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Must the breaker pay? Cabinet crises and electoral trade-offs¹

H.M. Narud and G.A. Irwin

1. Introduction

'You can't have your cake and eat it', goes the old adage. For political parties it might be formulated as, 'You can't always hold governmental office, influence governmental policy, and win votes at elections'. In a dream world for political parties, holding public office would mean implementing popular policies that were rewarded with more votes at elections. In the real world it simply does not always work this way and holding public office may bring with it the necessity of making unpopular decisions that result in loss of votes. It often becomes clear that it is not possible to pursue the three goals of gaining votes at elections, influencing governmental policy, and holding governmental office simultaneously; choices must be made and trade-offs take place.

Based upon these three basic goals and the emphasis that a party decides to place, we can identify three types of parties: the vote-seeking party, the office-seeking party, and the policy-seeking party. In 'A Behavioral Theory of Competitive Political Parties', Kaare Strøm (1990) has proposed a unified model of party behaviour in which these three models are seen as 'special cases of competitive party behaviour under special organizational and institutional conditions' (Strøm, 1990: 565). The idea of trade-offs plays an important role in this model. The basic assumptions of the trade-off model can be easily summarized: Parties go through cycles of electoral competition, legislative bargaining, and government formation. In this process votes are translated into office benefits and policy influence. Votes have no intrinsic value to party leaders, but are simply a means to office or other benefits. The value of votes is their contribution to office and policy benefits (Strøm, 1990: 573). However, parties may face a conflict between vote-seeking on the one hand and policy and office seeking on the other. Governing parties are judged on their performance, forming for example, the basis for theories of 'retrospective voting' (Fiorina, 1981). Governing parties may therefore be held to more severe standards, particularly the consistency between promise

and performance than opposition parties. In terms of vote seeking, it may thus even be a disadvantage to hold office. This disadvantage, which Strøm calls the 'incumbency effect', leads to a trade-off in which parties must choose between different objectives.² Pursuing one objective, office (and thus policy) may come at the expense of the other objective, future votes. In popular language, this is sometimes known as 'throwing the rascals out'.

The trade-offs between vote-seeking, office-seeking, and policy-influence occur in any type of democratic political system. In multi-party systems with coalition governments the tactical considerations involved in deciding what strategic decisions are to be taken, which emphases are to be placed, and what compromises can be accepted become especially complicated. The incumbency hypothesis would seem to be focused upon the decision whether or not to join a coalition. In order to join a coalition, it is generally necessary to make compromises. These may not please one's voters, who may switch to another party at the subsequent election.

Yet the decision to join a coalition is not the only moment at which trade-offs must be considered. Not all coalitions manage to survive the maximum period of office, but fall, either because of internal difficulties among the coalition partners or by loss of support in parliament. This means that the consideration of whether to participate in a coalition is an ongoing decision, which must be reconsidered at each moment in which tension between the coalition partners occurs. Will the party continue in the coalition or will it force a break? This opens up a new possibility for the trade-off between office, policy, and votes, which can be summarized by the Dutch phrase, 'wie breekt, betaalt'. (*Who breaks, pays.*) This phrase was adapted from the French 'qui casse, paie' and was first applied in the Netherlands in the 1950s to refer to the obligation of a party forcing a break in a Cabinet coalition to take the initiative to 'repair' the damage and lead in the formation of a new Cabinet. Increasingly the phrase has come to have electoral implications, as can be seen implicitly or explicitly in several analyses (Gruijters and Vis, 1972; Vis, 1973; Anker and Oppenhuis, 1989). It is in the electoral sense, in which it is hypothesized that the party forcing a break in the coalition will lose votes at the subsequent election, that the phrase will be employed here.

Formulated in this fashion, the 'breaker pays' hypothesis can be taken as a corollary to the 'incumbency effect' hypothesis. It implies an added danger to office-holding when this involves coalition government and increases the possibility that office-holding can lead to electoral losses. This paper will focus primarily upon the Dutch corollary. However, before doing so it is important to first examine briefly the question of whether the incumbency effect hypothesis can be said to hold in the Netherlands.

2. The incumbency effect hypothesis

Although they do not hypothesize the direction of influence of incumbency, Rose and Mackie (1983) do provide data to test the incumbency effect hypothesis. For them, the 'pendulum swing' model is only one of the possible models. However, since this model also predicts that participation in office will cost votes, it is clearly closely related to the incumbency effect hypothesis. Their finding that in almost two-thirds of the elections held in Western nations since 1948 the governing parties had their vote go down rather than up would seem to support the hypothesis. Similar results have also been found by Powell (1981).

However, in the Rose and Mackie analysis, the Netherlands was grouped with Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, and Luxembourg as 'Continental Europe'. This may have been warranted, since the Netherlands may indeed resemble these countries more than other countries, such as the Anglo-Saxon countries, but there are nevertheless differences in traditions, including those concerning government formation. For this reason, in a separate analysis the authors have analyzed the Dutch case in more detail (Narud and Irwin, 1993). This analysis raises serious questions concerning the applicability of the incumbency effect hypothesis in the Dutch case.

Although it was found that the coalition as a unit lost seats at the subsequent election in 9 out of 14 cases between 1948 and 1994, not all parties in the coalition were found to suffer the same fate. In 10 of the 14 cases, some of the coalition partners won seats while others lost seats. No consistent patterns could be found for the dominant party in the coalition, or for the junior partners.

Table 1: Electoral fate of parties in government, 1948-93. N=45.

