease the likelihood of disagreement in the first place, thereby limiting the need for alternative mechanisms to elicit party group unity, such as discipline. The necessity and advantages of including MPs with specific expertise and backgrounds in certain specific policy areas, however, means that those are responsible for the recruitment and initial selection of candidates for the electoral list cannot only take (candidate) MPs' agreement with the party program and electoral manifesto into consideration during the recruitment and selection process. Moreover, there may also be electoral reasons to select particular candidates who may not be in complete agree with the party on all issues, but who is deemed to be attractive to certain (groups of) voters. Parties' ability to influence party agreement is argued to be determined by the electoral system and parties' candidate selection procedures, as well as the process of deliberation that takes place within the parliamentary party group. One could argue that in the Netherlands, the combination of the party-oriented electoral system and parties' relative freedom when it comes to candidate selection, enable 'parties-as-organizations' to extend their procedural advan-

---

<sup>31</sup> This increase in parliamentary activity could also be offered as an example of decentralized political behavioral personalization (see subsection 2.4.2 in chapter 2). Our interest in it here, however, is its consequence for MPs' sequential decision-making process.



tages over individuals into the electoral arena.

Rahat and Hazan (2001) offer a framework to classify parties' candidate selection methods according to four dimensions, of which the decentralization of selection methods (where, or at what level of the party organization, are candidates selected?)<sup>32</sup> and the inclusiveness of selectorate (who can select candidates?) are most relevant to the discussion at hand.<sup>33</sup> The more the candidate selection process is controlled by the national party leadership (i.e., the more centralized the method and the less inclusive the selectorate), the more it is able to control the final composition of the list, and thereby maximize the homogeneity of policy preferences among its MPs. At first sight, candidate selection in the Netherlands has changed such that we may expect party agreement to have decreased over time.

In the Netherlands there has always been minimal state interference when it comes to candidate selection, leaving political parties free to organize it as they see fit. According to Hazan and Voerman (2006, 155), the 1917 change in the electoral system to one of Proportional Representation, which treats the entire country as one constituency, enabled the centralization of candidate selection procedures in the hands of the national party executive, which was responsible for the recruitment and selection of candidates, and the drafting of the provisional list. The provisional list was then put to party members who could influence the ranking of candidates indirectly via representatives at party conferences or directly via membership ballots. Although the involvement of party members (or their representatives) in the finalization of the candidacy list means that parties' selectorates can be classified as rather inclusive, this stage of candidate selection generally did not affect the composition of the list; at most a candidate was moved up or down a few slots (Lucardie and Voerman, 2004; Hazan and Voerman, 2006).

In the 1960s a number of parties abolished individual members' votes, resulting in a less inclusive selectorate, and instead gave regional party organizations a greater say in the composition of the provisional list, which entailed a more decentralized procedure and limited the power of the national party organization. In the early 1990s candidate selection procedures again became more centralized, as for example in both the PvdA and VVD the power of the regions over the provisional list was taken away and given back to the central party organization. In return, local representatives at the party conference were granted the final vote, thereby again increasing the inclusiveness of the selectorate. By the early 2000s, most parties further democratized their candidate selection procedures allowing for direct participation by their members in the selection of candidates and/or the leading candidate or 'list-puller' (*lijsttrekker*) (who are then placed first on the list), making the selectorate even more inclusive (Hazan and Voerman, 2006; Hillebrand, 1992; Koole and Leijenaar, 1988; Lucardie and Voerman, 2007).

<sup>32</sup> Above, the degree of decentralization is described as territorial. It can, however, also be functional (i.e., including the functional representation of women, minorities, etc.) (Rahat and Hazan, 2001, 304).

<sup>33</sup> The other two dimensions deal with who can be selected (with the entire electorate representing the most inclusive pole and the restriction to only party membership plus additional requirements (such as length of party membership) at the most exclusive end of the continuum) and how candidates are nominated (by voting procedures or appointment) (Rahat and Hazan, 2001).



#### 6.4. Expectations

Today, in most political parties it is the national party executive that dominates the preparatory phase and coordination of candidate selection. The national party executive formulates a set of candidate selection criteria (such as age, regional origin and policy specialization) and appoints a special selection (and sometimes recruitment) committee, which makes recommendations to the executive, which in turn drafts a provisional list (Lucardie and Voerman, 2007). Informally, however, party executives and special committees often consult the parliamentary party group leadership in evaluating incumbent MPs, who thus play an advisory role (Louwerse and Van Vonn, 2012). Hazan and Voerman (2006, 150, 155) categorize today's candidate selection procedures as centralized, given the role of the national party executive and the fact that in most parties selection takes place at the national level, and quite inclusive, as a result of party members' formal involvement in the finalization of the candidacy list and their ability to vote on leading candidates.<sup>34</sup>

Hazan and Voerman (2006, 149, 158) argue that increasing the inclusiveness of the selectorate could lead candidates to employ more individualistic strategies as a means of appealing to party members in order to increase their chances of (re-)selection. If successful, this could influence the composition of the candidate list, resulting in the nomination of candidates whose preferences are more akin to the party membership instead of the party leadership. In her analysis of policy preference congruence between CDA, PvdA, VVD and D66 party members and their representatives in parliament in the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s, Den Ridder (2014, 200-226, 331) finds that although preference homogeneity is generally lower among party members than among their representatives, the level of average congruence between the preferences of party members and their representatives in parliament is quite high and has not systematically increased or decreased over time. This suggests that the effects of party democratization are likely to be limited in terms of party group preference homogeneity in the legislative arena.

In addition, Hazan and Voerman (2006, 149) argue that a high degree of centralization in the hands of the national party organization can minimize the effect of increased inclusiveness. Indeed, the fact that the provisional lists presented by the party executive and/or selection committees remain largely unaltered indicates that the direct influence of party members remains minimal. This, and the fact that the composition of the list and the order in which candidates are placed is also difficult to overturn at the electoral stage, means that political parties, and especially the party leadership and national executive, have a strong procedural advantage over the individual in the electoral arena (Bowler, 2000; Sieberer, 2006).

Given that the influence of party democratization is probably quite limited, and the national party organizations have reestablished their centralized control over candidate

---

<sup>34</sup> Selection procedures are less centralized and more inclusive in *GroenLinks*, which formally does not involve the executive; the party council appoints a committee that makes recommendations to the party conference. And the members of D66 are allowed to express their preferences for the candidate list by means of postal ballot, on the basis of which an advisory committee (appointed by the party conference) determines the ranking on a provisional list, which is then put to the party conference. The final exception is the PVV, which formally has only one member (the party leader Geert Wilders) who makes all decisions himself, making its selection procedure very centralized and exclusive (Lucardie and Voerman, 2007).



selection, it is likely that, in an attempt to curtail the potential effects of partisan dealignment, parties have made an effort to select candidates whose policy positions are in agreement and closely match those stipulated in the party program and electoral manifesto, thereby increasing the homogeneity of the party group in parliament, and minimizing the need for alternative measures of maintaining party group unity. As a result of streamlining candidates in terms of policy positions, we expect that *party agreement in the Dutch national parliament increased over time (H2)*.

### 6.4.3 Party loyalty

In the case of disagreement with the party group line, an MP may still vote with the party group voluntarily because he subscribes to norms of party group loyalty and thus follows a 'logic of appropriateness'. Electoral volatility and partisan dealignment are argued to have a negative effect on party group loyalty because MPs may be more likely to choose to vote according to the position of other (potential) principals (i.e., voters) in the case of disagreement with the party group line. Although the decision to adhere to the norm of party group loyalty lies with the individual MP, party selectorates can try to influence the number of MPs in the parliamentary party group who adhere to the norm, and the extent to which MPs do so.

