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Cabinets and party systems in ten smaller European democracies

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1, The three existing theoretical approaches

The subject of this paper has been approached in political science chiefly from three angles: (1) that of the traditional comparative government literature which has mainly concentrated on institutional variables; (2) that of the study of comparative party systems; and (3) that of formal coalition theory.

These three approaches have in common a desire to generalize but they all suffer from certain defects because their findings have been insufficiently tested against empirical material. Hence inadequate typologies, an overconcentration on variables that are easily collected (chiefly formal institutional data and numerical data on party systems), too little systematic attention to the methodological problem inherent in the fact that political systems are configurative wholes, and a great deal of speculative theorizing which tends to treat party systems as if they were static phenomena. Much of this is, alas, inevitable in view of the little knowledge we have of the *working* of systems as contrasted to their external *structures*.

A, The Traditional Comparative Government Literature

The traditional comparative government literature would seem to present the following problems:

- 1 General typologies of forms of government, like the opposition between 'presidential systems' and 'parliamentary systems', and between 'cabinet government' and 'assembly government', are to a very large extent extrapolations from the functioning of the political systems of the U.S.A., Great Britain and pre-1958 France. They leave little room for other forms: e.g. the Swiss system; systems with a directly elected President juxtaposed to a responsible parliament (Austria, Finland, Ireland, post-1958 France); and systems in which cabinets and parliaments are more balanced than in the ideal-type Britain or the stereotyped France of another day.
- 2 The literature ascribes too much causal importance to single institutional devices: e.g. dissolution, investiture, interpellations, non-confidence pro-

* This paper was originally presented as a report to a Round Table Conference on European Comparative Politics which was organized by the International Political Science Association between 10 and 14 September 1969 in Turin, Italy. The text is unchanged, apart from some improvements in language and some references to more recent literature. This report forms part of a joint project on the comparative study of the smaller European democracies which is conducted by Stein Rokkan of the University of Bergen (Norway), Val R. Lorwin of the University of Oregon (U.S.A.), Robert A. Dahl of Yale University (U.S.A.), and the author with financial support by the Ford Foundation. Research for this paper began while I was a Fellow of the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences in Stanford, California, U.S.A. in 1966—1967. I am grateful for research assistance to J. Ferejohn, J. van der Velden, J. Boehmer and J. Verhoef.

cedures, parliamentary committees. Hence it feeds an exaggerated belief in the potential of institutional engineering.

- 3 The literature suffers from certain fashions, strongly influenced by the political fortunes of 'pattern states'. British cabinet government, French beliefs in popular sovereignty, German distastes for the alleged *Parteienstaat*, Italian corporatism, American presidentialism and congressional organization, have all had their vogue in the writings of institutionalist theorists at one time or another.
- 4 Although often normative in intent, the literature rarely spells out the criteria by which the functioning of political systems is judged. Its writings are vicariously shaped by a-political legalistic traditions, by naive democratic models which start from an allegedly sovereign electorate, and by highly personal appreciations of the institutional structures of particular states.

B, The Literature on Comparative Party System

The comparative party-systems literature has been influenced by older comparative government concerns, as is clear for instance in the strong influence of the presumed dichotomy between two-party and multiparty-systems (read: 'Britain' and the 'Continent'), and the widespread assumption that desirable party systems can be engineered through institutional reforms (for instance, changes in the electoral system). But as a whole, this body of literature comes nearer to actual political processes in specific polities than the traditional comparative government writings. Yet it presents the following problems:

- 1 It has paid an exaggerated attention to the importance of purely numerical criteria for distinguishing party systems. The construct of a two-party system has few approximations in the real world. The category of multiparty systems offers too little discrimination among very numerous, but different polities. Hence the attempt to develop more complex numerical typologies, for instance: Sartori's¹ contrast between moderate and extreme pluralism, Blondel's² distinction between two-party systems, two-and-a-half party systems, multi-party systems with one 'dominant' party and multiparty systems without a dominant party, and Rokkan's³ more complex

¹ Giovanni Sartori: 'European Political Parties: The Case of Polarized Pluralism', in Joseph LaPalombara and Myron Weiner eds., *Political Parties and Political Development*, Princeton, 1966, pp. 137—176; and Sartori, 'The Typology of Party Systems: Proposals for Improvement', in Erik Allardt and Stein Rokkan eds., *Mass Politics - studies in political sociology*, New York, 1970, pp. 322—352.

² Jean Blondel, 'Party Systems and Patterns of Government in Western Democracies', *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, 1 (1968), pp. 180—203.

³ Stein Rokkan, *Citizens, Elections, Parties: Approaches to the Comparative Study of the Processes of Development*, Oslo, 1970, pp. 91 ff.

accounting of party systems on the basis of the distance which separates the largest party from the majority point, and the second and the third-largest parties from the largest party.

- 2 Too little empirical attention has been given to the differences in internal party structures, the degree of cohesion of different parties, and the effect of these factors on the relations between cabinets and parliaments. Epstein's⁴ thesis about the inevitable *creation* of cohesive parties by the mechanics of parliamentary government is suggestive, but insufficiently tested. Duverger's⁵ contrast between 'internally' and 'externally' created parties seems too neat, and of increasingly less importance in the state of parties in the modern world, long after their creation.
- 3 The literature has been powerfully affected by the axiom of a natural tendency towards dualistic cleavage lines. Some examples: the alleged superiority of two-party systems; the explanation of multiparty systems through cross-cutting dualistic cleavages, inevitably leading to 'fragmentation'; Duverger's proposition that a Center cannot exist; Sartori's contrast between good and bad pluralism according to the bi-polarity or the multipolarity of political divisions.
- 4 As in the comparative government literature, value judgments have been implicit rather than explicit, without an attempt either to specify value criteria or to measure the performance of actual political systems.