Party	Electoral result					
	winning		status quo		losing	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
KVP (N=8)	2	25%	2	25%	4	50%
ARP (N=6)	3	50%	-	-	3	50%
CHU (N=6)	2	33%	1	19%	3	50%
CDA (N=6)	2	33%	1	17%	3	50%
PvdA (N=8)	4	50%	-	-	4	50%
D66 (N=2)	1	50%	-	-	1	50%
VVD (N=7)	2	29%	-	-	5	71%
PPR (N=1)	-	-	-	-	1	100%
DS'70 (N=1)	-	-	-	-	1	100%
All (N=45)	16	37%	4	10%	25	56%

The only pattern that seemed to be consistent was that the VVD lost seats five of the seven times it has faced the electorate as an incumbent. (See Table 1) Three parties, ARP, PvdA, and D66 show an even balance between winning and losing as incumbents, while the CDA has lost one more time than it has gained as an incumbent. The KVP and CHU lost more often than they gained as incumbents, but to base any conclusion on these results would be dangerous, since the KVP was never in the opposition and the CHU only rarely. Thus, with the exception of the VVD, it would seem that Dutch parties need not fear that incumbency will necessarily lead to a loss of votes³

3. 'Who breaks, pays'

The incumbency effect hypothesis was formulated to apply to all political systems, but does not seem to work too well in the Netherlands. On the other hand, the 'breaker pays' hypothesis is taken directly from the political folklore of the Netherlands and, as a corollary of the incumbency effect hypothesis, certainly deserves examination.

The incumbency hypothesis takes no account of whether a cabinet has completed its full term of office, or has fallen before reaching the finish. If the term is completed the subsequent elections are regular elections, whereas early elections may be called if a cabinet falls.⁴ In terms of trade-offs, the incumbency hypothesis implicitly is most relevant to the decision to join a new government coalition. By joining, one can gain office and thus influence policy, but at the risk of disappointing one's voters and being punished at the subsequent election. The hypothesis of 'who breaks, pays' implies that the trade-off decision is not simply one to be made at the beginning of a coalition, but must be reconsidered at critical moments during the life of the coalition. Although Dutch coalitions have increasingly attempted to reach compromise positions on all controversial issues at the beginning of the new governmental period, internal disagreements nevertheless develop and new compromises must be reached. Any compromise agreement on an important issue must be sold to the party supporters at the next election. But refusing to compromise may also be unacceptable to the voters. Each time such a compromise must be negotiated between or among the coalition partners, the potential impact upon the voters and the question of trade-offs must be considered. Dutch political culture places high value on reaching an acceptable compromise and 'the breaker pays' hypothesis indicates that the trade-off is considered to be to the disadvantage of the party forcing the break (see eg. Vis, 1973; Irwin, 1977; Anker and Oppenhuis, 1989). Thus once a party has entered a coalition, the trade-off calculus changes slightly, as the pressure

not to break is greater than the pressure to enter. At least, this is the implication of the hypothesis.

In order to test this, we first identify those cabinets that fell or were 'terminated' because of a political conflict. Table 2 lists the eight cases of coalitions that were terminated by political dissension. Of these, two were not followed immediately by new elections, so that we are left with a very small number of cases with which to test the hypothesis. Whether a strong belief in the validity of this hypothesis has contributed to the paucity of cases is something which unfortunately cannot be examined here. Cabinets that were clearly interim or caretaker cabinets until new elections could be held have been excluded from the tables, and the previous cabinet is taken to have been the true 'incumbent'. Drees IV, Cals, Biesheuvel I and van Agt II are cases of such incumbents.

For the purpose of this analysis, we have avoided attempting to consider possible 'deeper' causes of breaks and have adopted two easy and straightforward criteria for determining the 'breaker'. First, in cases where one of the parties formally made the decision to leave the coalition, we have designated this party as the 'breaker'. This includes the case of internal dissension within the cabinet leading to the withdrawal of ministers from one of the parties. Second, when a cabinet is brought down by action from the parliament, the party whose delegation failed to vote for the government proposal is designated the breaker. Applying these criteria it emerges that the VVD broke coalitions three times, PvdA twice, KVP/CDA twice and DS'70 once. Two of the cases, Drees I and Marijnen, were not followed by general elections, and,

Table 2: Dutch governments which ended because of political conflict. 1945-1993.*

Government	formed	ended	duration months	parties	parl. basis	breaker
Drees I**	Aug 48	Jan 51	30	PvdA,KVP,CHU,VVD	76	VVD
Drees IV	Oct 56	Dec 58	26	PvdA,KVP,ARP,CHU	85	PvdA
Marijnen**	Jul 63	Feb 65	19	KVP,ARP,CHU,VVD	61	VVD
Cals	Apr 65	Oct 66	18	KVP,PvdA,ARP	70	KVP
Biesheuvel I	Jul 71	Jul 72	13	ARP,KVP,CHU,VVD,DS'70	54	DS'70
den Uyl	May 73	Mar 77	46	PvdA,KVP,ARP,D'66,PPR	64	CDA
van Agt II	Sep 81	May 82	8	CDA, PvdA,D'66	72	PvdA
Lubbers II	Jul 86	Sep 89	40	CDA,VVD	54	VVD

* Party of prime minister listed first

** Not followed by an election

Source: Andeweg and Irwin, 1993:115 and Compendium voor Politiek en Samenleving in Nederland I.