As is the case with party agreement, the national party leadership's centralized control over candidate selection plays a determining role when it comes the degree of solidarity in the party group. To a certain extent, candidates are socialized into norms of party group loyalty through their previous experience within the party or as party representatives at other levels of government (Asher, 1973; Crowe, 1983; Kam, 2009; Rush and Giddings, 2011), and being nominated as a candidate for the national parliament is considered a reward for these former party activities (Secker, 2000, 300). Although the number of first-timers in parliament has increased over time as a result of both electoral volatility and party selectorates' own tendency to increasingly opt for new instead of incumbent candidates (Thomassen et al., 2014, 185-186), the percentage of MPs with previous party experience has remained relatively stable over time (Secker, 2000, 300; but also see *Parlement & Politiek* 2015d). Given the risks for party group unity associated with electoral volatility and partisan dealignment, candidates' previous track record when it comes to subscription to the norm of party group loyalty as a selection criterion has likely increased in importance over time. All in all, we expect that parties have been able to counteract the effects of electoral volatility and partisan dealignment, and that *party group loyalty in the Dutch national parliament has increased over time (H3)*.

### 6.4.4 Party discipline

Party discipline entails that an MP submits to the party group line involuntarily in response to (the promise or threat of) positive or negative sanctions by the party (group) leadership (Andeweg and Thomassen, 2011a; Crowe, 1983; Jensen, 2000; Kam, 2009). In this case, an MP disagrees with the party group line and either has not sufficiently internalized the norm of party group loyalty, or the conflict with the group's position is



#### 6.4. Expectations

so intense that it supersedes his loyalty. As highlighted elsewhere in this book, parties have a number of different tools through which they can attempt to persuade MPs to obey the party despite their disagreement and lack of loyalty. Within the parliamentary arena, parties' control over committee membership and issue spokespersonship serve as important procedural advantage that can be used to elicit MPs' obedience. MPs who follow the party group line can be rewarded with the more prestigious committees and topics, whereas those who defy the party group can have their committee membership and spokespersonship taken from them. The fact that in the Dutch parliament an increasing amount of parliamentary work takes place within parliamentary committees means that the impact of such punishments, as perceived by MPs, may have increased over time. Thus, although the actual use of committee membership and issue spokespersonship as a means of disciplining MPs may not have increased over time, one can argue that the party's carrots have become increasingly tasty and the sticks increasingly hard.

What has increased over time is the number of cabinet (junior) ministers with previous parliamentary experience. Before 1967, 53 percent of cabinet (junior) ministers had previously held the position of MP. Between 1967 and 1986 this percentage rose to 69 percent, but dropped to 61 percent between 1986 and 2006. In the period between 2007 and 2012, however, 81 percent of cabinet (junior) ministers had been an MP prior to their promotion to the government (Thomassen et al., 2014, 187), which means that (potentially) governing parties have probably increased the use of (the promise of) government positions as a positive incentive to influence MPs' behavior.

Again, candidate selection also serves as an important tool with which party (group) leaders can (promise to) reward or (threaten to) punish their MPs. Knowing that in many Dutch parties the national party executive and selection committee consult the party group when evaluating incumbent MPs (Louwerse and Van Vonnö, 2012), recalcitrant MPs can be credibly threatened or actually punished with an unelectable slot on, or even removal from, the candidacy list. That candidate selection may be an important disciplinary tool is illustrated by an example offered by Koole and Leijenaar (1988, 205), who mention that the "...six CDA parliamentarians who voted against the installation of Cruise Missiles on Dutch Soil in 1986 paid the penalty by being relegated to much lower positions on the advisory list at the next election, although their supporters in the branches did manage to get them moved a little on the final list." Moreover, our earlier analysis of party discipline in the Dutch case in chapter 5, revealed that MPs consider being placed on an unelectable position on the party electoral list, or not being reselected at all, a likely response to an MP who repeatedly does not vote with the party group (see Table 5.26 in subsection 5.4.4). Furthermore, although the increase in electoral volatility has led to an increase in the number of seats exchanged between parties as a result of elections over time (see Table 6.1), the number of new MPs in parliament cannot solely be ascribed to changes in the electorate; parties themselves are increasing less likely to reselect incumbent MPs (Thomassen et al., 2014, 185-189; Van den Berg and Van den Braag, 2004, 69-71), making it more likely that party (group) leaders make good on their threat to not reselect MPs who disobey.

Moreover, whereas during the period of pillarization many MPs in the Netherlands were recruited from, but could also return to, the organizations within their pillar after



their time in politics (Andeweg and Thomassen, 2011a, 665), depillarization has meant that these ties between political parties and other societal organizations have disappeared, as has automatic recruitment and career advancement within the societal pillar. In addition, since the 1970s the position of MP has become a full-time profession. Although once in parliament an MP's income is secured because the party cannot legally oblige him to give up his seat, parties do control whether the MP will be selected for upcoming elections, and thus MPs are solely dependent on the party for their future income if they would like to pursue a career in politics. Both depillarization and professionalization entail that over time MPs have become more dependent on their political party for their career and livelihood, which means that the weight of candidate reselection as a disciplining tool has probably increased over time. All in all, we expect that as a pathway to party group unity, *party discipline in the Dutch parliament has increased over time (H4)*.

## 6.5 Analysis of the decision-making mechanisms in the Dutch Second Chamber

As stated, the Dutch case provides a unique opportunity to test the hypotheses developed above because the 1972, 1979, 1990, 2001 and 2006 Dutch Parliamentary Studies<sup>35</sup> provide attitudinal data based on face-to-face interviews over a long span of time. As stated before, although we include data from the Dutch part of the most recent 2010 PartiRep MP Survey, we only include it in our discussion of longitudinal trends when the formulation of the questions and answering categories allows us to do so.

Although the response rate attained for the first surveys was 90 percent or more, there seems to be a trend towards a decrease in response rates with 76 percent of MPs participating in the 2006 survey, and only 43 percent in the PartiRep Survey in 2010 (see Table 6.10). Both the 2006 and 2010 surveys took place in the months prior to elections, however, which probably negatively influenced MPs' willingness to participate in the survey.<sup>36</sup> In addition to their regular parliamentary duties, most were also involved in

---

<sup>35</sup> Parts of the analyses in this section are replications of those found in Andeweg and Thomassen (2011a). The replications used the original 1972, 1979, 1990, 2001 and 2006 Dutch Parliamentary Studies (i.e., raw data).

<sup>36</sup> When it comes to the timing of the surveys with respect to the elections for the Second Chamber, the interviews for the 1972 survey were held in the Spring of 1972, about one year after the scheduled April 1971 elections, and six months before the November 1972 elections, which were held as a result of the unexpected early fall of the Biesheuvel I Cabinet in July of that year. Most of the interviews for the 1979 survey were held in November and December 1978, more than two years after May 1977 elections, and two years before the May 1981 elections (the Van Agt I Cabinet completed its entire term). In 1990 the survey was held approximately one year after the September 1989 elections, and the next elections were held in May 1994 (the Lubbers II Cabinet also ran its entire term). The 2001 survey was held three years after the May 1998 elections, and one year before the scheduled elections in May 2002 (the Kok II Cabinet fell early, but only a few weeks before the scheduled elections). Finally, in both 2006 and 2010, the surveys were held in the months leading up to the elections for the Second Chamber. In 2006, early elections were held in November due to the fall of Balkenende II Cabinet that was caused by D66's withdrawal from government



## 6.5. Analysis of the decision-making mechanisms in the Dutch Second Chamber

electoral campaigning, and thus did not have the time to participate in the surveys.