C, *The Contribution of Formal Coalition Theory*

Paradoxically, formal coalition models have been receiving an increasing attention at a time when students of comparative party systems tend to develop more complex, developmental typologies. A new abstract theory is being formulated at a time when other students are becoming increasingly conscious of the need for closer attention to concrete historical patterns.

Modern coalition theory (as exemplified by Downs,⁶ Riker⁷ and Michael Leiserson⁸) does provide a careful articulation of its assumptions about party behavior. One might raise the following queries about these:

- 1 The theories assume that parties operate as single actors. This leaves insufficient scope for factionalism within parties: factions are introduced only as elements of uncertainty, or are themselves thought to be subject

⁴ Leon D. Epstein, *Political Parties in Western Democracies*, New York, 1967.

⁵ Maurice Duverger, *Political Parties*, revised second edition, New York, 1959.

⁶ Anthony Downs, *An Economic Theory of Democracy*, New York, 1957.

⁷ William H. Riker, *The Theory of Political Coalitions*, New Haven, 1962.

⁸ Michael Avery Leiserson, *Coalitions in Politics: A Theoretical and Empirical Study* - unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, Yale University, New Haven, 1966.

to the laws of coalition behavior.

- 2 Whenever coalition models are tested against the actual world of politics (e.g. Michael Leiserson, Erik Damgaard⁹) the tests have to assume the presence of an 'ideological space' in which parties occupy definite positions. The actual positioning of parties has either been postulated, or been studied with very weak indicators. This procedure runs the danger of circular reasoning: assumed coalition preferences are deduced from past coalition behavior, and these preferences are used to explain the formation of new coalitions. The models, moreover, tend to assume a static placement of parties.
- 3 Most existing theories would seem unable to explain coalitions which are much wider than Riker's 'minimum-size principle' would dictate. The theories seem particularly unsuited to explain the formation and maintenance or fall of coalitions in what Lijphart¹⁰ has termed 'consociational democracies' and Lehmbruch¹¹ 'Konkordanz-demokratien' or 'Proporz-demokratien'. They neglect historical factors which have exercised a continuing influence on elite behavior and on the politicization or depoliticization of cleavage lines.

2, Cabinets in the smaller European democracies — some hypotheses and some data¹²

Existing theories on cabinet-parliament relations and party systems have been drawn chiefly from the experience of the larger European countries. A systematic collection and analysis of data on cabinets in the smaller European countries should widen the empirical base against which such theories may be tested.

We have therefore collected data on all 250 cabinets which sat since 1918 in ten smaller European democracies (the five Scandinavian countries, the three Benelux countries, Ireland, and Austria). In addition, we have collected data for the same period on the holders of eight of the more important ministerial

⁹ Erik Damgaard, 'The Parliamentary Basis of Danish Governments - the Patterns of Coalition Formation', *Scandinavian Political Studies*, 4 (1969), pp. 30—57.

¹⁰ Arend Lijphart, 'Typologies of Democratic Regimes', *Comparative Political Studies*, 1 (1968), pp. 3—44.

¹¹ Gerhard Lehmbruch, *Proporzdemokratie: Politisches System und Politische Kultur in der Schweiz und in Oesterreich*, Tübingen 1967 and Lehmbruch, 'A Non-Competitive Pattern of Conflict Management in Liberal Democracies: the Case of Switzerland, Austria and Lebanon', paper presented to I.P.S.A. Congress, Brussels, 1967.

¹² The following section shows many of the defects which were pointed out in the previous pages. This is partly due to the nature of the exercise, partly to the need to compress the findings into too little space. Some alternative ways of approaching the subject are discussed in Section III.

offices: those of the Prime Minister, Foreign Affairs, Defence, Interior, Justice, Finance, Economic Affairs, and Education). The data (which have been put on punched cards) are inevitably of a somewhat formal nature.

We have used, in particular,

- *period in office*: for cabinets, the period in office has been defined as the number of months during which one and the same Prime Minister presided over a cabinet of the same political composition, without interim resignation;
- *parliamentary base*: this is the combined percentage of seats in the Lower House occupied by parties which have ministers in a given cabinet;
- *the number of parties*: this refers to the total number of parties which are represented in a given cabinet;
- *the actual party or parties* which participate in the cabinet (for ministers, the political color of the individual holder of an office).

Against these data we have tested a series of assumptions and hypotheses which are commonly found in the literature.

Hypothesis 1: In the smaller European democracies, cabinets have generally been coalition cabinets.

This widespread assumption proved, on closer inspection, to be too much of a generalization. Out of 250 cabinets, no less than 72 have been composed of single parties; 95 have been two party coalitions, 46 have been three-party coalitions and 29 have been coalitions of four parties or more. The remainder have been non-party or emergency cabinets.

Although coalition cabinets have been in the majority, single-party cabinets have predominated in some countries: Ireland, Norway, Sweden. Of our ten countries, only The Netherlands, and to a lesser extent Belgium, Luxembourg, Iceland and Finland have generally had coalition government throughout the period under study.

Hypothesis 2: Coalition cabinets are bound to be unstable.

If stability is measured by number of months in office, the 250 cabinets show the following distribution:

Table I, Number of parties and average duration of cabinets (in number of months in office) in ten smaller European democracies, 1918—1969

Cabinets composed of:				
one party	two parties	three parties	four parties	five parties and more
22.8	21.5	17.8	17.0	5.4

Although there is no great difference between one-party and two-party coalitions, the hypothesis seems confirmed. It also tends to hold when controlled for percentage parliamentary base. (See Table II).