Table 3: Electoral results at elections following a cabinet crisis, 1948-89. N=5.
(in percentage of vote; in parentheses number of parliamentary seats won or lost)

	KVP	ARP	CHU	CDA	PvdA	D'66	VVD	PPR	DS'70
1959	-0.1 (0)	-0.5 (0)	-0.3 (-1)	x)	-2.3 (-3)	x)	3.4 (6)	x)	x)
1967	-5.4 (-8)	1.2 (3)	-0.5 (-1)	x)	-4.4 (-6)	x)	0.4 (1)	x)	x)
1972	-4.1 (-8)	0.2 (1)	-1.5 (-3)	x)	2.7 (4)	-2.6 (-5)	4.1 (6)	3.0 (5)	-1.8 (-2)
1982	x)	x)	x)	-2.5 (-3)	2.1 (3)	-6.8 (-11)	6.4 (10)	-0.3 (-1)	x)
1989	x)	x)	x)	0.7 (0)	-1.4 (-3)	1.8 (3)	-2.8 (-5)	x)	x)

as indicated, have been excluded from the analysis. Finally, in trying to assign responsibility for the break and examine whether the breaker must pay, the 1977 election poses a particular problem. At the election following the break, the APR and KVP joined with the CHU to present a joint list. It was therefore impossible for the voters to pass judgement on these two parties. Because of this, the case of 1977 has been treated separately. It is not included in table 3, but is examined when we turn to the analysis of voter reaction to such Cabinet crises.

Table 3 shows the electoral fate of both the incumbent and opposition parties for the five relevant coalitions. The figures for parties in government are in bold, and the 'breaker' is underlined.

Of the five governments that were judged by the electorate after a government crisis, we can see that the breaker pays in four of the cases and gains in one—1982. The number is small, but the balance tips toward support for the hypothesis. However, the importance of this support weakens if we look at the results for the other coalition partners. Non-breaking incumbents also do relatively poorly at subsequent elections, losing in eight cases and winning in only four. This is only slightly better than the results for the breakers and may indicate that everybody loses in a 'divorce'.

This simple test of the hypothesis is too limited for reaching any definite conclusion. We have employed a fairly simple definition of winning and losing here, namely comparisons of the results to the previous parliamentary election. This oversimplifies the situation and ignores additional information that the parties have available in determining their trade-off decisions. Parliamentary elections are not the only elections in the Netherlands; provincial elections, to a somewhat lesser extent, municipal elections, and even European parliamentary elections are often considered political barometers. Results of such elections are often seen as referenda on the performance of parties, particularly incumbent parties. Moreover, parties are well aware of their position between elections from the public opinion polls. Since the introduction of regular opinion polling in the 1960s, parties now have results available weekly. The trends in the polls are considered quite seriously by the

parties and certainly have influence upon the trade-off decisions and the decision whether or not to terminate a coalition. If government participation seems to cause a dramatic fall-out in popular support, a party may very well change from a cooperative to a competitive strategy (Lupia and Ström, 1993).

4. Evidence from public opinion data

The 'breaker pays' hypothesis is based upon two assumptions concerning the attitudes and behaviour of voters. First, there is the assumption that voters prefer cabinets not to fall apart. Once a cabinet has been formed the preference is for solving internal differences or differences with parliament and for continuing in office rather than for letting a break occur. If, on the other hand, voters are actually of the opinion that it was correct for the cabinet to fall rather than reach a solution, there is little reason to punish the breaker. Thus, the possible electoral effects of a cabinet break are dependent upon how voters feel about whether or not a solution should have been found. Only if they prefer a solution is there a reason to punish the breaker.

The second assumption concerns the question of responsibility. Above we have described our own attempts to assign responsibility for the crises that have occurred in the past. Although we were able to do so in all cases, we mentioned that this might not always be the case and that ambiguities may arise as to who was the guilty party. In terms of the hypothesis it is nevertheless necessary that voters are aware of who is to blame and that they actually assign blame in order to punish a breaking party.

We have been able to find only one survey that provides information concerning how voters react to a cabinet crisis.⁵ In 1977 the break occurred only a few weeks before the scheduled election. A small number of questions was appended to the National Election Study to deal specifically with the two points mentioned and to attempt to determine whether the break had any effect upon the outcome. Voters were first asked if they knew over which issue the cabinet had fallen. More than 70% 'correctly' indicated that questions of land policy had been the cause of the break. Only 1% mentioned underlying causes that lay in the background of the break, whereas almost 3% reported issues which could hardly be deemed correct. Somewhat less than 25% was unaware of the cause of the break or gave no answer.

Another question asked: 'Do you feel that it was correct that the Den Uyl cabinet fell as a result of this issue, or would you have preferred it if a solution had been found to this problem?' Fifty-seven percent reported that they would have preferred that a solution be found, and only 18% felt that it was correct that the cabinet had fallen. Both figures would be higher if the almost 25% who had no opinion, didn't know, or gave no response were eliminat-

Table 4: Attitudes towards the 1977 cabinet crisis by party choice 1972

Vote recall 1972						
Attitude toward break	PvdA	CDA	D'66/PPR	VVD	others	Total
correct to break	0	21	12	42	30	20
should have solved crisis	75	55	71	41	50	61
don't know/no opinion	16	23	17	18	20	19
Total	100	99	100	101	100	100
N	523	448	83	206	138	1398

ed. These figures indicated that despite the stormy history of the Den Uyl cabinet, a solid majority of voters still would have preferred that a solution had been found and that the cabinet had continued. However, these figures do not provide much information, since it is quite likely that one's reaction to a cabinet crisis is coloured by party preference. To investigate this for 1977, the answers to this question have been broken down by the recalled vote in 1972.⁶