The first four Dutch Parliamentary Surveys attained response rates above 90 percent, with the distribution of MPs among party groups, and governing or opposition parties, very closely matching those found in the Second Chamber at that time. For the 1972 survey, the respondents from the CDA's predecessors (ARP, CHU and KVP) are presented jointly (as was also done for the voting data); these parties fought under one electoral list as of the 1977 elections. For the 2006 survey, the response rate of MPs per party group varied from 38 to 100 percent, averaging at about 75 percent per party group. The ratio between respondents whose parties participated in government (48 percent) and those in the opposition (52 percent) is almost exactly the same as that in the parliament itself at the time. Because D66 ended support for the coalition and withdrew from the cabinet before the interviews were held (see footnote 36), it is coded as an opposition party. For the 2010 PartiRep Survey, the response rate of MPs per party group varied from 0 to 100 percent, the average being around 36 percent per party group. In this case, the PvdA had dropped out of government, and is thus treated as an opposition party. Still, respondents from government parties are slightly overrepresented: 37 percent of respondents are from governing parties, whereas 31 percent of the MPs in parliament were from governing parties when the 2010 PartiRep Survey was held.<sup>37</sup>

In previous chapters we were able to combine MPs' responses to different survey questions and follow an individual MP through the different steps of the decision-making sequence central to this study (excluding the division of labor pathway and the associated cue-taking mechanism). Although the mechanisms are ordered as stipulated in our sequential decision-making model, they are dealt with separately and at the aggregate MP level for each available survey. The reason is that because of the formulation and nature of some of the survey questions, especially those pertaining to the first two decision-making mechanisms (cue-taking and party agreement), it is not possible to track the number of MPs who move into the next stage of the decision-making sequence. Moreover, comparison over time is sometimes problematic, since not all of the questions that are used to gauge the four different decision-making mechanisms are included in all of the surveys, nor are they formulated consistently over time.<sup>38</sup>

---

in June. In 2010, the PvdA dropped out of the Balkenende IV Cabinet in February and elections were held in June.

<sup>37</sup> Differences between MPs who belong to governing parties and those in opposition are only mentioned when these are statistically significant.

<sup>38</sup> Ideally, we would have connected MPs' survey answers to their actual voting behavior or defection. This would have made it possible to see whether an individual MP who (occasionally) votes against the party group, or leaves his parliamentary party group, differs from his peers in his application of the different decision-making mechanisms. Respondents were, however, guaranteed anonymity, and the fact that defections and voting dissent occur so very infrequently in the Dutch Parliament might have made it possible to identify individual MPs' responses.



## 6.5. Analysis of the decision-making mechanisms in the Dutch Second Chamber

Table 6.10: Dutch Parliamentary Studies and PartiRep MP Survey response rates for the Second Chamber of the Dutch Parliament

Year	Survey	Response	
		n	%
1972	Dutch Parliamentary Study	141	94
1979	Dutch Parliamentary Study	139	93
1990	Dutch Parliamentary Study	138	92
2001	Dutch Parliamentary Study	135	90
2006	Dutch Parliamentary Study	114	76
2010	<i>PartiRep MP Survey</i>	65	43

*Note:* The 1972, 1979, 1990 and 2001 Dutch Parliamentary Studies were financed by the Dutch National Science Foundation (*Nederlandse Organisatie voor Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek*, NWO). The 2006 Dutch Parliamentary Study was financed by the Dutch government's advisory Council on Public Administration (*Raad voor het openbaar bestuur*, ROB). The author would like to thank Rudy B. Andeweg and Jacques J.A. Thomassen for sharing these surveys. The 2010 PartiRep MP Survey was financed by the Belgian Federal Science Policy Office (BELSPO).

### 6.5.1 Division of labor

In the Dutch Parliamentary surveys, MPs were asked whether, when it comes to bills that they did not deal with themselves for the party group, they usually vote according to the advice of the parliamentary party spokesperson.<sup>39</sup> The figures in Table 6.11 indeed confirm that most MPs in the Dutch parliament usually rely on the voting cues provided by their fellow party group members. In line with our hypothesis, there also seems to be an increase in cue-taking over time: whereas in 1972 almost 80 percent indicated that MPs usually vote according to the advice given to them by their parliamentary party spokesperson, in the 2006 survey over 95 percent do so.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>39</sup> Respondents were asked to respond to the statement 'As an MP you usually vote according to the advice of the parliamentary party spokesperson when it comes to bills that you did not deal with yourself for the party group' (*Als Kamerlid stem je bij wetsvoorstellen die je niet zelf voor de fractie behandeld hebt, doorgaans volgens het advies van de fractiewoordvoerder*, translation CvV). The Dutch Parliamentary Studies surveys use different answering categories for the question used to gauge cue-taking. The 1972 and 1979 surveys provided respondents with three answering categories: 'that is the case', 'that is somewhat the case', and 'that is not the case'. The 2001 and 2006 Dutch Parliamentary Studies asked respondents to answer whether they agree with the statement on a five-point ordinal scale. For presentation purpose the three answering categories from 1972 and 1979 are used, and those from the 2001 and 2006 surveys are combined: 'fully agree' and 'agree' are combined into 'that is the case', 'fully disagree' and 'disagree' are collapsed into 'that is not the case', and 'partly agree, partly disagree' is included in the middle category 'that is somewhat the case' (see Table 6.11).

<sup>40</sup> In the 2010 PartiRep Survey MPs were asked a different question, namely whether they agree with the statement that 'The parliamentary party spokesperson gets to determine the party's position on his/her



## 6.5. Analysis of the decision-making mechanisms in the Dutch Second Chamber

Table 6.11: 'As an MP you usually vote according to the advice of the parliamentary party spokesperson when it comes to bills that you did not deal with yourself for the party group' in the Second Chamber of the Dutch Parliament 1972-2006 (%)

	1972	1979	1990	2001	2006
That is the case	79	91	-	96	96
That is somewhat the case	19	8	-	2	5
That is not the case	2	1	-	2	0
Total %	100	100	-	100	100
Total n	99	138	-	135	110

$$\chi^2 (6) = 27.830, \text{ sig.} = .000; \varphi c = .179, \text{ sig.} = .000; \text{gamma} = -.495, \text{ sig.} = .000$$

Table 6.12 shows what MPs' identify as the main decision-making center within their parliamentary party group. The question was included in the Dutch version of the 2010 PartiRep Survey, but unfortunately it was not a part of the 1972 Dutch Parliamentary Study questionnaire. Moreover, in 1990 it was only posed to members of the CDA, PvdA and VVD; MPs from small party groups were excluded. For the sake of comparison, the bottom of Table 6.12 shows only the responses of MPs from the three largest party groups for the other years as well. When comparing the top and bottom halves of the table, we see that the inclusion of small party groups is associated with a higher percentage of MPs identifying the weekly parliamentary party meeting (and to a lesser extent the party specialist) as the main decision-making center, especially in later years. That the percentage of MPs who identify the party group committee as most important is higher when only the CDA, PvdA and VVD are included makes sense since smaller political parties usually do not have a system of internal party group committees in which the spokespersons for adjacent policy areas meet. The percentage of MPs who identify the party group leadership as the main decision-making center is roughly the same whether small parties are included or not. When MPs from small parties are excluded,

topic'. 60 percent of MPs (mostly) agree that this is indeed the case, 19 percent (mostly) disagree, and 22 percent neither agree or disagree (not shown in Table 6.11). At first glance this could be taken as an indicator that the importance of cue-taking seems to have decreased since the 2006 Dutch Parliamentary Study. One should keep in mind, however, that although at the individual level an MP may take his voting cues from his fellow party group members, it may be quite another matter, from the perspective of an MP, to let one individual decide the position of the party as a whole. The party's position may already be formulated in the electoral manifesto or party program, for example, or may be broadly determined during the weekly parliamentary party group meeting. In other words, whereas the 2010 PartiRep question refers to the role of party group spokespersons in determining the party group position (and thus may be a better indicator of the division of labor within a party group), the Dutch Parliamentary Studies' question inquires into more specifically into the role of cue-taking in MPs' decision regarding their voting behavior.