Table II, Average duration (number of month's in office) and number of cabinets (between brackets), by number of parties and formal parliamentary base

formal parliament- ary base	cabinet composed of:					others
	one party	two parties	three parties	four parties	five parties and more	
under 35%	20.3 (23)	10.8 (8)	16.0 (1)			
35%—44%	16.6 (18)	10.5 (6)	5.3 (3)	40.0 (1)		
45%—49%	38.0 (10)	20.0 (2)	4.0 (1)	1.0 (1)		
50%—54%	33.6 (14)	36.2 (15)	16.5 (6)	16.0 (4)		
55%—64%	28.2 (5)	18.7 (27)	15.4 (10)	13.3 (4)		
over 65%	—	23.4 (28)	24.0 (21)	16.2 (10)	4.5 (2)	
all cabinets (including non-party, emergency and no information)	22.8 (72)	21.5 (95)	17.8 (46)	17.0 (22)	5.4 (7)	5.6 (7)

The same is *not* true, however, when cabinets are compared within countries. Our data throw together cabinets from all countries, and are therefore heavily influenced by the record of instability of some countries. Cabinets of Belgium (42), Finland (42) and Austria (32) form, in fact, close to half the total of our 250 cabinets, and as coalition cabinets have tended to predominate in these countries, this weights the record for coalition cabinets towards political instability.

The distribution of the various types of cabinets within individual countries reveals that the few coalition cabinets of Ireland, Denmark, and Norway (since 1965) have not been noticeably less stable than single-party cabinets; relatively stable coalition governments have prevailed in The Netherlands and Iceland; and the most stable governments in Finland have been four party-cabinets.

Hypothesis 3: In parliamentary systems, cabinets must have an assured majority backing in Parliament.

Table III lists our 250 cabinets according to the percentage of their parliamentary base:

Table III, Formal parliamentary base of cabinets

percentage parliamentary base	number of cabinets	average number of months in office
no formal party base	13	13.3
under 35%	32	17.8
between 35% and 44%	28	14.9
between 45% and 49%	14	20.4
between 50% and 54%	39	33.7
between 55% and 65%	46	18.6
over 65%	61	21.8
emergency cabinets	12	5.9
no information	4	19.0

Clearly, the hypothesized relation does not hold in our ten countries. In fact, 36.5% of all cabinets (sitting for 28.5% of the time) have been minority cabinets.

A detailed inspection of these 74 cabinets shows that minority cabinets have been in office particularly frequently in Scandinavia. Most minority cabinets occurred in the inter-war period, but the practice has remained a living reality in all Scandinavian countries, particularly in Denmark where minority cabinets have been in office for fifteen years since 1945.

Are minority cabinets perhaps really majority cabinets in disguise? The tabulation *could* be an artifact of the formal nature of our definition of parliamentary support. By defining the parliamentary base of a cabinet as the percentage strength of the parties in parliament which have ministers in the cabinet, we inevitably reckon, among the minority cabinets, cabinets enjoying the steady support of an outside party which does not have ministers in the cabinet. A more detailed enquiry does reveal a number of these cases. But in a great many other cases, cabinets have in fact acceded to office without any such formal undertaking. Hypothesis 3 must therefore be rejected.

Hypothesis 4: Although cabinets may enter into office without formal majority backing, such cabinets must be instable.

Table III lists, in its second column, the average duration of cabinets according to the width of their parliamentary base. Although minority cabinets have been slightly less stable in the aggregate than majority cabinets, their average duration (not to speak of the duration of some individual cabinets in this category) has been such as to make hypothesis 4 of dubious value. Many cabinets close to the majority point have been practically as stable as cabinets

with a margin as wide as 65% or over. Minority cabinets formed on as low a formal parliamentary base as 35% or less have lasted almost as long as majority cabinets with the support of between 55% and 65%.

For majority cabinets, two contradictory propositions have been put forward by various observers with equal confidence:

Hypothesis 5a: The wider the parliamentary backing, the more stable the cabinet.

Hypothesis 5b: Parties will try to form coalitions of minimal size; hence cabinets with a narrow parliamentary majority will be more stable than cabinets with a wider parliamentary margin.

Neither hypothesis finds conclusive support in the second column of Table III. The most stable cabinets have been those with a narrow parliamentary majority. This finding would support hypothesis 5b, not hypothesis 5a. But cabinets with a margin of over 65% are more stable than cabinets with margins between 55% and 65%, which goes against the minimum size principle. Several coalition theorists (Leiserson; Abraham de Swaan¹³) have found that European cabinets have often been considerably larger than coalition theories would regard as rational.

To investigate this problem somewhat more closely, let us look at the following series of hypotheses:

Hypothesis 6a: Whenever one party obtains a majority of the seats of parliament, it will try to monopolize office by forming a single-party cabinet.

The facts confirm the hypothesis: only rarely have parties possessing an independent parliamentary majority agreed to share power (exceptions: Austria in 1945–1949 in the aftermath of war; two cases in Luxembourg).

Hypothesis 6b: If no party obtains an independent parliamentary majority, coalitions will consist of the largest party plus one or more supporting parties necessary to reach the minimum majority point.

Although this situation has occurred frequently, there are too many alternative arrangements found for the hypothesis to claim general validity: e.g. single-party minority cabinets, coalitions of all the smaller parties against the largest party, and coalitions much wider than the hypothesis demands.

Hypothesis 6c: Whatever the size of the coalition, some parties occupy such strategic places in the political spectrum as to make their inclusion inevitable.

¹³ See Leiserson, *op. cit.*, passim and A. de Swaan, 'An Empirical Model of Coalition Formation as an N-Person Game of Policy Distance Minimization', in Sven Groenings, E. W. Kelley, and Michael Leiserson eds., *The Study of Coalition Behavior*, New York, 1970, pp. 424–444, in particular pp. 427–428.

