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Institutions and Legislative Consensus in National Parliaments

A Dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction  
of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Political Science

by

Brian Donald Williams

August 2014

Dissertation Committee:

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Dr. Shaun Bowler

Dr. Kevin Esterling

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The Dissertation of Brian Donald Williams is approved:

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## ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Institutions and Legislative Consensus in National Parliaments

by

Brian Donald Williams

Doctor of Philosophy, Graduate Program in Political Science  
University of California, Riverside, August 2014  
Dr. Indridi Indridason, Chairperson

This study focuses on how political institutions—electoral systems and legislative rules, and coalition agreement policy pledges—affect consensus in national parliaments. Two theoretical propositions are established and tested empirically. Proposition 1 contends that consensus will be higher under proportional systems of representation (PR) than under its majoritarian alternatives. Proposition 2 contends that under coalition government, legislative consensus should be higher on legislative motions lacking governing coalition commitment. Proposition 1 is tested with new legislative vote data from New Zealand and Belgium covering those countries' institutional transformations to PR. To test Proposition 2, I focus on periods of coalition government in New Zealand and Belgium after their transition to PR, and in Britain during the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition government.

The analysis indicates that New Zealand's electoral system change in the mid-1990s caused a significant increase in consensus, and after reform bills assigned to a

select committee chaired by an opposition MP were more likely to result in a bipartisan vote outcome, consistent with Proposition 1. Belgium's institutional transformation from 1893 to 1921 coincided with a *decrease* in consensus on budgetary legislation. This development suggests that PR will not have a consensus inducing effect in the near-term if the adoption of PR coincides with democratization, though the adoption of PR sets the stage for consensus building over time.

Support for Proposition 2 is mixed. In post-reform New Zealand I find that confidence and supply agreements hold those parties to the agreement together when the corresponding bill comes up for a final vote. However, governing coalition commitments are not found to increase consensus in New Zealand. During the Catholic-Liberal coalition government in Belgium from 1921-23, the opposition Socialist Party was significantly more likely to oppose the government on votes approving bills prioritized in the government's post-election declaratory speech, consistent with Proposition 2. During the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition in Britain, government policy commitments have a limited effect on vote outcomes. This finding confirms that the effect of coalition agreements on legislative voting in an otherwise majoritarian parliamentary system will be limited.

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION<sup>1</sup>

In this study I focus on how political institutions affect consensus in national parliaments.<sup>2</sup> Consensus is challenging to explain at a general level, because there are many 'moving parts' which affect it. Name a political topic, and you can probably think of some way that consensus relates to it. As a result, there are several relevant areas of research which will come up in this study. The main ones include: studies on comparative political institutions, spatial theories of legislative behavior, theories of coalition size, electoral connection theories, principal-agent relations, and some political philosophy. In conducting this study, I hope to synthesize and build on these different literatures where relevant, though this is primarily a study in comparative political institutions and coalition politics in national parliaments.

### 1.1 Why Focus on Consensus in National Parliaments?

In his book *The Development of the Modern State*, Gianfranco Poggi (1978, 112), asserted that parliament "represents the public realm par excellence". If Poggi is correct about the importance of parliaments, it would seem worthwhile to study political phenomena such as legislative voting within national parliaments. But why focus on consensus? If consensus is a desirable outcome, then we should be interested in how institutions can maximize consensus. However, two distinct literatures underscore a

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<sup>1</sup> In Appendix A at the end of this study, I provide brief descriptions of several key terms used frequently throughout the study. I recommend reading these descriptions before proceeding.

<sup>2</sup> North (1990, 3) described institutions as "the rules of the game in a society or...the humanly devised constraints that shape human interaction." I adopt this definition of consensus for this study. On institutions, also see Knight (1992) and March and Olsen (1989).

debate over whether, in a democratic society, it is best to maximize consensus, or rather to embrace contestation as something inevitable and even desirable.