## 6.5. Analysis of the decision-making mechanisms in the Dutch Second Chamber

Table 6.12: The main decision-making center in the parliamentary party group in the Second Chamber of the Dutch Parliament 1979-2010 (%)

All	1979	1990	2001	2006	2010
Meeting	51	-	37	33	59
Committee	39	-	29	24	19
Specialist	8	-	27	34	14
Leadership	3	-	8	10	9
total %	100	-	100	101	102
total (n)	134	-	123	104	58

$$\chi^2 (9) = 44.236, sig. = .000; \varphi c = .188, sig. = .000$$

CDA, PvdA and VVD only	1979	1990	2001	2006	2010
Meeting	48	26	27	32	52
Committee	43	53	39	31	23
Specialist	8	13	24	27	16
Leadership	2	9	10	11	9
total %	101	100	100	100	100
total (n)	120	102	90	82	44

$$\chi^2 (12) = 46.438, sig. = .000; \varphi c = .188, sig. = .000$$

the parliamentary party group meeting and committee rival each other as the main decision-making center, although the parliamentary committee seems to have been losing ground to the party group specialist (until the 2010 survey, see the discussion below). The increase in the importance of individual specialists as decision makers may provide some evidence as to the increased specialization and professionalization of MPs, and the consolidation of a strict division of labor within parliamentary party groups.

MPs' responses in 2010 are out of step with the earlier surveys, however.<sup>41</sup> The party group meeting is most important, at the expense of both the party group committee and specialist. At first glance, the increase in the importance of the party group meeting could be related to the decrease in the number of seats attained by the 'large' established

<sup>41</sup> The formulation of the question and available answering categories was exactly the same in all five surveys.



## 6.5. Analysis of the decision-making mechanisms in the Dutch Second Chamber

parties, which may, among other things, be the result of the increase in the number of party groups in parliament. For both the PvdA and VVD, the increase in the importance of the party group meeting is confined to the 2010 survey (not shown in Table 6.12), which was preceded by the 2006 parliamentary elections in which both parties had shrunk in terms of their share of seats (the PvdA went from 42 seats in the 2003 election to 33 seats in the 2006 election, and the VVD went from 28 to 22 seats). However, for the CDA this increase of importance of the party group meeting, and decrease in the importance of the party group committee, is already visible in the 2006 survey (not shown in Table 6.12), at which time it had obtained 44 seats in the 2003 election, which is 1 more seat than in the 2002 election, and 13 more than it had after the 1998 election. Moreover, with 41 seats, the CDA still constituted as a 'large' party group (by Dutch historical standards) at the time of the 2010 PartiRep Survey. This, this explanation does not seem to hold for the CDA. Only time will tell whether the high percentage of MPs who identify the party group meeting as the main decision-making center in the 2010 survey is a single occurrence, or whether the importance of the party group meeting will continue to grow over time.

Even if we accept the 2010 survey as valid, the role of the party group specialist is still more important in this most recent survey than it was in the 1979 and 1990 studies. On balance there do seem to be some indications that cue-taking and the division of labor in parliamentary party groups, especially large ones, has strengthened over time and may therefore have an increased contribution to the high levels of party group unity in the Netherlands.

### 6.5.2 Party agreement

Unfortunately, the question concerning the frequency of disagreement with the party's position on a vote in parliament, which we used to gauge party agreement in our analyses in the previous chapters, was not included in any of the Dutch Parliamentary Studies. In all six surveys respondents were asked to place both themselves and their political party on a number of different policy scales,<sup>42</sup> including the ideological Left-Right scale. MPs' self-placement on policy scales found in elite surveys are often used to calculate party group agreement coefficients (Van der Eijk, 2001). In order to gauge whether there are any changes in party group agreement over time, Table 6.13 shows Van der Eijk's (2001) agreement coefficients for the three largest established parties in the Dutch parliament (CDA, PvdA and VVD). The coefficient of agreement, which is designed specifically for ordinal rating scales, ranges from -1 (entailing complete dispersion and thus polarization among MPs from the same party group) to 0 (which occurs when MPs are spread equally across the scale) to +1 (when there is complete agreement between party

---

<sup>42</sup> The surveys are generally not consistent when it comes to the policy areas scales that MPs are asked to place themselves on, making the longitudinal analysis of party group homogeneity based on MPs' self-placement for specific policy areas difficult.



## 6.5. Analysis of the decision-making mechanisms in the Dutch Second Chamber

Table 6.13: Party group ideological homogeneity on the Left-Right scale in the Second Chamber of the Dutch Parliament 1972-2010: CDA, PvdA and VVD only (coefficient of agreement)

	1972	1979	1990	2001	2006	2010	Mean
CDA	.76	.75	.68	.71	.77	.61	.71
PvdA	.84	.77	.83	.83	.84	.87	.83
VVD	.71	.68	.93	.65	.85	.79	.77

*Note:* These agreement coefficients may differ from those found in Andeweg and Thomassen (2011a, 663) as a result of a different transformation of the scales used in the surveys (see footnote 43).

group MPs).<sup>43</sup>

As this is a replication of the analysis in Andeweg and Thomassen (2011a, 61-64) (with the addition of the 2010 PartiRep data), it is not surprising that the results are very similar. The parliamentary party groups of the three largest established political parties in the Netherlands are very homogeneous on the ideological Left-Right scale, as well as in regard to specific issues (not shown in Table 6.13), as most coefficients are above 0.5 and thus closer to complete homogeneity than to complete dispersion. This indicates that agreement is likely to be an important pathway to party group unity in the Dutch parliament. However, although there are some fluctuations, there is no systematic change in party group homogeneity, entailing that it does not seem to be the case that party group agreement has increased over time. Although this does point in the direction of the one-arena model and that parliament may be isolated from the electoral arena, it could be still be the case that party (group) leaders have taken measures to counteract changes in the electoral arena (just enough to maintain party agreement, instead of increasing it).

As pointed out by Kam (2001a, 103), however, it need not be the case that MPs who place themselves at the same position on a policy scale also see themselves at equal distance from the party's position, as they may have different interpretations of the position of their party. Kam suggests that it may instead be better to measure how far MPs subjectively perceive themselves to be from their party's position. In all five of the Dutch Parliamentary Studies, as well as the PartiRep Survey, MPs were asked to place both themselves and their political party on an ideological Left-Right scale, allowing for the calculation of the absolute distance MPs perceive between their own and their party's

<sup>43</sup> Before calculating the Van der Eijk's (2001) coefficient of agreement, the scales for all the Left-Right ideological placement questions were converted to a 7-point scale using the formula  $y = a + bx$  (Irwin and Thomassen, 1975, 417-418). For the 9-point scale (which was used in the 1972 and 1979 Dutch Parliamentary Studies) where 1 must equal 1 and 9 must equal 7, the formula used is  $y = 1/4 + 3/4 * x$ . For the 11-point scale (which was used in the 2006 Dutch Parliamentary Study and the 2010 PartiRep Survey), where 1 must equal 1 and 11 must equal 7, the formula  $y = 2/5 + 3/5 * x$  is used. For the 2006 Dutch Parliamentary Study and 2010 PartiRep Survey the values were first recoded so that 0 equals 1 and 10 equals 11 by adding 1.