Table 4 shows that opinions differ considerably according to the party one had voted for in 1972. Those voters who had supported parties that did not join in the cabinet coalition were strongest in the belief that it was correct that the cabinet had fallen. This is not so surprising if we assume that many of these voters had the hope that their party (assuming that they again intend to support a party not in the cabinet) might now have a chance to participate in government. Nevertheless, 40% of the VVD voters and half of the voters of small non-cabinet parties would have preferred a solution. Among voters who had voted for one of the parties that joined the cabinet in 1973, CDA voters were the most likely to feel that the crisis was correct; more than one-fifth of the CDA voters were of this opinion, while slightly more had no opinion or did not know. This is undoubtedly strongly related to the fact that most voters felt that it was the CDA that had caused the break. The supporters of the secular parties in the cabinet (PvdA, D66, PPR) were the strongest, more than 70%, in their feeling that a solution should have been found.

In the 1977 survey voters were asked 'Who or whom, that is which minister or ministers or parties were the most important cause of the fall of the cabinet?' Those who responded either with Van Agt or CDA have been recorded as CDA, and those naming Den Uyl or the PvdA as PvdA. Some placed responsibility on both of the parties.⁷ In Table 5 these responses have also been broken down by the party vote in 1972.

First we may note that more than two-thirds of the voters were in agreement that it was the CDA that had been responsible for the break. Only

Table 5: Responsibility for crisis in 1977 by party choice 1972

Vote recall 1972						
	PvdA	KVP ARP CHU	D'66 PPR	VVD	Other parties	Total
CDA responsible	73	56	75	64	63	66
PvdA responsible	1	4	4	5	4	3
Both responsible	5	10	4	11	6	7
others/do not know	21	30	18	20	27	24
Total	100	100	101	100	100	100
N	523	448	83	206	138	1398

about 3% assigned responsibility to the PvdA, and 7% felt both parties were responsible. The remaining 24% said that others caused the crisis or didn't know. The differences in responses from the voters of the various parties are substantial. Most interesting are the differences among the voters who had supported one of the parties in the government coalition. Voters for the progressive parties, PvdA, D66 and PPR, are strongest in assigning responsibility to the CDA. Only a small number assign responsibility to the PvdA or to both CDA and PvdA. Although a majority of the supporters of the former CDA parties feel that the CDA should be held responsible for the break, the figure is almost 20% lower than that of the supporters of the other coalition partners. These voters were more likely to say that the PvdA was responsible, that the parties shared responsibility, or gave other responses. For the examination of the breaker pays hypothesis, it is the voters for the coalition partners that are the most interesting. However, it might be noted that the distribution of responses from VVD voters is somewhat between the two other groups, with in fact the highest proportion holding the PvdA singularly or jointly responsible.

The figures from Tables 4 and 5 indicate that, at least for this particular case, most voters reacted in accordance with the assumptions underlying the 'breaker pays' hypothesis. Although voters are affected by their own party preferences, solid majorities indeed felt that it was not correct that the cabinet had fallen, but that a solution should have been sought. Almost three-fourths were able to assign blame, and most were in agreement that this lay with the CDA. Unfortunately, we have no way of knowing whether we would find similar results for other elections. However, since these figures tend to support the assumptions underlying the hypothesis, for the purposes of further analysis below, it does not seem unreasonable to presume that voters reacted in a similar fashion following other governmental crises.

Since voters in substantial numbers have reacted in accordance with the assumptions of the 'breaker pays' hypothesis, the final question is whether any evidence can be found that voters actually punished the CDA for causing the cabinet crisis. To determine possible punishment behaviour we must first distinguish between the starting point of voters. Voters who had supported the breaking party at the previous election are in the best position to punish the party by withdrawing their support. Such voters have two possibilities, namely voting for another party at the new election or simply abstaining from voting. For the case of 1977, we should therefore expect that among voters who had supported the CDA in 1972, those who blamed the CDA and felt that a solution should have been found were more likely to change party or at least to stay home than those who agreed that the CDA was to blame, but that it was correct that the break had come. In Table 6 the group of voters who reported having voted for one of the CDA parties (i.e. KVP, ARP, or CHU) in 1972 have been asked what they intended to do in 1977. We have chosen to examine the intended vote, because the question was asked in the same wave of the study as the other questions. This provides a maximum number of cases for the analysis and allows maximum chance to discover punishment effects. We must realize, however, that not all voters actually followed their intentions. In order to reduce the size of the table we combined all of the parties other than the CDA in order to concentrate on the question of whether CDA voters intend to exercise their two punishment options.

Although the figures in the table are in the direction predicted, the differences are insubstantial and not statistically significant. Of those who thought that the CDA had acted correctly in breaking, 83% indicated an intention of again voting CDA. As the hypothesis had predicted the figure for those who

Table 6: Intended action of 1972 CDA voters, by assignment of responsibility

Intended vote 1977	CDA guilty, preferred solution	CDA guilty, but acted correctly	Other responses	Total
CDA	80	83	82	82
Other party	10	11	7	9
Will vote, don't know which party	8	5	9	8
May or will not vote	2	2	2	2
Total	100%	101%	100%	101%
N	158	63	227	448

Chi Square = 2.9 d.f. = 6 Sig. = .826

felt a solution should have been found were less likely to support the party, but the difference is only 3%. Those who held others responsible or did not know whom to hold responsible were in between with their support at 82%. Clearly the fact that the CDA had forced the break in the coalition had almost no influence upon the voters for the party.