Table IV lists for all countries the absolute number of months during which the main system parties have participated in cabinets.

Table IV, *Parties and total months in office (major parties only)*

country	con- servatives	catholics	protes- tants	socia- lists	liberals	agrarians/ radicals	com- munists
Austria	p.m.	427		279			55
Belgium		499		285	388		27
Denmark	41			341	140	246	6
Finland	189			183	(302)	433	39
Iceland	343			207	343		56
Luxembourg		509		179	248		15
Netherlands		524	500	194	182		
Norway	114		49	304	156	75	4
Sweden	38			392	85	115	
Ireland		Fianna Fail 272; Fine Gael 188					

¹ Figures of 'dominant' parties are printed in italics.

² Protestants in the Netherlands comprise both Antirevolutionaries and Christian-Historicals.

From this table, one can draw up a list of parties which seem to have been more or less consistently governing parties:

- *Catholics* have been represented in all or almost all cabinets in the three Benelux countries and in Austria; so have two Dutch protestant parties;
- *Socialists* have sat in practically all Swedish cabinets since 1932; they have played a dominant role in Denmark since 1929 and in Norway since 1935, even though occasionally alternative cabinets have been formed;
- *Fianna Fail* has been a governing party in Ireland since 1932, but for two periods of government by coalitions of other parties;
- *Agrarians* have been in office in the great majority of Finnish cabinets.

The listing of these various parties makes it evident that the frequent use of the term 'dominant' in this connection is somewhat ambiguous:

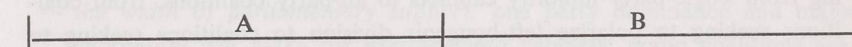
- if defined in terms of the potential of a party to reach the majority point by itself, the term excludes those steadily governing parties which remained far below the 50% threshold; the term would only be applicable to the Austrian Catholics, the Norwegian and Swedish Socialists, and Fianna Fail;
- if defined as the largest party in the system, the term excludes such perennials in government as the Finnish Agrarians or the Dutch Antirevolutionaries and Christian-Historicals;
- if defined simply in terms of percentage chance of partaking in government responsibility, the term begs the question of whether sharing in govern-

ment does make a party *dominant* or not: parties may have been more or less consistently represented in cabinets without exercising a dominant influence on their policies.

Hypothesis 7: The chance of parties' inclusion in cabinets depends on a combination of (a) numerical relations and (b) their location within the party system.

A combination of Stein Rokkan's distinction of party systems in the smaller European democracies on the basis of numerical criteria¹⁴ and Sartori's classification on the basis of bipolarity or multipolarity of government-opposition relations¹⁵, suggests that the ten countries may be classified in three sub-groups:

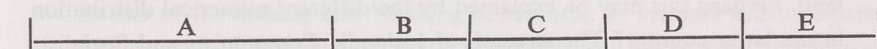
(1) *bipolar systems*, schematically represented on a left-right continuum as follows



Empirical examples: Austria; to a lesser extent Ireland.

Cabinet options: single-party cabinets formed by A or B, or a grand coalition AB.

(2) *unipolar systems*, schematically represented as follows:



In this case one large party faces a number of smaller parties.

Empirical examples: Sweden, Norway and Denmark since the early 1930's; to a lesser extent Ireland in the post-war period.

Cabinet options: A forms single-party cabinet (on majority or minority basis as the numerical situation may be);

A plus nearest smaller party (B) form a majority coalition;

B + C + D + E form coalition of smaller parties against the larger party; any minority cabinet formed from one or more of the smaller parties;

all-party cabinet

(3) *multipolar or non-polar systems:* The schematic representation depends on the numerical relations between the parties. Among the ten countries in our sample, there would seem to be two sub-categories:

(3a) *Center-based systems*, with the largest party in the center of a left-right continuum:

¹⁴ See Rokkan, *Citizens, Elections, Parties*, pp. 91 ff.

¹⁵ See besides the articles by Sartori cited in footnote 1, Jean Blondel, *An Introduction to Comparative Government*, London, 1969, pp. 154 ff. and pp. 340 ff. and Richard Rose and Derek Urwin, 'Social Cohesion, Political Parties and Strains on Regimes', *Comparative Political Studies*, 2 (1969), pp. 7-67.

Com- munists	Socialists	Catholics	Liberals	Conservatives
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Empirical examples: Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg.

(3b) *Even multiparty systems without a clear center party:*

Communists	Socialists	Agrarians/ Progressives	Conservatives
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Empirical examples: Finland, Iceland.

Cabinet options:

- *in center-based systems:* cabinets exclusively formed from the religious party (or in the Netherlands three religious parties); cabinets of religious party (or parties) with either partner on left or right; all-party cabinets.
- *in even multi-party systems:* formation of all manner of governments ranging from single-party minority cabinets to all-party coalitions, from coalitions seeking to polarize left-bourgeois division to coalitions seeking to bridge the gulf separating the bourgeois bloc from the Socialists or even the Communists.

(This situation made for unstable coalitions in Finland, but less so in Iceland. Perhaps this may be explained by the different numerical distribution in the latter country? The strength of Icelandic Communists and Socialists is much below that of Finland, and the power of the Conservative and Agrarians to sustain cabinets correspondingly greater).

Hypothesis 8: The three types of systems make for differences in the possible patterns of governmental change.