## 6.5. Analysis of the decision-making mechanisms in the Dutch Second Chamber

position.<sup>44</sup> As we saw in previous chapters, a large perceived distance between an MP's position and that of his party is associated with frequent disagreement with the party's position on a vote in parliament, whereas a small perceived distance between an MP's policy position and that of his political party entails that an MP frequently agrees with the party line; a relationship that also holds for the Dutch national parliament in the 2010 PartiRep Survey (see chapter 4 and chapter 5).<sup>45</sup>

Table 6.14 shows that, contrary to our hypothesis, party agreement in terms of the ideological distance MPs perceive between their own and their party's position has actually decreased over time. In 1972 65 percent of MPs place themselves on the same position as their party, whereas in the 2010 PartiRep Survey only 33 percent of MPs do so. From 1979 to 2006, however, the percentage who perceive no difference between their own and their party's position remains quite stable at around 50 percent. There thus seem to be two large dips in party agreement: in the 1979 survey and in the 2010 survey (although we must be careful about interpreting the 2010 survey as a part of a trend given the different nature of the survey and the lower response rate). Starting with the 2006 survey, however, there is an increase in the percentage of MPs who perceive a distance of two points or more, hinting that in the case of the 2010 dip, the decrease had already set in before.

The three largest established parties, PvdA, VVD and CDA, follow the general trend of a decrease in the percentage of MPs who perceive no difference between their own position and that of their party (see Table 6.15). The decrease in party agreement over time is greatest within the CDA. One might expect a sharp decrease in the 1979 survey, since this was the first survey after the 1977 elections, which the ARP, CHU and KVP fought with one electoral list for the first time before the official creation of the CDA in 1980.<sup>46</sup> Party agreement can be expected to be lower in a newly merged party groups, and indeed, in terms of party voting unity, the party group suffered relatively frequent and deep dissent during its first parliamentary term (see subsection 6.3.2). Instead of a one-time dip, however, the decrease in party agreement continued and deepened, especially in the 2006 and 2010 surveys, even though voting unity was reestablished and consolidated to near perfection following the initial period after the fusion. The perceived ideological distance among PvdA MPs follows the general trend but also oscillates over time. There are two notable dips in party agreement: in the 1990 and 2006 surveys. The VVD also follows the general trend, with one very large dip in 1979, and

---

<sup>44</sup> The questions are located consecutively in all 5 surveys, making it reasonable to assume that any distance indicated by MPs is conscious and meaningful. However, that MPs are first asked to place themselves may act as a pull for where they subsequently place the political party, and that the latter is contingent on the former. This may lead to an underestimation of the distance between MPs and the political party.

<sup>45</sup> The surveys include Left-Right ideological scales of different lengths: the 2010 PartiRep Survey and 2006 Dutch Parliamentary Study use an 11-point scale, the 2001 and 1990 Dutch Parliamentary Studies use a 7-point scale, and the 1979 and 1972 Dutch Parliamentary Studies use a 9-point scale. In order to compare the distance on the ideological scales over time, the scales are converted to an ordinal 11-point scale ranging from 0 to 10 (see footnote 43 for the conversion formulas).

<sup>46</sup> For the 1972 survey, the MPs from the ARP, CHU and KVP are all included as CDA in the tables. MPs were asked, however, to place the ARP, CHU or KVP, depending on the political party they belonged to.



## 6.5. Analysis of the decision-making mechanisms in the Dutch Second Chamber

Table 6.14: Perceived ideological distance on the Left-Right scale in the Second Chamber of the Dutch Parliament 1972-2010 (%)

	1972	1979	1990	2001	2006	2010
0	65	52	52	53	49	33
1	30	38	41	41	33	47
2+	5	11	8	6	18	20
Median	0	0	0	0	1	1
Mean	0.42	0.66	0.58	0.49	0.79	0.91
Total %	100	100	100	100	100	100
Total n	133	125	116	128	107	64

$$\chi^2 (30) = 94.130, sig. = .000; gamma = .188, sig. = .000$$

again in 2010.

There are also significant differences in perceived ideological distance between MPs whose party is in government and those in opposition (see Table 6.16). With the exception of the 2001 survey (in which the difference between government and opposition is very small), government MPs are more likely to perceive a difference between their own and their party's position and, usually a higher percentage of government MPs is more likely to experience a difference of two points or more. This may be explained by the coalition nature of Dutch government, which often forces MPs whose parties partake in government to support certain unpopular measures or compromises that are included in the government coalition agreement. As the party has signed the coalition agreement, it is likely that MPs associate the coalition agreement with the position of their party. However, when looking at the difference in perceived ideological distance for the CDA, PvdA and VVD it does not seem to be the case that MPs' perceived ideological distance co-varies with their parties' government participation (see Table 6.15).

Instead, the difference between MPs whose party is in government and those in opposition may be the result of the fact that parties in opposition tend to be small or medium sized party groups. Indeed, the larger the party group the more likely MPs are to perceive a difference between their own and their party's position on the scale (see Table 6.17). Whereas 74 percent of MPs whose party has five or fewer seats in parliament perceive no distance between their own and their party's position, only 64 percent of medium size party groups (six to nineteen seats) do so, and only 48 percent of large party groups (twenty seats or more) do so. MPs from large party groups are also most likely to perceive a distance of two points or more (12 percent MPs from large party groups, and only 3 percent of MPs from both medium and small party groups). This may have to do with the fact that in small party groups MPs may be more personally



Table 6.15: Perceived ideological distance on the Left-Right scale in the Second Chamber of the Dutch Parliament 1972-2010: CDA, PvdA and VVD only (%)

CDA		1972	1979	1990	2001	2006	2010
0		<b>62</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>50</b>	52	<b>36</b>	<b>10</b>
1		<b>31</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>36</b>	40	<b>39</b>	<b>48</b>
2+		<b>8</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>14</b>	8	<b>25</b>	<b>43</b>
Median		<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	0	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>
Mean		<b>0.48</b>	<b>0.58</b>	<b>0.67</b>	0.58	<b>0.94</b>	<b>1.38</b>
Total %		<b>101</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	100	<b>100</b>	<b>101</b>
Total n		<b>52</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>36</b>	25	<b>36</b>	<b>21</b>
$\chi^2 (30) = 43.450, sig. = .012; gamma = .346, sig. = .000$							
PvdA		1972	1979	1990	2001	2006	2010
0		67	60	<b>36</b>	<b>51</b>	39	50
1		31	37	<b>58</b>	<b>46</b>	48	44
2+		3	4	<b>7</b>	<b>2</b>	13	6
Median		0	0	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	1	0
Mean		0.44	0.46	<b>0.73</b>	<b>0.48</b>	0.81	.56
Total %		101	101	<b>101</b>	<b>99</b>	100	100
Total n		39	52	<b>45</b>	<b>41</b>	31	18
$\chi^2 (30) = 43.050, sig. = .058; gamma = .191, sig. = .022$							
VVD		1972	1979	1990	2001	2006	2010
0		<b>81</b>	<b>14</b>	73	<b>61</b>	<b>56</b>	36
1		<b>13</b>	<b>50</b>	20	<b>30</b>	<b>13</b>	55
2+		<b>6</b>	<b>36</b>	7	<b>9</b>	<b>31</b>	9
Median		<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	0	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	1
Mean		<b>0.25</b>	<b>1.5</b>	0.33	<b>0.45</b>	<b>1.0</b>	0.73
Total %		<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	100	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	100
Total n		<b>16</b>	<b>22</b>	15	<b>33</b>	<b>16</b>	11
$\chi^2 (25) = 41.762, sig. = .019; gamma = .007, sig. = .952$							