Supporters of the breaker at the previous election are in the best position to punish a breaking party. However, any party may hope that lost votes are counterbalanced by gains from voters who had voted for other parties at the previous election. This, of course, implies that other voters may also punish the breaker by not moving to this party. We should therefore expect that among voters who had supported other parties in the previous election, those who placed responsibility and felt the break should have been avoided will move to the breaker in smaller numbers than those who agreed with the break or assigned the responsibility elsewhere. For the 1977 case then, we should again expect the percentages for the CDA among the first group in the following table to be lower than for the other groups.

Again the differences among the groups are in the direction predicted by the hypothesis, and differ more than in the previous table. However, the results are again not statistically significant. Only 4% of those who favoured a solution reported an intention to support the CDA, as did 5% of those who assigned joint responsibility or gave another response. Among those who felt that the CDA was correct in breaking the coalition, 10% indicated they would now vote CDA. Any claim that the results of these two tables supports the hypothesis would be exaggerated. Although the figures are, in all cases, in the predicted direction, the differences are too small to warrant any claim. If the CDA was punished in 1977 for causing the break, the punish-

Table 7: Intended action of 1972 voters for other parties, by assignment of responsibility.

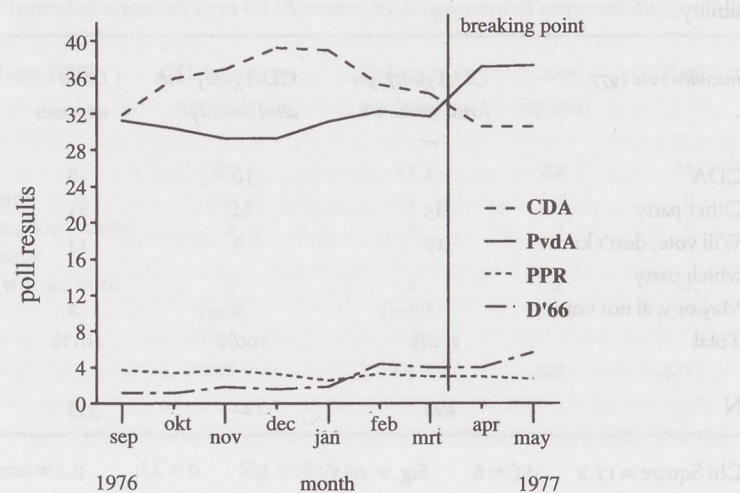
Intended vote 1977	CDA guilty, preferred solution	CDA guilty, but acted correctly	Other responses	Total
CDA	4	10	5	5
Other party	85	82	81	83
Will vote, don't know which party	10	8	13	11
May or will not vote	1	0	2	1
Total	100%	100%	101%	101%
N	495	122	333	950

Chi Square = 11.2 d.f. = 6 Sig. = .082

ment was hardly enough to throw a scare into future decision-makers. Even if we assume that the voters intended to punish the CDA, at the election the party actually gained one seat in parliament. Of course, it is possible that CDA voters are especially loyal to their party and in 1977 was successful in attracting new voters. But we should remember the special circumstances of the 1977 election, since CDA faced the voters as a merged party for the first time. CDA voters could also be reasonably certain that their party would return in a following cabinet, since no cabinet has as yet been formed without the party (or its largest predecessor the KVP). Supporters for other parties may act differently when their party has forced a break. Unfortunately, we have no data comparable to those of 1977 with which to test these possibilities. Our remaining test of the 'breaker pays' hypothesis must therefore be based upon trends in aggregate results of opinion polls.

4.1. *The Den Uyl Cabinet, 1973-77* – Coalitions of PvdA with the religious parties have tended, with a few exceptions, to be stormy affairs. In 1973, when the PvdA was at the height of its polarization strategy and the religious parties were severely weakened by shattering electoral losses, an extremely long formation period produced a cabinet dominated by the PvdA (with its allies D66 and PPR) which included ministers from the KVP and ARP. As one of the authors wrote in 1977, 'The Den Uyl cabinet has never had it easy internally' (Irwin, 1977: 81). Conflicts abounded, and one television program counted ten crises during the cabinet period. Nevertheless, solutions were always found and it began to appear that the cabinet would be able to complete its full term. Yet, within sight of the finish, it stumbled and on March 22, 1977 submitted its resignation.

Figure 1: Support for government parties, September 1976 – May 1977 (Nipo Polls)



The seeds of the final destruction had been sewn in December of 1975, when new legislation related to the ownership of land was introduced. At the beginning of 1977 these proposals were finally taken up in the Second Chamber. The Christian Democratic members of parliament voiced strong criticism of the legislation and introduced an amendment. The KVP-Minister of Justice, Van Agt, refused to continue defense of the legislation in parliament. After lengthy discussions between the cabinet and parliamentary leaders, the cabinet voted not to agree on all of the Christian Democratic demands, whereupon the KVP ministers refused to accept responsibility for the legislation. After deliberation, the ARP ministers chose to support their new CDA brethren and also resigned.

Figure 1 shows the trends in political choice for the four coalition parties, as based upon NIPO public opinion polls, for the period from September 1976 until the election in May 1977.⁸ The trend lines show contrasting pictures for the two senior coalition partners, CDA and PvdA. At the end of 1976 support was increasing for the CDA parties and declining for the PvdA. However, as the new year began, both trends began to move in the opposite direction. The CDA began to fall and the PvdA started gaining. The rate of change accelerated sharply between March and April. The PvdA jumped from 31.7% in March to 37.2% in April, whereas the CDA fell from 34.2% to 30.6%. It was almost exactly the time of the fall of the Cabinet that the PvdA passed the CDA to become the largest Dutch party. Shortly thereafter, support for both parties levelled out until the election.