In political philosophy, this argument found in the debate between deliberative and agonist democratic theorists. Deliberative democratic theorists such as Cohen (1989) and Habermas (1996) have emphasized the importance of consensus for democratic legitimacy while others such as Mouffe (2000) have argued that consensus imposes pressures to conform and is thus potentially dangerous.<sup>3</sup> I return to this argument in the conclusion to this study. In comparative politics, Lijphart (1984; 1999) has emphasized different democratic institutional choices, both consensual and majoritarian. In a democratic context, there are some compelling reasons why one might view consensus as preferable to majoritarian outcomes. For example, in addition to the relevance of consensus to democratic legitimacy, consensus might also be viewed as inherent to conflict resolution (Tinder 1995, 23) and conducive to the maximization of autonomy (Wolff 1970, 23).<sup>4</sup>

In addition to the question *Why consensus?* there are at least two important subsidiary questions: *Who is in agreement?* and *What is being agreed to?* Regarding who is in agreement, consensus would seem to be increasingly representative of the wider

---

<sup>3</sup> For a concise overview of this debate see Friberg-Fernros and Schaffer (2014). For an analysis of Habermas's democratic theory also see Warnke (1999, ch.6), Steiner et al. (2004, ch.2), and Chambers (1996, ch.7).

<sup>4</sup> Roughly corresponding to this point, Cohen (1998, 222), discussing consensus as an outcome of deliberative decision making points out that, "by requiring justification on terms acceptable to others, deliberative democracy provides for political autonomy."

polity as the percentage of the population represented in the legislature expands.<sup>5</sup> Under nondemocratic systems of government, inclusivity is limited, for instance by high barriers to entry for opposition parties and/or by limited suffrage (Dahl 1971; Diamond 2008). Therefore, in nondemocratic societies where inclusivity is severely curtailed, legislative consensus might be achieved but only among the narrow set of actors with privileged access to the national policy making arenas.

Among democracies, proportional electoral systems are typically recognized as more inclusive than their majoritarian counterparts in that the former makes it easier for minor political parties to gain access to the legislature (Duverger 1954).<sup>6</sup> It follows that consensus achieved under a more inclusive, proportional system of representation would constitute agreement across a wider cross-section of the society. The relevance of electoral system choice to parliamentary inclusivity will be discussed at various points as this study proceeds.

The second question, regarding what is being agreed to, is important given that the justness of a social policy is independent of the level of agreement achieved on it. That is, legislative consensus can be established in favor of a just *or* an unjust policy (Rehfeld 2009). Thus, consensus may be viewed as normatively good or bad depending

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<sup>5</sup> Young (1999) also emphasizes that the principle of inclusivity is essential to the legitimacy of a deliberative procedure. Similarly, Gargarella (1998) underscores the importance of full representation for deliberation.

<sup>6</sup> On a single dimension it may be that the caucuses of two major catch-all parties are equivalent to the parties of a multiparty system in terms of seat shares and the constituencies represented. Even so, allowing those caucuses to form their own distinct party arguably increases the autonomy of that group in that the group formerly subsumed by a political party now has their own distinctive party identity, and in this sense the parliament may therefore be seen as more inclusive.

on what is being agreed to. I do not focus extensively in this study on which institutions are most conducive to the instillment of virtuosity in legislators. I argue that there is value in identifying which institutions maximize consensus *per se*, and suggest that studies such as this one can be considered along side other studies focusing on how institutions affect the justness of statutory laws.<sup>7</sup>

## **1.2 Consensus and Structural Institutions**

### **1.2.1 Consensus Democracy, Centripetal Democracy, and Institutional Veto Players**

There are a number of different choices to consider when establishing or reforming a constitution, such as the electoral system, legislative rules, and separations of power. Understanding these choices, and their effects on political behavior has been a central task of comparative political scientists. To this end, one objective has been to establish typologies of democracy, categorizing regimes according to various macro-institutional dimensions.

For example, Lijphart (1999) distinguishes majoritarian from consensual democratic countries based on two dimensions. The executives-parties dimension is based on: (i) Single-party majority cabinets versus multiparty coalitions, (ii) executive-legislative relations in which the executive is dominant versus executive-legislative balance of power, (iii) two-party versus multiparty systems, (iv) majoritarian versus

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<sup>7</sup> Steiner et al. (2004, ch.6) examine how institutions affect the quality of parliamentary discourse, and then assess the impact that discourse quality has on the level of agreement achieved in parliament as well as the level of social justice achieved in parliamentary policy outcomes.



proportional electoral systems, and (v) pluralist versus "corporatist" interest group systems.