Bold = in government at the time of the survey



Table 6.16: Perceived ideological distance on the Left-Right scale in the Second Chamber of the Dutch Parliament: government-opposition (%)

	All		1972		1979		1990		2001		2006		2010	
	Gov	Opp	Gov	Opp	Gov	Opp	Gov	Opp	Gov	Opp	Gov	Opp	Gov	Opp
0	47	59	64	67	40	63	42	74	54	52	41	54	13	45
1	39	35	29	31	41	34	48	23	41	43	30	34	50	45
2+	14	6	7	2	19	3	10	3	6	5	28	12	38	10
Median	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	1
Mean	0.71	0.49	0.44	0.40	0.93	0.42	0.70	0.29	0.49	0.50	1.0	0.62	1.29	0.68
Total %	100	101	100	100	100	100	100	100	101	100	99	100	101	100
Total n	368	305	75	58	58	67	81	35	84	44	46	61	24	40

$\chi^2 (6) = 19.715$ , sig. = .003; gamma = .256, sig. = .000 (all years combined)



## 6.5. Analysis of the decision-making mechanisms in the Dutch Second Chamber

Table 6.17: Perceived ideological distance on the Left-Right scale in the Second Chamber of the Dutch Parliament: party group size (%)

	Small (5 or less seats)	Medium (6 to 20 seats)	Large (21 or more seats)
0	74	64	48
1	23	33	40
2+	3	3	12
median	0	0	1
mean	0.29	0.40	0.64
Total %	100	100	100
Total n	35	121	517

$$\chi^2 (24) = 20.462, sig. = .000; gamma = .358, sig. = .000.$$

involved in determining the position of the party group in the first place. As we saw, MPs from small party groups are more likely than MPs from larger party groups to identify the weekly parliamentary party meeting as the main decision-making center. Moreover, small parliamentary parties are more likely to consist of only those candidates who were ranked at the top of their party's candidacy list, who are more likely to have previous party experience and who held top positions in the party organization. It thus makes sense that they would perceive little to no distance between their own and their party's position, as it is likely that they themselves were involved in the formulation of the party program.

We are, however, left with a discrepancy between the fact that there is no change over time in terms of the ideological homogeneity of party groups based on MPs' self-placement, while the average difference between an MP's self-placement and his perception of his party's position has increased over time. This could be caused by MPs interpreting the positions on the scales differently, as argued by Kam (2001a, 103). We have no reason to believe, however, that MPs' tendency to do so would have increased over time.<sup>47</sup> There is another explanation for the difference between the two findings. MPs who do place themselves at a distance with respect to their party's position on the Left-Right ideological scale tend to do so in the same direction. Most MPs tend to place themselves to the left of where they perceive their party to be, with the exception of the VVD MPs, who place themselves to both the left and the right of their party (not shown in Table 6.14). Thus, in terms of the effects of changes in the electoral arena on the pathways to party unity in the parliamentary arena, it would seem that depillariza-

<sup>47</sup> It could also be that the Left-Right ideological scale is too abstract and therefore does not accurately gauge what parliamentary voting is actually about. It is unlikely, however, that the level of abstraction has increased over time.



tion has not led political party selectorates to diversify their selection of parliamentary candidates in terms of their policy preferences as a means of appealing to a wider voter audience.

Related to this is that in all of the surveys the question that instructs MPs to place their 'political party' does not specify which part of the political party organization MPs should keep in mind. We have no way of knowing whether MPs place the position of the parliamentary party group, the extra-parliamentary party or the party-as-whole (and whether this includes party members) on the ideological Left-Right scale. If most MPs think of the party group's position when answering the question, it is indeed likely that this increase in disagreement involves concrete votes in parliament.

If, however, MPs interpret the question as referring to the extra-parliamentary organization or party-as-a-whole, it is more difficult to know whether this also has implications for the relative importance of agreement when it comes to determining party group voting unity in parliament. At first glance, the finding that MPs have become more likely to experience a larger distance between their own and their political party's position would seem to actually provide some evidence for the popular assumption that since depillarization parties have become 'catch-all' as a conscious electoral strategy, with a more diffuse ideological identity in order to appeal to as many voters as possible (Andeweg and Thomassen, 2011a). If this is true, the fact that party group policy homogeneity based on MPs' self-placement has not decreased but remained high would again mean that this broadening of ideological profile has not affected the parliamentary party group in the same way. However, as most MPs place themselves in the same direction from their party's position, it is likely that the ideological profiles of parties have not become more catch-all, but have rather moved in one direction (or at least according to MPs' perception).

On the other hand, the party group is bound to the electoral manifesto and the party program, which in most parties are determined the members and/or board of the political party (organization) outside of parliament. Thus, even if MPs interpreted the question as referring to the extra-parliamentary party or the party-as-a-whole, there may still be more frequent disagreement with the party's position in parliament when a vote concerns an issue for which the party's position is determined outside of parliament.

In conclusion, it seems that although parties have been able to maintain a high degree of ideological homogeneity among their MPs, party agreement in terms of distance MPs perceive between their own and their party's position has increased over time. Thus, although MPs might still usually agree amongst themselves, this does seem to indicate that disagreement with the party's position, whether origination in or outside of parliament, has become more likely over time, meaning that the chance that MPs find themselves at odds with the position of their party has increased over time.

### 6.5.3 Party loyalty

As opposed to other measures used in this chapter, the question used to measure party group loyalty refers directly to voting in parliament. In the Dutch Parliamentary Studies, MPs were asked whether, in the case of disagreement with their party group's position



## 6.5. Analysis of the decision-making mechanisms in the Dutch Second Chamber

Table 6.18: Party group loyalty (own opinion versus party group's position) in the Second Chamber of the Dutch Parliament 1972-2010 (%)

	1972	1979	1990	2001	2006	2010
Own opinion	40	22	11	10	5	12
It depends	53	65	69	66	66	-
Party (group) position	7	14	20	24	31	88
Total %	100	100	100	100	101	100
Total n	141	130	138	135	105	45

$$\chi^2(8) = 84.783, \text{ sig.} = .000; \text{ pc} = .256, \text{ sig.} = .000 \text{ (1972 - 2006 only)}$$

*Note:* Whereas the question in the earlier Dutch Parliamentary Studies refers to the party group (*fractie*) position, the question in 2010 PartiRep Survey refers to the party's (*partij*) position.

on a vote in parliament, an MP ought to vote according to his own opinion or the party group's position. The latter answer is taken as indicative of an MP's subscription to the norm of party loyalty.

In line with the hypothesis, subscription to the norm of party group loyalty has increased over time (see Table 6.18). The percentage of MPs who think that in the case of disagreement an MP ought to vote with the party group has steadily increased from 7 percent in 1972, to 31 percent in 2006. When comparing MPs' responses to the Dutch Parliamentary surveys, for which that the 'it depends' answering category was included, one can see that the percentage of MPs who think that 'it depends' stays quite stable, whereas the percentage of MPs advocating that an MP who disagrees with the position of his party ought to follow his own opinion has decreased over time from 40 percent in 1972 to only 5 percent in 2006. The three largest parties in the Dutch parliament (CDA, PvdA, VVD) follow the same general pattern, although the moment at which the trend sets in is different for each of the parties (see Table 6.19). Among PvdA MPs the increase in the percentage of MPs who subscribe to the norm of party group loyalty occurred quite early (in the 1979 survey) and remained rather stable over time. Loyalty among CDA MPs increased as of the 1990 survey, whereas among VVD MPs there was a definite increase as of the 2001 survey.