The junior partners in the coalition also show differing patterns. D66 had reached a nadir in 1974 when it even considered disbanding. In the fall of 1976 it was still smaller than the PPR, but by the beginning of the new year it had begun attracting new voters and actually passed the PPR in size. Just before the election, the party experienced another boost in popular support. The pattern of support for the PPR was fairly consistent. Right up until the election support drifted slightly downward. For neither of these parties is there a significant break in the line associated with the fall of the cabinet.

The election of May 25, 1977 resulted in a massive victory for the PvdA, which gained 10 seats and became the largest party in parliament. The new CDA emerged with the gain of a single seat, as compared to the joint results for the three parties in 1972. The results for the PPR were a disaster, dropping four seats to a new total of three. D66 was delighted by a gain from six to eight seats.

Drawing a conclusion concerning the 'who breaks, pays' hypothesis based upon the experience of 1977 is not easy. In terms of electoral results, the CDA actually won a seat as compared to the previous election. However, examination of the poll results shows that gains were at least potentially

greater. At the beginning of 1977, support for the CDA was considerably higher than at election time. The hypothesis receives some support if one looks at the trend lines. There is a substantial jump in the figure for the PvdA between March and April of 1977. On the other hand, the CDA figures for the same period show a clear drop. Yet, in both cases, the patterns are simply accelerations of previously existing trends. More interesting and more puzzling perhaps is the fact that this trend was abruptly halted for both parties in April and support levels remained steady until the election. In terms of the broader question of trade-offs, it was this election perhaps more than any other Dutch election that illustrated the complicated relationship between office, policy, and votes. A simple assumption that electoral gains can be turned into office was brutally shattered by the results of the 1977 cabinet formation. The PvdA won a record ten parliamentary seats and, as has been demonstrated in the previous section, was certainly not seen by the electorate as the party guilty of forcing the break. Yet, after the longest formation period in Dutch history, a CDA-VVD cabinet emerged. In terms of gaining office, it was not the breaker who paid. Where the blame must be laid for the failure of the PvdA to return to office is beyond the scope of this paper. That there may be trade-offs when attempting to pursue the goals of votes, office, and policy simultaneously is amply illustrated.

4.2. *The Cabinet Van Agt II, 1981-82* –The relationship between CDA and PvdA in the Van Agt II cabinet was even more turbulent than in the Den Uyl government. It came as a surprise to many that Den Uyl was himself willing to serve in a government led by Van Agt, thus reversing the roles they had earlier held. D66 was also part of this cabinet which never really got off the ground. The formation period was difficult and after only five weeks in office, the Labour ministers quit the cabinet in a dispute over fiscal policy. A fragile reconciliation brought them back, but the cabinet proved to be extremely disharmonious, with both personal and policy conflicts making continuation increasingly difficult (see Dittrich et al., 1983; Daalder, 1986; Gladish, 1991). In May 1982, the Labour ministers refused to agree on certain cuts in public spending, and the cabinet broke up. Early elections were called. In Table 3 we have seen electoral fate of the parties involved. The 'breaker', PvdA, gained 2.1% compared to the 1981 result and obtained three additional seats in parliament. For the CDA, the result was the opposite, the party lost 2.5% and three seats in parliament. The big loser, however, was the third incumbent, D66, which suffered a massive loss of 11 seats in parliament. Thus, at least when comparisons of electoral results are made it was the 'breaker' who gained, whereas the 'remainders' lost. A closer look at the opinion poll results may throw light on the question whether the fall of the cabinet was related to these results.

Figure 2: Support for government parties, September 1981 – October 1982 (Nipo Polls)