Lijphart's federal-unitary dimension distinguishes countries based on: (i) unitarism versus federalism, (ii) unicameral versus bicameral legislatures, (iii) "flexible" constitutions amendable by simple majority versus rigid constitutions requiring a supermajority, (iv) parliamentary supremacy versus strong constitutional review, and (v) central banks which are dependent on the executive versus independent central banks. Following his comparative analysis of consensus and majoritarian democratic institutions, Lijphart (1999, 301-2) argues that, "because the overall performance record of the consensus democracies is clearly superior to that of the majoritarian democracies, the consensus option is the more attractive option for countries designing their first democratic constitutions or contemplating democratic reform."

Meanwhile, Gerring and Thacker (2008) distinguish between centripetal and decentralist democracies. Centripetal democracies are characterized by a centralist structure of government—parliamentary legislative-executive relations, a unitary state, and a unicameral legislature—plus 'inclusivity' achieved via closed-list proportional representation (PR). By contrast, decentralist polities are characterized by various separations of power, including bicameralism, presidentialism, and federalism. Gerring and Thacker (2008, 40) aver that, "the most effective way to mediate conflict and foster consensus is through [centripetal] political institutions that are at once, inclusive and authoritative."

The main difference between Lijphart's consensus-majoritarian framework and Gerring and Thacker's centripetal-decentralist distinction is thus found in the presence or absence of separations of power.<sup>8</sup> In Lijphart's work, separations of power are recognized as an institutional means of fostering consensus. According to James Madison, people are inherently faction prone, and the solution to faction was to create a decentralist system of government which makes it difficult for any one faction to monopolize power and thus forces them to build up a level of consensus sufficient to clear the various institutional veto hurdles, and in so doing arrive at a policy outcome favorable to the public at large.

### **1.2.2 Majoritarian and non-majoritarian structural institutions**

The theoretical discussion below will apply primarily to *centralist* democracies with limited macro-level institutional veto players. That is, the model of parliamentary consensus I develop does not include the veto players normally associated with *decentralist* structural institutions such as bicameralism, presidentialism, and federalism, though these topics do arise occasionally. This is not, of course, to discount the importance of these constitutional choices.

I limit my focus to centralist democracies for two main reasons. The first reason concerns effective theory building, and the need to focus comparative analysis on "key" variables (Lijphart 1971, 690). Consensus is difficult to explain at a general level,

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<sup>8</sup> To be clear, the term 'decentralist structure' refers to a system of government with many 'macro-level' institutional veto players—a bicameral legislature, a presidential executive, a federal separation of powers—while a 'centralist' structure' refers to a system of government with limited institutional veto players—a unicameral legislature, a parliamentary executive, and a unitary state. The term 'centralist structure' is not synonymous with the term 'centripetalism' as the later combines a centralist structure with a proportional electoral system (Gerring and Thacker 2008).

because it of all variables is affected by the problem of 'many moving parts'. Thus, the exclusion of 'macro-level' institutional veto players such as the president, the senate, and more local state government makes it easier to establish a parsimonious model of legislative consensus.

The second reason for excluding macro-institutional veto players from my model has to do with the implications of separated powers for genuine consensus building. On the one hand, some authors such as Lijphart and Madison view separated powers as conducive to consensus building, though perhaps for different reasons. Similarly, Bächtiger et al. (2008, 276) contrasts the effects of separated and non-separated powers on deliberative consensus building as follows,

"[W]e expect veto power to generate a logic of joint decision-making where deliberative elements might be necessary to make bargaining efficient and to secure the overall success of negotiations. When veto institutions are absent, there is no need for participants to achieve deliberative agreement on fundamentals; the majority can forgo serious arguing and quickly proceed with voting."

Decentralism (and veto players more generally) may be viewed as consensus *inducing*. However, the Madisonian view on decentralism is also majoritarian (and similar to agonist democratic theory) in its view of political conflict as inherent to politics and thus unavoidable. Consensus induced via separated powers may not be conducive to

a lasting consensus based on deliberative democratic principles, if people are persistently on guard against faction. The idea of faction—by definition, a group of individuals seeking to further some private interest—runs against the deliberative democratic idea that citizens participating in a deliberative process seek to advance the common good. In contrast, centralism is premised on the idea that governments can be trusted and should thus be empowered to govern (Mansbridge 2012).

Within centralist democracies, there are two main institutional variables that I focus on theoretically and empirically in this study. These variables are shown in Table 1.2 below. At the structural level, I focus on the distinction between, what I will refer to as majoritarian and non-majoritarian electoral systems and their accompanying set of legislative rules. The second main institutional variable I focus on is, at the level of governmental institutions, governing coalition agreement policy pledges.