In the 2010 PartiRep Survey, the question refers to a conflict between an MP's and the 'party's' position, not specifically the party group. This makes its comparison to the Dutch Parliamentary Studies problematic. In addition, the answering category 'it depends' is not included as an answering category, forcing MPs to choose between the two options.<sup>48</sup> The percentage of respondents who answer that an MP ought to vote

<sup>48</sup> In the 2010 PartiRep Survey 20 MPs refused to answer the question, often indicating to the interviewer that 'it depends' (not shown in table).



according to the party's position is very high (88 percent). It is noteworthy that the category that subscribes to the norm of party loyalty 'profits' more from the absence of the option 'it depends' than the category that includes MPs who feels that an MP should vote according to his own opinion in the case of disagreement.

The threat of early elections if the government is brought down could lead one to expect that government MPs have a stronger feeling of responsibility towards their party, and are thus more likely to voluntarily support their party group in the case of disagreement, than opposition MPs (Van Schendelen, 1992, 82). The responses in Table 6.20 are not always consistent with this expectation: whereas in the 1990 and 2001 surveys government MPs are more likely to vote according to their party group's opinion in the case of disagreement than opposition MPs, in all other years opposition MPs are more likely to do so (with the exception of 1972, when 7 percent of both government and opposition MPs subscribe to the norm of party group loyalty). Moreover, if we look at the largest established parties that have participated in government over the past 40 years specifically (CDA, PvdA and VVD, see Table 6.19), it does not seem to be the case that moving from the government to the opposition bench has a systematic effect on the percentage of MPs who subscribe to the norm of party group loyalty. Within each of these established parties the increase in the percentage of MPs who subscribe to the norm of party group loyalty over time is stronger than the effect of government participation. Table 6.20 shows that opposition MPs generally are more likely to vote according to their own opinion than government MPs, but again the pattern is not consistent over time and does not seem to hold for the CDA, PvdA and VVD individually.

### 6.5.4 Party discipline

As has become evident throughout this study (see subsection 3.2.2 in chapter 3 and subsection 4.3.4 in chapter 4, gauging party discipline and its actual use is difficult. In the 2001, 2006 and 2010 surveys, MPs were asked for their opinion about party discipline in their party. Unfortunately, the question was not asked in earlier surveys, making it impossible to trace MPs' opinions concerning party discipline over a longer period of time. In all three surveys more than three-quarters of MPs are satisfied with general party discipline in their party, as they answered that general party discipline should remain as it is (see Table 6.21). Of those who indicate to be dissatisfied with party discipline, there seems to be a small increase in the percentage of MPs who hold the opinion that party discipline ought to be more strict, which is rather surprising if MPs indeed associate party discipline with coercion. Although it is difficult to interpret these answering categories, we argue that MPs who indicate that party discipline ought to be more strict are those who value the collective benefits of presenting a united front to the outside world above an individual MP's freedom and personal mandate. Those who answer that party discipline should remain as it is probably perceive a good balance between the two, or value one above the other, but are content with how they are maintained in the parliamentary party group. And MPs who answer that party discipline ought to be less strict are those who value an MP's freedom and personal mandate above presenting a united front, and are likely to be those who were confronted with (threats of) party discipline in the past.



Table 6.19: Party group loyalty (own opinion versus party group's position) in the Second Chamber of the Dutch Parliament 1972-2010: CDA, PvdA and VVD only (%)

CDA	1972	1979	1990	2001	2006	2010
Own opinion	<b>36</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>15</b>	4	<b>3</b>	<b>15</b>
It depends	<b>57</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>57</b>	60	<b>64</b>	<b>0</b>
Party (group) position	<b>7</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>28</b>	36	<b>33</b>	<b>85</b>
Total %	<b>100</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>100</b>	100	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
Total n	<b>58</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>47</b>	25	<b>36</b>	<b>13</b>

$$\chi^2 (8) = 37.155, \text{ sig.} = .000; \varphi c = .298, \text{ sig.} = .000 \text{ (1972 - 2006 only)}$$

PvdA	1972	1979	1990	2001	2006	2010
Own opinion	49	14	<b>4</b>	<b>12</b>	0	<b>15</b>
It depends	49	63	<b>71</b>	<b>69</b>	74	<b>0</b>
Party (group) position	3	22	<b>25</b>	<b>19</b>	26	<b>65</b>
Total %	101	99	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	100	<b>100</b>
Total n	39	49	<b>48</b>	<b>42</b>	31	<b>13</b>

$$\chi^2 (8) = 46.086, \text{ sig.} = .000; \varphi c = .332, \text{ sig.} = .000 \text{ (1972 - 2006 only)}$$

VVD	1972	1979	1990	2001	2006	2010
Own opinion	<b>25</b>	<b>23</b>	11	<b>3</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>0</b>
It depends	<b>69</b>	<b>64</b>	79	<b>71</b>	<b>47</b>	-
Party (group) position	<b>6</b>	<b>14</b>	11	<b>27</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>100</b>
Total %	<b>100</b>	<b>101</b>	101	<b>101</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>100</b>
Total n	<b>16</b>	<b>22</b>	19	<b>34</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>7</b>

$$\chi^2 (8) = 16.865, \text{ sig.} = .000; \varphi c = .282, \text{ sig.} = .000 \text{ (1972 - 2006 only)}$$

Bold = in government at the time of the survey



Table 6.20: Party group loyalty (own opinion versus party group's position) in the Second Chamber of the Dutch Parliament 1972-2010: government-opposition (%)

	All		1972		1979		1990		2001		2006		2010	
	Gov	Opp	Gov	Opp	Gov	Opp	Gov	Opp	Gov	Opp	Gov	Opp	Gov	Opp
Own	16	21	33	50	25	19	10	14	7	15	4	5	20	10
Depends	64	62	59	43	68	62	64	79	70	58	54	73	-	-
Party group's	20	17	7	7	8	20	26	7	23	27	41	22	80	90
Total %	100	100	100	100	101	101	100	100	100	100	99	100	100	100
Total n	374	275	81	60	70	69	95	43	87	48	46	59	15	30

$\chi^2 (2) = 3.236$ , sig. = .198;  $\varphi c = .071$ , sig. = .198 (all MPs; 1972 - 2006 only)



## 6.5. Analysis of the decision-making mechanisms in the Dutch Second Chamber

Table 6.21: Satisfaction with general party discipline in the Second Chamber of the Dutch Parliament 2001-2010 (%)

	2001	2006	2010
More strict	2	9	11
Remain as it is	87	76	81
Less strict	11	15	8
Total %	100	100	100
Total n	135	110	63

$$\chi^2(4) = 9.456, \text{ sig.} = .051; \varphi c = .124, \text{ sig.} = .051; \text{gamma} = -.192, \text{ sig.} = .083$$

MPs' responses to the questions pertaining to specific aspects of party discipline, included in the 2006 and 2010 surveys (see Table 6.22), provide some additional insight into the circumstances under which party discipline is more or less likely to be applied, accepted, or even desired. When it comes to sticking to the party line during parliamentary voting, the question most relevant to party voting as an indicator of party group unity, almost 95 percent of MPs are satisfied with party discipline as it is. Party voting unity therefore seems fairly undisputed in the Dutch parliament. This also seem to hold for seeking permission from the party group before taking parliamentary initiatives; around 85 percent of MPs indicate to be satisfied with party discipline for this aspect of parliamentary behavior as well.