An inventory of patterns actually found in our ten countries suggests the following classification:

- 1 *one-party dominance:* In this situation one party dictates the composition of governments through a series of election periods; it is found in bipolar and unipolar systems. This situation has prevailed in Sweden for more than thirty years, and was characteristic to a lesser extent of Norway, Ireland, Denmark, and in a very different way of Austria until 1934;
- 2 *majority alternation:* this situation is possible in bi-polar systems, and in unipolar systems if the out-parties combine. Although not in a pure form, this situation existed to some extent in the alleged 'two bloc parliamentarism' of Denmark, in post-war Ireland, and in Norway, since 1963.
- 3 *semi-turnover:* in this situation, typically found in multipolar systems, one party or group of parties, is always represented in the government, but with alternating coalition partners. Examples: Netherlands, Luxembourg;

- 4 *open choices* (termed *Allgemeinkoalitionsfähigkeit* by Val R. Lorwin¹⁶). In this case (found in multipolar systems only), both the width and the political placing of cabinets are indeterminate, and in many cases coalitions may come about of seemingly incongruous composition. Examples: Finland, Iceland, to a lesser extent Belgium;
5. *grand coalitions* in which all parties join in some kind of *Proporz*-arrangement. This option is theoretically possible in all three types, though logically to be expected mainly in multipolar systems. It has occurred in periods of national emergency in many countries, but also in Austria from 1945 to 1966, and occasionally in Finland.

The different patterns of governmental change have an impact on:

- *the extent to which there is a polarization between parties in government and in opposition;*
- *the width of parliamentary support:* one party dominance and majority alternation will make for narrow-based cabinets; grand coalitions are by nature wide-based coalitions; in semiturnover systems cabinets will probably have a wider base if formed of a center-left than of a center-right coalition; systems of open choices are compatible with any type of parliamentary backing;
- *the site of the making and breaking of cabinets:* in systems with one-party dominance and majority alternation, cabinets will be formed and broken up mainly at the hands of the electorate; hence they will tend to sit for the period of one legislature (or longer if constitutional convention permits them). In the three other systems the life of cabinets is dependent on inter-party relations which may lead to a *renversements des alliances* also between elections;
- *the stability of ministerial personnel:* the greater the degree of change in the party composition of governments, the larger should be the turnover of persons. Hence one would expect an increased turnover as one moves from systems with grand coalitions and one-party dominance, to systems of semi-turnover, to systems with majority alternation and to systems with open choices.

Table V gives for all ten countries the number of new persons appointed to eight ministerial offices in the inter-war and the post-war periods. This table does indeed bear out the assumption that the turnover of ministerial personnel depends on the types of governmental change: note the sharp reduction in

¹⁶ Val R. Lorwin, 'Belgium', in Robert A. Dahl ed., *Political Oppositions in Western Democracies*, New Haven, 1966, p. 178.

Norway and Sweden when a system of open choices was replaced by one of majority dominance; note also the increase in stability of personnel in post-war Austria. The greatest number of new entrants to the eight ministerial offices is found in Finland's system with open choices. In the Netherlands and Denmark an increase in the number of coalition alternatives went together with an increased rate of recruitment of new ministers.

Table V, Total number of new ministerial appointees to eight ministerial offices

country	inter-war period	postwar period	total
Austria	96	47	143
Belgium	100	84	184
Denmark	30	59	89
Finland	108	93	201
Iceland	40	29	69
Ireland	30	48	78
Luxembourg	35	35	70
Netherlands	51	69	120
Norway	76	99 52	
Sweden	77	22	128

Notes:

Periods are not entirely identical. In Austria the interwar period runs for obvious reasons to 1934 only. In some Scandinavian countries, cabinets have been counted from 1920 only.

Not in all countries did all eight ministerial posts exist at all times; this depresses the possible number of *homines novi* in Iceland and Luxembourg, and to a smaller extent in Sweden.

Hypothesis 9: To account for the formation of governments one should not only know the numerical distribution and the location of parties, but the intensity of the cleavages which separate them.

In the formal models just presented, it is assumed that parties are legitimate participants in the coalition game, and that no cleavages separate them which would rule out the formation of coalitions between them.

This assumption is hardly valid. Historical conflicts have made for deep cleavages between certain parties and others. In addition, certain parties have been regarded as by definition outside the system altogether. The extent to which certain parties are unacceptable to one another, or to the potential governing parties as a body, lessens the number of permissible coalitions. This factor has been of particular importance in connection with the socialists before World War II; extreme nationalist movements in the same period; Com-

munist parties; and Fianna Fail in Ireland in the period before 1932.

1 *The admission of the Socialists*

Since the introduction of universal suffrage growing left-wing strength has reduced the parliamentary basis of non-socialist cabinets in all countries but Ireland. This factor was particularly important in Austria, and in all Scandinavian countries, much less so in the three Benelux countries.

Non-socialist parties adopted any one of the following attitudes towards the Socialist party or parties:

- denial, ending in military repression (Austria in 1934, Finland in 1918);
- induction in wide-based coalitions (this practice, already used in some countries during World War I, was adopted again in Belgium in 1935, in Finland in 1937 and in the Netherlands in 1939);
- conditional admission as minority cabinets as in Sweden in 1921 and 1924, Finland in 1926, Norway in 1928. When Socialists did not accept the boundaries implied, they were speedily ejected from office, to rethink their desires for government responsibility on the opposition benches;
- transfer of power to a Socialist cabinet in alliance with a non-socialist party, as in Belgium in 1925, and in Denmark in 1929, soon followed elsewhere in Scandinavia.

2 *The admission of national-socialists and other ultra-nationalist groups*

This phenomenon made itself felt with particular force in pre-1934 Austria, where (except for one occasion in 1927, when Seipel offered a coalition to the Socialists which the latter refused) the Catholics associated with various ultra-nationalist groups to keep the Socialists in opposition. Outside Austria and to a lesser extent Finland, extremist parties of the right did not attain a sufficient potential for effective blocking or blackmail.