Table 1.1: Institutional variables focused on in this study

Institutional level	Majoritarian	Non-majoritarian
Structural	Majoritarian electoral systems & legislative rules	Proportional representation & power-sharing legislative rules
Governmental	Governing coalition agreements <sup>a</sup>	Governing coalition agreements

<sup>a</sup> Governing coalition agreements are rare in majoritarian parliamentary systems, given the regular occurrence of single party governments. In this study, I focus on the British Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition, which is an exception to this rule.

Majoritarian electoral systems (most commonly, single-member district plurality systems) are often accompanied by majoritarian legislative rules, while non-majoritarian

electoral systems (especially proportional systems of representation) tend to coexist with power-sharing legislative rules (Cain, Ferejohn and Fiorina 1987, 4; Gerring and Thacker 2008, 56).<sup>9</sup> In this study, majoritarian electoral systems plus legislative rules which disempower the opposition will be viewed as components of a majoritarian institutional structure, while proportional electoral systems plus power-sharing legislative rules will be viewed as components of a non-majoritarian institutional structure.

### **1.2.3 Electoral systems, legislator incentives, and party unity**

A widely held view among scholars of legislative politics is that legislators are motivated by a desire to acquire, retain, and improve one's holding of government office (Downs 1957; Mayhew 1974).<sup>10</sup> Laver and Schofield (1990, ch.3) review different perspectives concerning whether legislators are primarily office-seeking or policy-seeking. However, the desire to acquire and hold political office is often recognized as paramount, as legislators who are motivated primarily by the ability to produce statutory laws must first acquire office to do so. Given these motives, how do electoral systems affect the behavior of office- and policy-seeking legislators?

An important distinction to highlight is that between legislator incentives to build up a strong personal vote, and incentives to support one's political party. These two objectives are often in tension with each other, and both are recognized as ways

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<sup>9</sup> Evidence of the positive association between electoral system proportionality and power-sharing legislative rules is found when regressing the level of government agenda control from Döring (1995, Table 7.1) on the effective number of legislative parties in the year 2000 from Golder (2005). There one finds a statistically significant correlation ( $t=2.13$ ,  $R^2=.2216$ ).

<sup>10</sup> Fenno (1978) identifies several legislator goals: a desire to have a successful career in political office, the desire to advance certain public policy objectives, as well as a desire to attain power and prestige within the government.

legislators can enhance their electoral prospects under different circumstances (Martin 2011; Carroll and Eichorst 2013). The personal vote can be understood as the electoral support a candidate enjoys based on her/his personal qualities, qualifications, activities and record (Cain, Ferejohn and Fiorina 1987, 3). Electoral system rules affect the extent to which the personal vote or the partisan incentive is most predominant (Carey and Shugart 1995; Carey 2007).

Under a majoritarian single-member district plurality (SMDP) electoral system, legislators have strong incentives to focus on constituency work, because a locally concentrated set of voters from a particular district are likely to be more appreciative of policies targeting them specifically, than they are of a policy providing a public good over the polity at large (Cain, Ferejohn and Fiorina 1987, 200; Bishin 2009). Single-member district plurality systems are therefore likely to create an 'electoral connection' between reelection-seeking legislators and their local constituencies (Mayhew 1974).

Meanwhile, proportional representation systems (PR) provide less incentive to cultivate a personal vote than SMDP systems (Cain, Ferejohn and Fiorina 1987, 228). In PR systems candidates are not elected by voters from a local district based on the candidate's personal reputation. Rather, under PR systems, an MP's electoral fate is tied to his rank on the national party list and how many list seats his party wins. Therefore, under PR the candidate is expected to be more beholden to his party leadership than to any local voter constituency (Bowler, Farrell and Katz 1999, 8). Thus, it is argued that legislators elected via SMDP will be more responsive to local voters whose interests may

clash with those of the national party leadership, making that MP less likely to vote with his party and reducing party unity in the legislature as a consequence (Cain, Ferejohn and Fiorina 1987, 219; Rich 2014, 114), especially if legislators are at risk of losing the next election (Carroll and Eichorst 2013).