The one exception to this pattern is the MPs' evaluation of party discipline. When it comes to keeping internal party discussions confidential the majority is satisfied with party discipline, but almost all of those who are dissatisfied would like to see party discipline be applied more strictly (34 percent in 2006 and 24 percent in 2010). This highlights that party group unity is not just about the final vote in parliament, but refers to a much broader requirement that comprises the entire policy making process. Apparently, there are MPs who do breach confidential intra-party discussions, otherwise there would not be MPs who would like to see party discipline applied more strictly. It also seems, however, that those who do breach party confidentiality get away with it, or at least accept the consequences, otherwise there would have been more MPs who indicate that party discipline should be less strict.

That a relatively high percentage of MPs would like to see stricter party discipline when it comes to keeping internal party discussions confidential, however, means that maintaining (the appearance of) a united front is considered very important and it is something that MPs and parties are actively concerned about. In the parliamentary arena, other parties may try to profit from parties that do not present a united front earlier in the policy making process, by putting certain controversial issues on the agenda, framing debates and proposals in such a way as to elicit MPs' dissent, or even calling



Table 6.22: Satisfaction with specific aspects of party discipline in the Second Chamber of the Dutch Parliament 2001-2010 (%)

Sticking to the parliamentary party line in votes			
	2006	2010	
More strict	1	5	
Remain as it is	93	95	
Less strict	7	0	
Total %	101	100	
Total n	108	63	

$$\chi^2 (2) = .752, sig. = .687; \varphi c = .067, sig. = .687; gamma = -.059, sig. = .855$$

Taking political initiatives only with the parliamentary party's authorization			
	2006	2010	
More strict	8	6	
Remain as it is	84	87	
Less strict	7	6	
Total %	99	100	
Total n	114	63	

$$\chi^2 (2) = .210, sig. = .900; \varphi = .035, sig. = .900; gamma = .033, sig. = .877$$

Keeping internal party discussions confidential			
	2006	2010	
More strict	34	24	
Remain as it is	66	76	
Less strict	1	0	
Total %	101	100	
Total n	110	63	

$$\chi^2 (2) = 2.174, sig. = .337; \varphi = .113, sig. = .337; gamma = .197, sig. = .243$$



## 6.6. Conclusion

for roll call votes strategically. MPs and parties may also be concerned with the consequences of the appearance of parliamentary party disunity in the electoral arena. New parties that are troubled by party disunity tend not to return to Dutch parliament for a second or third term (the LPF, for example). In his analysis of Westminster parliaments Kam (2009), for example, finds that voters tend not to vote for parties they perceive to be disunited. Although his analysis only includes the influence of party voting disunity, it seems that parties and their MPs are not only concerned with party group unity in the final policy making stage (i.e., voting), but also during the process preceding it.

## 6.6 Conclusion

Even though electoral volatility and partisan dealignment in the Netherlands have increased through time, they do not ‘appear to travel together’ (Kam, 2009, 73-74) with MPs’ dissent in the national parliament. Party group unity has always been very high in the Netherlands, whether measured in terms of voting unity, the frequency or depth of MPs’ dissent, or MPs’ defection from their party group, especially when it comes to the established parties. Moreover, and in line with the findings in Bowler’s (2000) study of other European parliamentary democracies, party voting unity has even increased slightly over time. When voting dissent does take place, both in terms of its frequency and depth, this seems to be a characteristic of new parties (e.g., the LPF in the 2000s, as well as in the parties that fused into the CDA at the end of the 1970s). Party group defections, when they occur, are also a characteristic of new parties. In the established parties, the frequency and depth of voting dissent are limited, and party defections take place only sporadically.

This seems to indicate that parliament is insulated from the changes in the electorate, pointing to the one-arena model that emphasizes the procedural advantage that ‘parties in office’ have over MPs in the legislative arena (Bowler, 2000). There are, however, some changes over time in the relative contribution of the different pathways to party group unity outlined in this study. Whereas the ideological homogeneity among MPs from the same party group has remained high over time, average party agreement, in terms of MPs’ perception of the distance between their own and their party’s position on the ideological Left-Right scale, has decreased over time. Although we cannot be sure, this does seem to indicate that the parliamentary arena is not insulated from the electoral arena. Still, given that party group unity scores have stayed above 99 percent and have actually increased slightly since the first survey, parties’ procedural advantages over individual MPs in the legislative arena may have been sufficient to counteract this decrease in party agreement over time.

The percentage of MPs who identify the party group specialist as the main decision-making center in the parliamentary party group, as well as the percentage of MPs who indicate to take their voting cues from the parliamentary party spokesperson, have increased over time as well, indicating that MPs have increased their reliance on cue-taking as a decision-making mechanism. Because cue-taking as a decision-making mechanism takes place before agreement, as it follows from MPs not having the time and resources



to form their own opinion on matters put to a vote, it is likely that MPs' increased reliance on the cues of their fellow party group members has to a certain extent contained the effects of the decrease in party agreement. Given that the increase cue-taking is likely to be connected to the increase in parliamentary activity over time, and the fact that the latter cannot be ascribed to any changes in the formal rules and/or organization of the Dutch parliament itself, it is likely that this increase in cue-taking has been brought about by either individual MPs themselves, or their parties acting as 'organizations'.<sup>49</sup>

The percentage of MPs who indicate to subscribe to the norm of party group loyalty has also increased over time.<sup>50</sup> Although parties can try to socialize MPs into the norm of party group loyalty once they reach the parliamentary party group, it is more likely that subscription to the norm has increased in importance as a candidate selection criterion. This entails that 'parties as organizations' have taken advantage of their control over candidate selection, and have thus been attempted to counteract the effects that electoral volatility and partisan dealignment seem to have had on party agreement.

The fact that party agreement has decreased, whereas cue-taking and party loyalty have increased, indicate that parliament is not insulated from changes in the electorate, but that parties have not stood idle either and relied solely on the roles of the legislative arena in order to maintain party group unity. Instead, parties have responded to the changes in the electorate through the extension of their procedural advantages into the electoral arena through candidate selection. Although parties have been unable to counteract the effects of electoral volatility and partisan dealignment on party agreement, they have been able to do so for cue-taking and party loyalty.

Finally, our data do not allow us to study the actual application party discipline, nor are we able to trace the changes in MPs' satisfaction with party discipline over an extended period of time. We therefore do not know if party (group) leaders have responded to the changes in the electorate by increasing their use of (the threat of) party discipline. The fact that in the last three surveys MPs are not very concerned with party discipline in general, when it comes to voting or seeking authorization from the party before taking parliamentary initiatives, means that party group unity in these areas is not really an issue; the great majority of MPs probably stick the party line and abide by the party (group) rules voluntarily or otherwise readily accept the consequences of not doing so. That those who are unsatisfied with party discipline when it comes to keeping internal party discussions confidential are more likely to want party discipline to be more strict, indicates that MPs are concerned with maintaining (the appearance of) a united front not only when voting, but also during other stages of the policy making process. This concern with maintaining the appearance of a united front again indicates that it is unlikely that parliament is insulated from the electoral arena.

---

<sup>49</sup> It may be that policy specialization has become a more important selection criteria in the process of candidate selection, but we do not have the data to corroborate this argument.

<sup>50</sup> The different formulation of questions used in the 2010 PartiRep Survey make an analysis over all six surveys problematic, but the trend is already present in the first five surveys.