3 *The admission of Communists to cabinet positions*

As Table IV showed, Communists entered cabinets for a very short period after 1945 in a number of European countries. After 1947, however, they have participated in cabinets only in Iceland and Finland. In these two countries, their numerical importance has been larger than in the other eight smaller European countries. This increased their potential blocking power and stirred desires for some opening to the left. But when entry came, this was made possible through wide-based coalitions, implying conditions and controls.

4 *The entry of Fianna Fail in 1932*

The induction of Fianna Fail into legitimate Irish politics, after a period of anti-system opposition, came through electoral politics leading to eventual

accession to office as a single-party cabinet with some support from Irish Labor. The strength of British parliamentary traditions and civil service efficiency eased what was at one time regarded as a possible jeopardy to democratic government.

Hypothesis 10: The induction of parties once outside the circle of legitimate coalition partners will increase the number of possible coalitions, hence:

Hypothesis 10a: governmental power will be more proportionally shared as between the parties:

The concept of 'share of governmental participation' has been quantified by Blondel.¹⁷ He logically finds that numerical equity has been greater in systems which practice (approximate forms of) grand coalitions and in systems with a regular alternation between alternative blocs or parties than in systems with dominant majority parties. The hypothesis therefore depends on the dynamics of governmental change;

Hypothesis 10b: the greater mutual acceptability of parties to one another should be apparent in a greater frequency with which they have sat in cabinets together.

This hypothesis finds considerable support when one compares the number of months parties have sat in office with one another in pre-war as contrasted to post-war periods. But here again, the possibility of independent majority power, or exclusive majority coalitions, has prevented the crossing of dividing lines in some cases: e.g. in Ireland between Fine Gael and Fianna Fail, and in Denmark, Norway and Sweden between Socialists and most 'bourgeois' parties (except in war time).

Hypothesis 10c: the widening of permissible governmental space increases the margin of formal parliamentary support on which cabinets have rested.

This hypothesis stands confirmed for almost all countries. In Scandinavian countries, the growing strength of Socialists has led to the formation of majority or near-majority cabinets in lieu of the narrow-based minority cabinets of an earlier period. In countries which traditionally practised coalition cabinets, a similar widening of parliamentary support resulted from the inclusion of Socialists.

Hypothesis 10d: the increase in the number of possible coalitions increases the instability of cabinets.

¹⁷ Blondel, 'Party Systems and Patterns of Government in Western Democracies', pp. 180—203.

The reasoning behind this hypothesis is as follows: parties which have more alternatives in the making of government coalitions will more readily break up any particular combination of which they form a part.

Douglas Rae and Eric Browne¹⁸ have found a correlation of $-.671$ between the number of possible minimal winning coalitions in 17 countries and cabinet stability in the period since 1945. Their definition of minimal coalition: 'the number of distinct combinations of parties which: (a) contain at least a majority of the seats in a parliament and (b) would not contain a majority if any single party were removed' is based on purely quantitative terms, however, and does not take into account the impact of (changes in) cleavage intensity between any two parties.

A better test may be obtained if one inspects (a) the changes in the degree of cabinet stability in individual countries which result from a widening of the number of permissible coalitions, and (b) the record of stability of cabinets with parties formerly outside but now part of the legitimate system.

On the ten countries, there has been some decrease in cabinet stability (when one compares the post-war with the interwar period) in The Netherlands, Luxembourg, Denmark and Iceland. In most of these countries, the number of possible coalitions has gone up as a consequence of the lifting of former barriers against the Socialists. There has been a great increase in cabinet stability in Sweden and Norway, where the numerical factor made for one-party dominance (and hence *lessened* the scope for alternative governments). In Austria, an increase in stability resulted from a deliberate freezing of coalition options. Finally, in Belgium and Finland an increase in the number of possible coalitions coincided with some slight *increase* in cabinet stability.

The effect of a widening of legitimate coalition space may be traced also by comparing the average duration of cabinets without Socialists and with Socialists. Table VI shows that a widening of the basis of cabinets by the inclusion of Socialists has led to an increase in their average life in all countries but Luxembourg. But this increase has been much more dramatic in the Scandinavian countries, where Socialist strength tended to lessen the scope for alternative governments, than in countries where cabinets without Socialist participation could be formed with much less difficulty.

3, Some theoretical issues and the need for further research

An inspection of the experience of cabinets in the ten countries under consideration suggests that it is possible to obtain an insight into their formation if one can specify (a) the numerical relations of parties, (b) the location of parties in

¹⁸ Douglas Rae and Eric Browne, 'A Preliminary Note on the Numerical Structure of Parliamentary Party Systems and Cabinet Tenure', unpublished paper, 1969.

Table VI, Average duration of cabinets with Socialists and without Socialists

country	no socialists in cabinet	socialists in cabinet
Austria	8.2	12.7
Belgium	12.9	13.2
Denmark	26.8	31.0
Finland	10.9	14.1
Iceland	29.1	29.6
Ireland	27.6	37.0
Luxembourg	34.6	12.8
Netherlands	23.6	24.3
Norway	18.6	43.4
Sweden	13.6	37.1
total	17.9	23.5

relation to one another, and (c) the intensity of cleavage lines. This may be easy in the construction of formal models, but it is not in actual society. Numerical relations are relatively easy to come by; but if the analysis is to go beyond a mere counting of parliamentary seats, it must inquire also into the extent to which numbers do present a homogeneous reality: do parties enter into the game of cabinet-making as single units or as forces internally divided? The problem of specifying dimensions and locations is even more formidable. Models usually start from an *a priori* left-right assumption that may not be valid in actual behavior: the occasional formation of cabinets of Socialists and Liberals in Belgium is a reminder that religious conflicts may override socio-economic criteria; similarly the cooperation of Conservatives and Socialists in Iceland suggests that urban-rural divisions may make havoc of a simple left-right scale. To reason in terms of continua on which parties are assigned a fixed location makes politics too much a static process, as if dimensions may not change and as if party elites may not affect the specific location of their party on any particular dimension.