Many scholars of the U.S. Congress observed a decline in the importance of the political party both at the electoral and legislative levels in the post-war era (see Aldrich 1995, 14-8). This view was articulated by a handful of scholars who in 1950 produced an American Political Science Association report on the decline of the 'responsible party' in the United States (American Political Science Association 1950). The core characteristics of responsible party government include: (i) clearly articulated electoral party policy platforms, (ii) clear differences between electoral parties, and once elected, (iii) the capacity to implement the agenda the victorious party campaigned on, fulfilling the voter mandate attained at the general election (Bowler, Farrell and Katz 1999, 3; Aldrich 1995, 10; Cox and McCubbins 2005, 1).

In the post-war era, it was widely held that the Democratic and Republican parties had failed to live up to these standards of party responsibility (see Aldrich 1995, 15-7). In a similar vein, Krehbiel (1998) argued that patterns of partisan voting in the House could more accurately be attributed to ideological incentives of individual legislators than to legislator party affiliation. Vote outcomes appear partisan not because of partisan pressures but rather because 'birds of a feather flock together'.

In contrast to these views of the declining importance of the political party in U.S. politics, Cox and McCubbins (2005) have contended that a system of responsible party government can be found in the U.S. Congress. According to Cox and McCubbins, political parties acquire the characteristics of a 'procedural cartel' taking over key decision making veto points in the legislature, blocking legislative motions which would defeat the majority of the majority party on the House floor (that is, negative agenda power) while maintaining a unified majority so as to implement their agenda (that is, positive agenda power).

Extending the logic of Cox and McCubbins's procedural cartel theory to the Westminster parliamentary setting, Dewan and Spirling (2011) posit that, left with little power in a majoritarian institutional setting to influence legislation, opposition members of parliament (MPs) can credibly commit to voting together in opposition to government bills. The incentive to engage in this 'strategic opposition voting' is found in the result it produces. Assuming some overlap between the sets of government and opposition members of parliament (MPs) on an ideological dimension, strategic opposition voting (that is, unified voting in opposition to government motions) forces the government to appeal to its own 'pivotal' MPs in order to build a majority. As a result, legislative outcomes end up closer to the median opposition preference, and more centrist overall.

On *individual* bills, opposition MPs who refuse to support a government bill would actually benefit more as an individual by 'sincerely' supporting the government's bill. However, over the entire term of the cabinet, members of the opposition *on average*



benefit more from strategic opposition voting (Dewan and Spirling 2011, 346). Thus, through repeated interaction, opposition MPs are able to consistently vote strategically in opposition to government bills. The Westminster model therefore provides an explanation of partisan government-versus-opposition vote outcomes in majoritarian parliaments.

#### **1.2.4 Non-majoritarian structural institutions and parliamentary consensus**

In the theory presented here, I adopt the 'partisan theoretic' view of Dewan and Spirling that within parliamentary democracies, majoritarian structural institutions—in particular, majoritarian electoral systems plus government-dominated legislatures—will tend to foster a partisan, government-versus-opposition equilibrium with two highly unified parties. While government unity is sustained by government whips and party discipline (where 'natural' cohesion between the parties is lacking), opposition unity is sustained by the aforementioned incentives to strategically oppose the government.

Although I am adopting these basic assertions of the Westminster model, this is not to overlook countervailing electoral incentives to cultivate a personal vote and to appeal to local constituents rather than party leaders. Nor do I assume that political parties in parliamentary systems are 'unitary actors', though the rise of the unified 'mass party' is seen as an important 19th century development in European politics (Bowler, Farrell and Katz 1999, 5-14).<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Laver and Schofield (1990, ch.2) review ways political parties violate the unitary actor assumption. Moreover, a number of studies on parliamentary democracy emphasize factors which foment intra-party dissent (see e.g., Bowler, Katz and Farrell 1999; Kam 2009; Cowley and Stuart 2012; 2013; 2014). Indeed, sinking popularity for the major party choices in the post-war era is thought to intensify MP incentives to distinguish themselves from their party by cultivating a personal vote through constituency work at the local level (Whitley and Seyd 1999, 66-7).

And yet, in parliamentary democracies intraparty dissent is recognized as an exception to the rule of party unity (Baker et al. 1999, 72). As Whitley and Seyd (1999, 53) observe about British politics, "Since the development of the modern mass-based party system in the late nineteenth century, MPs have been elected to the House of Commons as representatives of a political party, and, as such, have been very generally bound to their party's election manifesto." Personal vote incentives are found to be stronger in the United States context than in European parliamentary settings, particularly in contrast to Westminster.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, Aldrich (1995, 10-1) observes that the responsible party government model is actually based on the Westminster style of politics. I emphasize the importance of the political party in parliamentary democracies, because the partisan Westminster model serves as a springboard for the remainder of my theoretical discussion.