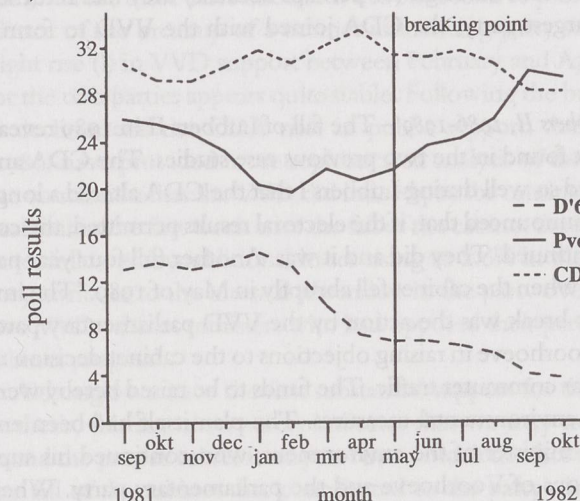


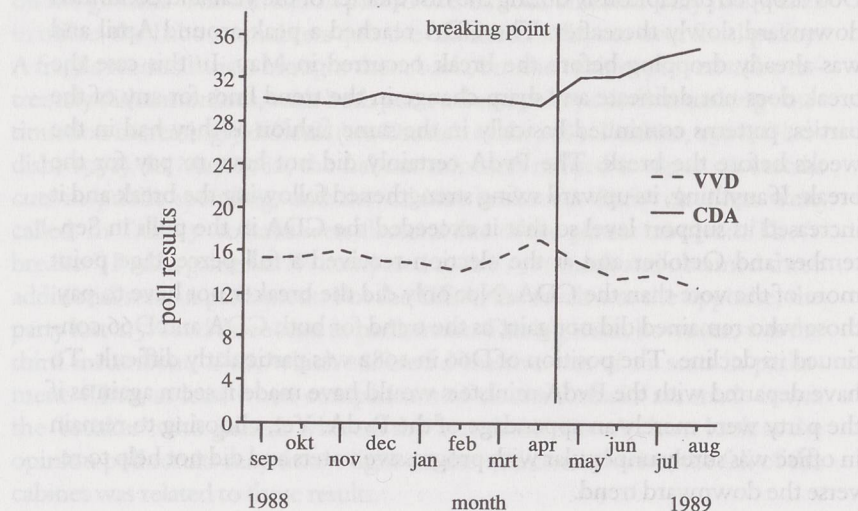
Figure 2 indicates voter preferences for the period between September 1981 and October 1982. The figures show that some rather dramatic changes in levels of support took place during this period.

At least two distinct periods can be distinguished. At the end of 1981 the PvdA was losing support steadily, dropping to a level of about 20%. The CDA was increasing slowly and D66 was riding the crest of its highest level of support until then. With the coming of the new year, the trends for PvdA and for D66 reversed direction. The PvdA began a steady climb, while D66 dropped precipitously during the first quarter of the year and continued downward slowly thereafter. The CDA reached a peak around April and was already dropping before the break occurred in May. In this case the break does not delineate any sharp change in the trend lines for any of the parties; patterns continued basically in the same fashion as they had in the weeks before the break. The PvdA certainly did not have to pay for the break. If anything, its upward swing strengthened following the break and it increased its support level so that it exceeded the CDA in the polls in September and October and at the election received a full percentage point more of the vote than the CDA. Not only did the breaker not have to pay, those who remained did not gain, as the trend for both CDA and D66 continued its decline. The position of D66 in 1982 was particularly difficult. To have departed with the PvdA ministers would have made it seem again as if the party were merely an appendage of the PvdA. Yet, choosing to remain in office was surely unpopular with progressive voters and did not help to reverse the downward trend.

Parallel to the 1977 case, PvdA satisfaction with the electoral results was not translated into office. Although (or perhaps because) they had returned to the position of largest party, the CDA joined with the VVD to form a new cabinet.

4.3. *The Cabinet Lubbers II, 1986-1989* – The fall of Lubbers II in 1989 reveals some new twists not found in the two previous case studies. The CDA and VVD had cooperated so well during Lubbers I that the CDA altered a long-standing policy and announced that, if the electoral results permitted, the coalition would be continued. They did and it was. Another full four year period seemed in sight when the cabinet fell abruptly in May of 1989. The immediate cause of the break was the action by the VVD parliamentary party and its leader Joris Voorhoeve in raising objections to the cabinet decision to lower tax relief for car commuter traffic. The funds to be raised hereby were intended to pay for environmental measures. The plan itself had been endorsed by the VVD minister of the environment, who continued his support despite the actions of Voorhoeve and the parliamentary party. When the VVD members of parliament refused to 'rethink' their action, the entire cabinet submitted its resignation and new elections were called for September. Table 3 has shown that the electoral results for the two incumbents differed considerably. The CDA increased its vote slightly, but failed to gain additional seats. The VVD suffered badly, losing almost 3% of its vote and five seats in the Second Chamber.

Figure 3: Support for government parties, September 1988 – October 1989 (Nipo polls)



The trends in support for the two incumbent parties are presented in Figure 3. Of the three cases discussed, this one seems to present the strongest evidence of the breakup of a cabinet influencing party support. Except for a slight rise (!) in VVD support between February and April of 1989, support for the two parties appears quite stable. Following the break the VVD clearly declines and the CDA rises in public support. Anker and Oppenhuis (1989) have provided more sophisticated analysis of these data and came to the conclusion that the VVD did indeed pay for causing the break. They reveal that in the first week after the fall of the cabinet the party lost 1.7% of the vote, followed by additional losses rising to 2.6% in the second week. This they attribute to the internal dissension in the party over the position of the two VVD cabinet ministers who had opposed their party and supported the cabinet proposal.

Although we have the first substantial support for the 'breaker pays' hypothesis, this last observation indicates that we may nevertheless not have found the proper cause. It may not be so much the fact that the VVD caused the fall of the cabinet that contributed to the party's losses, but that voters were disgusted with the internal dissension within the VVD. Survey evidence showed VVD voters had lower regard for their own party leader Voorhoeve than for the CDA minister of finance Ruting and the CDA prime minister Lubbers (Van Holsteyn and Irwin, 1992). Although slightly less critical than other voters, VVD supporters also gave low scores to the party for internal cooperation. Perceptions of poor leadership and internal party dissension are thus more likely to have been responsible for the decline in support than the actual break itself.

5. Conclusions

In our analysis of the incumbency effect hypothesis we found that incumbency was not necessarily a liability for governing parties in the Netherlands. Only the VVD seemed to suffer consistently. The evidence for the 'breaker pays' hypothesis is, however, inconclusive. In 1989 it does seem clear that the breaker (VVD) paid an electoral price, but even then other factors may have been involved. In 1977 the CDA may have paid a price, but the evidence is somewhat mixed. In 1982 the PvdA certainly did not pay, and may even have gained from having terminated a turbulent coalition.