The intensity of conflict, finally, is based on the one hand on specific social cleavages, on the other hand on the extent to which systems have developed in the past a capacity to handle conflict. Formal models usually leave out the latter element, and start from the assumption that cleavages are automatically translated into conflict irrespective of the extent to which elites succeed in politicizing or depoliticizing conflict. Cleavages in fact make their impact felt in different political cultures, which themselves are a product of past politics.

The rejection of the static assumptions underlying formal models calls, on the one hand, for comparative historical analysis on the way particular institutional and party patterns have come about, and, on the other, for an analysis of contemporary processes of handling political conflict.

A, Developmental Factors

Stein Rokkan's work on developmental typologies of party cleavages within the smaller European democracies has rightly called attention to the interaction between institutional factors, on the one hand, and party cleavage factors on the other.¹⁹ Institutions and party systems have evolved together, and hence should be analysed in their interaction, not as if one factor *determined* the other.

Comparative analysis leads to a rejection of the assumption (found often in the literature, even in Huntington's brilliant 'Political Modernization: America vs. Europe'²⁰) that all continental European systems attained an early centralization under a dominant executive authority, against which democratization movements developed in antagonistic fashion. In fact:

- in some countries, political centralization did not come about early (e.g. Switzerland, Netherlands, and to a lesser extent Belgium and Luxembourg). These countries for long lacked the tradition of a strong centralized administration, or a permanent standing army. This profoundly affected later political developments, as it did in the U.S.A.;
- in a larger number of countries, traditions of representation resisted the full force of bureaucratic centralization (in addition to the countries above, Sweden and in its wake Finland; to a lesser extent also Norway and Denmark);
- in many European countries a fargoning local autonomy persisted, because political centralization was absent, or because geographic factors made attempts at centralization ineffective, or because socio-economic modernization came only very late.²¹

Against the background of these factors, considerable differences existed in the manner in which responsible parliamentary government came about. One may distinguish at least four patterns:

- 1 In some countries, responsible parliamentary government came early, at a time when politics was still dominated by pluralist elites in the absence of strong political parties. In Switzerland and The Netherlands (and to a lesser extent in the other two Benelux countries), an autochthonous tradition of the 'politics of accommodation'²² provided the framework in which later mass movements developed. Older elite styles eased the transition to

¹⁹ Rokkan, *Citizens, Elections, Parties*, Section I, pp. 11–144.

²⁰ Samuel P. Huntington, 'Political Modernization: America vs. Europe', *World Politics*, 15 (1965–66), pp. 378–414.

²¹ See Hans Daalder, 'Parties, Elites, and Political Developments', in La Palombara and Weiner, *op. cit.*, pp. 43–58, 64–67.

²² This is the well-chosen title of Arend Lijphart's book: *The Politics of Accommodation: Pluralism and Democracy in The Netherlands*, Berkeley, 1968.

mass politics and made for a tradition in which the principle of proportionality led to a de-emphasis of the majority principle in favor of a pluralist autonomy of all subgroups in the society.

- 2 In a second group of countries (Sweden, Denmark, Norway), a much stronger centralized establishment which centered on King and bureaucracy co-existed with representative organs which did not succeed in obtaining responsible government early or easily. In Norway, Denmark and Sweden, responsible government came about through a process of mass mobilization of counter-establishment forces. In the process political parties became strongly entrenched locally, and cohesive on the floor of Parliament. Parliament became a strong 'democratic' forum, seeking to make the central bureaucracy accountable. This development fostered a belief in majority principles, tempered by a judicious appreciation for the need of executive government. If unavoidable, minority cabinets and ad hoc coalition arrangements for specific policy goals were preferred over the theoretical alternative of *Proporz*-cabinets.
- 3 In a third group of countries (Finland, Ireland), responsible government coincided with national emancipation; here mass politics and parliamentary government were introduced simultaneously. Bitter strife over the mode of national independence (and its possible social components) led to a situation of civil war, and to strong cleavages between the parties. This at times seemed to jeopardize the continuation of democratic politics. Strong traditions of local autonomy tended to separate local politics from the politics of the center, however, which allowed some measure of insulation for individual groups. Eventually greater legitimacy was reached when Fianna Fail in Ireland and the Socialists in Finland came into positions of governmental responsibility. In Ireland one party obtained an overall-majority. In Finland, on the other hand, instable coalitions sometimes led to a tendency to impose quasi-national solutions by presidential leadership.
- 4 Finally, in Austria responsible government arrived in the wake of a revolution which left a heritage of dissensus about the very existence of the state. Bitter polarization and persistent anti-democratic attitudes in authoritative circles led to the only case in our ten countries of destruction of responsible democratic government.

These four different patterns of democratization made for different political cleavages and different manners of accommodation. In group (1) traditions of pluralist accommodation tempered the political effect of whatever cleavages emerged; in group (2) cleavage lines determined the composition of governments, but strong traditions of accountable bureaucratic government tempered at the same time the full exploitation of political divisions; in group (3) dis-

agreements over the very mode of national emancipation led to legitimacy conflicts which were softened however by the persistent influence of older political institutions and a political culture borrowed from political neighbors and former masters (British parliamentarism and civil service ideals in Ireland; Swedish representative and bureaucratic traditions in Finland). In Austria, finally, both the origin of the state and autochthonous political culture created deep fissures and anti-democratic forces triumphed.