The only real conclusion that can be drawn is that politics is quite complicated and not easily summed up in simple hypotheses and homilies. The decision whether or not to let a cabinet fall is more complicated than just facing punishment for the break. Other factors must be considered. In 1989 the VVD was apparently unable to convince the voters that the break was for a

good reason. Instead, the party was perceived negatively because of leadership problems and internal dissension, and for this the party was punished. In 1982, however, the PvdA broke on an issue that was highly salient to its voters. The break certainly did nothing to halt the upward trend in support for the party. Clearly, choosing the right issue and the right moment to break is important, as most politicians are surely aware. It would be interesting to have individual survey data for 1982 comparable to the data from 1977 to examine 'who' voters felt were to blame for the break and whether the voters felt that the coalition should continue. The evidence from 1977 indicates that voters are not completely unanimous in their responses to such questions, assigning blame differentially and differing on whether the cabinet should have been saved. If a breaker is able to shift the blame, the costs are surely also shifted. Finally, it is quite likely that the amount of time between the break and the ensuing elections is of importance. The longer the time period, the less the impact, as other factors intervene and take on importance.

Notes

1. A first draft of this paper was presented at the 1993 Dutch political science conference in Soesterberg. The discussion there has been helpful for the revision of the paper. We would like to thank Rob Eisinga for making available the merged information on "voting intention", based on polling results from the NIPO, 1962-92, and Remco Kaashoek for technical assistance.

2. It should immediately be noted that this 'incumbency effect' is quite different from the hypothesized effect of incumbency in the United States. In the American context, incumbency is considered to be an asset in an election. Presidents have substantial resources at their disposal to help secure their reelection, and Congressmen and Senators have even greater certainty of reelection. (See e.g. Cronin, 1980: 43-46; Polsby and Wildavsky, 1980: 65-67).

3. This conclusion may be of little comfort to the CDA and the PvdA, who, as incumbents, suffered enormous losses at the most recent election in 1994. The opposition parties in 1994 were indeed the major winners at the election. Only time will tell whether 1994 was the exception to an old trend or the beginning of a new one.

4. Until 1967 it was not always considered necessary to call new elections when a cabinet fell. New coalitions could be formed without consulting the electorate. Since 1967, each time a cabinet has fallen, new elections have been called, and only caretaker coalitions have been formed to bridge the intervening period.

5. Questions concerning the breakup of various coalitions have been included in surveys conducted by the NIPO organization and made available through the Steinmetz Archive in Amsterdam. Hopes that these data would shed additional light on the subject were dashed when it was found that all data were unusable because of double-punching.

6. Notice that recall data provide lower reliability than panel data, but the relevant questions were not posed in the panel study. We also must note here that difficulties arise

when deciding what to do with those voters who report having supported the CHU in 1972. No members of this party served in the Den Uyl Cabinet and the party cannot therefore be responsible for the break in the coalition. Yet, before the break occurred the decision to submit a joint list of candidates in 1977 had been reached. Where possible we have in fact done the analysis for CHU voters, but found that they hardly differed in their reactions from KVP and ARP voters. (When attempting to assess the electoral effects in Table 6 the numbers became too small to achieve reliable results.) For these reasons and for the sake of simplicity of presentation, the 1972 voters for all three parties have been combined here into a single category of 'CDA-voters'.

7. A few named other politicians, such as ministers Van Thijn or Lubbers. Unfortunately these were combined in coding, and it is therefore not possible to determine whether CDA or PvdA should be held responsible.

8. During this period public opinion pollers were forced to change their question wording to reflect the merger into the CDA. For this analysis we have combined all responses for KVP, ARP, and CHU into the single category CDA.

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Onderzoek

Beïnvloeding van politieke houdingen via maatschappijleer?*

Karin Wittebrood

If the expectancy of life of a voter in the United States at the age of twenty-one is forty-two years, than in one-half of this time a new generation will have appeared upon the field of action. Consequently in twenty-one years it would be possible to have a new majority with an entirely new political education, with new political values, attitudes, interests, capacities. We could re-create the world politically within some twenty years, were we minded and equipped to do so. We might make the coming generation aristocrats, democrats, communists, nationalists, or internationalists at will, assuming that we were prepared to devote the necessary time and patience to the construction of the machinery for the purpose of social and political education. In the development of secondary education, then, lies one of the great possibilities of the political science of the future (Merriam 1925: 203).

1. Inleiding

De verwachting dat het onderwijs gebruikt kan worden voor de vorming van burgers is al eeuwenoud. Zowel Plato als Aristoteles benadrukten het belang van een uitgebreide instructie voor burgerschap door de staat. Later beklemtoonden politieke denkers als Hobbes de relevantie van burgerschapstraining als bescherming tegen politiek geweld, terwijl Rousseau onderstreepte dat burgers onderwezen moeten worden om hun persoonlijke belangen en wensen samen te laten gaan met de algemene wil. Ook in onze huidige samenleving wordt aan het onderwijs de taak toegeschreven een opleiding te verzorgen tot 'volwaardig burgerschap' (WRR 1986: 8).¹

Dat het onderwijs zo'n belangrijke plaats inneemt binnen de ideeën over de inrichting van een samenleving is niet verbazingwekkend. Het onderwijs is immers een door de overheid te besturen middel dat gebruikt wordt om invloed uit te oefenen in een samenleving. De overheid beschikt hiermee over een beleidsinstrument waarmee zij mogelijk de politieke houdingen en gedragingen van burgers kan beïnvloeden. In Nederland wordt binnen het onderwijs vooral het schoolvak maatschappijleer gezien als middel om politieke houdingen en gedragingen te beïnvloeden. Empirisch onderzoek naar