B, *The actual working of systems*

Different modes of cabinet government have proved reasonably effective in our ten countries, including types of cabinet which have usually been thought to be unworkable in larger European states (e.g. shifting coalition cabinets, minority governments). Two questions arise in comparative perspective: (a) is the capacity to work 'impossible' institutions perhaps due to the fact that smaller countries also have smaller problems? and (b) if the answer to the earlier question is negative, what makes institutions work which in other countries have been thought unworkable?

Ad a. Smaller loads on smaller countries? — This proposition — found in the literature with great frequency — is treated more fully by Robert A. Dahl in a forthcoming book *Size and Democracy*²³. There is no clear evidence that national problems are more simple in smaller states. *International* problems could be less important because a smaller size might imply smaller responsibilities in the international world. But against this proposition, one might raise two objections: (i) is not the foreign policy burden on larger states partly a result of their own choice? and (ii) when smaller states manage to contract out of foreign policy entanglements, is this not evidence of the fact that their elites succeed in deliberately de-emphasizing and controlling the impact of foreign affairs?

Ad b. Explanations for the working of systems — If very different modes of cabinet-parliament relations are compatible with democratic stability, their relative efficiency might theoretically lie in the presence of alternative supporting elements in the system. Some of the factors which may be adduced are:

- 1 *The institution of monarchy.* There is evidence that European systems with a monarchy have been more stable than systems with an elected President. One should not confuse cause and consequence, however: if some systems

²³ Robert A. Dahl and Edward Tufte, *Size and Democracy*, Stanford, forthcoming. A part of the manuscript for this volume was presented to the I.P.S.A. Round Table Conference in Turin in September, 1969. See on this point also the report to the same Conference by Val. R. Lorwin, 'Segmented Pluralism: Ideological Cleavages and Political Cohesion in the Smaller European Democracies', *Comparative Politics*, 3 (1971), pp. 141—175, in particular pp. 149 ff.

retain a monarch, this may well be because past stability has been such as not to destroy this institution. A continuation of monarchy, then, is not the cause, but only the effect and proof of political stability.

- 2 *The closeness of the elite structure.* Although there is little empirical evidence, some of our ten countries show an extraordinary length of tenure for some individual ministers (notably Prime Ministers and Foreign Secretaries).
- 3 *The strength of bureaucratic structures.* Bureaucracies may contribute to a routinization of political conflict. No definite answer can be given on this point, however, until we have better studies of comparative bureaucratic behavior and its importance for the actual functioning of political systems in Europe, including their ability to ensure the political accountability of bureaucratic establishments.
- 4 *The strength of the interest-group network.* The importance of 'corporate pluralism'²⁴ as an alternative site for decision-making (freeing — but also lessening the power of — cabinets and parliaments) is evident in many European countries, and deserves study in a comparative perspective.

C, Some Needs for Further Research

Future comparative research might perhaps best concentrate on:

- 1 *A more systematic testing of the canons of coalition theory.* This will require greater knowledge of the dimensionality of party systems (as found in the perceptions of both elite groups and the mass electorate).²⁵ It demands a closer study of coalition-building processes at the time of the formation of cabinets. One should seek to elucidate the strains which cabinets face when challenged on other dimensions, than those which determined their formation. One should study the reasons for the break-up of cabinets, and the changes of coalition patterns over time.

²⁴ See Stein Rokkan, 'Norway: Numerical Democracy and Corporate Pluralism', in Dahl ed., *Political Oppositions in Western Democracies*, pp. 70—115.

²⁵ See for instance Bo Särilvik, 'Partibytten som mått på avstånd och dimensioner i partisystemet', *Sociologisk Forskning*, 5 (1968), pp. 35—80; Mogens N. Pedersen, Erik Damgaard and P. Nannestad Olsen, 'Party Distances in the Danish Folketing', *Scandinavian Political Studies*, vol. VI (forthcoming); and Hans Daalder and Jerrold G. Rusk, 'Party and the Legislator in a Parliamentary System', in John Wahlke and Samuel C. Patterson eds., *Comparative Legislative Behavior*, New York (in press). For some recent empirical studies of coalition behavior, see Eric C. Browne, 'Testing Theories of Coalition Behavior in the European Context', *Comparative Political Studies*, 3 (1970), pp. 391—412 and Michael Taylor and V. M. Herman, 'Party Systems and Government Stability', *American Political Science Review*, 65 (1971), pp. 28—37.

- 2 *A more detailed analysis of the interaction between cabinets, parliaments, parties, interest groups and bureaucratic structures.* This requires more detailed institutional analysis; it demands case-studies of policy formation and policy execution; it calls for an integration of institutional analysis, legislative behavior studies, studies on parties and interest groups, and studies on comparative bureaucratic behavior within the context of an analysis of decision-making processes.
- 3 *A closer study of actual performance of political systems.* If the literature is to be freed from the tyranny of institutional predilections, it should seek to measure the overall performance of systems by agreed criteria of evaluation. This might be done by a careful study of the way individual cabinets have handled specific, but comparable political conflicts; it should also be done by attempts to measure the overall record of systems to meet specific challenges. One should finally trace the degree of legitimacy accorded to systems by participants on all levels of the polity.

Evidently, this calls for studies on many levels. Some of the work to be done is on the level of extensive comparative study (e.g. testing of formal models of coalition theory, cross-national studies of policy-making processes, studies of comparative legislative and administrative behavior). But important work can also be done by single-nation analysis, or even by concentration on the working of an individual institution (like one minority cabinet in one country), provided its relevance to larger theoretical issues is borne in mind.