If it is true that majoritarian institutions foster a partisan equilibrium of partisan government-versus-opposition voting (as Dewan and Spirling's study, and other cases suggest), it follows that *non*-majoritarian structural institutions—especially proportional representation (PR) plus power-sharing legislative rules—are a necessary condition for frequent *non*-partisan vote outcomes. But *how* do non-majoritarian structural institutions actually foster non-partisan voting? There are three reasons emphasized in my model:

---

<sup>12</sup> As Cain, Ferejohn and Fiorina (1987, 77-8) observe, "National forces such as party loyalty and executive performance play a much larger role in British than in American voting; the personal characteristics and efforts of the candidates for MP simply do not have the latitude to affect behavior that they do in the United States."

coalition government, reduced dependence on government for policy influence, and multidimensionality.

First, given social heterogeneity, PR allows multiparty systems to develop (Duverger 1954; Clark and Golder 2006), and multiparty systems in turn regularly necessitate the formation of multiparty coalition governments (Laver and Schofield 1990; Norris 1997, 308). In parliamentary systems, the parties of a coalition government should be more prone to interparty fragmentation than the caucuses of a single party government (Strøm and Müller 1999). There are a few reasons why this might be the case.<sup>13</sup>

Political parties are the most prominent groups in contemporary legislatures, each with their own party constitution and a more institutionalized and professional organizational basis than other types of legislator groups. The adage of Schattschneider (1942, 1) that, "Democracy is unthinkable save in terms of parties" cannot be equally applied to party factions or caucuses. Legislators rely on *their party's* brand name for electoral success, not on the brand name of their sub-party group nor on the brand name of their larger coalition. Though the same coalition may be reestablished over multiple parliamentary terms, multiparty coalitions generally do not have the same continuity that political parties have.

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<sup>13</sup> In a related topic, Dodd (1976, 6-10) provides a brief overview of scholarly arguments dating back to Lawrence Lowell's 1896 assertion that coalition cabinets will tend to be more prone to fragmentation and thus have a shorter lifespan than homogenous single party governments. Also, Bowler, Farrell and Katz (1999, 13) highlight studies showing that *party* cohesion tends to be higher as the level of inter-party competition—that is, the effective number of parties—goes up. Thus levels of intra-party unity could be ordered as follows: Multiparty system > Two-party system > One-party system.

The second way non-majoritarian structural institutions foster non-partisan voting, is found in the legislative rules. Power-sharing (or 'non-majoritarian') legislative rules (e.g., opposition chairs in a select committee) empower opposition parties, and thus reduce incentives for legislative parties to join a coalition government (Laver and Schofield 1990, 53-5; Strøm 1990). Office- and policy-seeking legislators do have strong incentives to join a government. However, there are also costs to being in government, such as being held accountable for poor economic conditions. If parties can shape policy without having to pay the costs of being in government then it becomes more rational for them to decline offers to join a cabinet. If they do join, power-sharing legislative rules would also presumably reduce incentives to stick with that government should a conflict within the coalition arise during the parliamentary term.

Third, while majoritarian two party systems tend to collapse multiple issue dimensions into a single partisan dimension, the increased effective number of legislative parties under non-majoritarian institutions increases the number of latent issue dimensions over which different parties can potentially form a legislative majority (Jenkins 1999; Wright and Schaffner 2002; Carroll and Eichorst 2013). Gallagher, Laver and Mair (2011, 288) summarize this point nicely stating, "by not penalizing minor parties, PR electoral systems help maintain minor cleavages. Conversely, first-past-the-post systems, by squeezing out small parties, may eliminate minor cleavages and allow the most salient cleavage to dominate the system as a whole."

Meanwhile, the increased independence of parliamentary parties should increase the number of cases in which coalition partners actually fragment and form a non-partisan alliance. Thus, consensus is likely to increase in non-majoritarian settings, both in terms of the frequency of non-partisan alliance formation, but also because, in forming a non-partisan alliance, it is more likely that the vote outcome will reflect a majority size larger than the seat share held by the governing coalition itself.<sup>14</sup> This brings me to the first of two propositions advanced in this study, this one corresponding to structural institutions.

**Proposition 1:** Non-majoritarian structural institutions should have more consensual vote outcomes than their majoritarian alternatives.

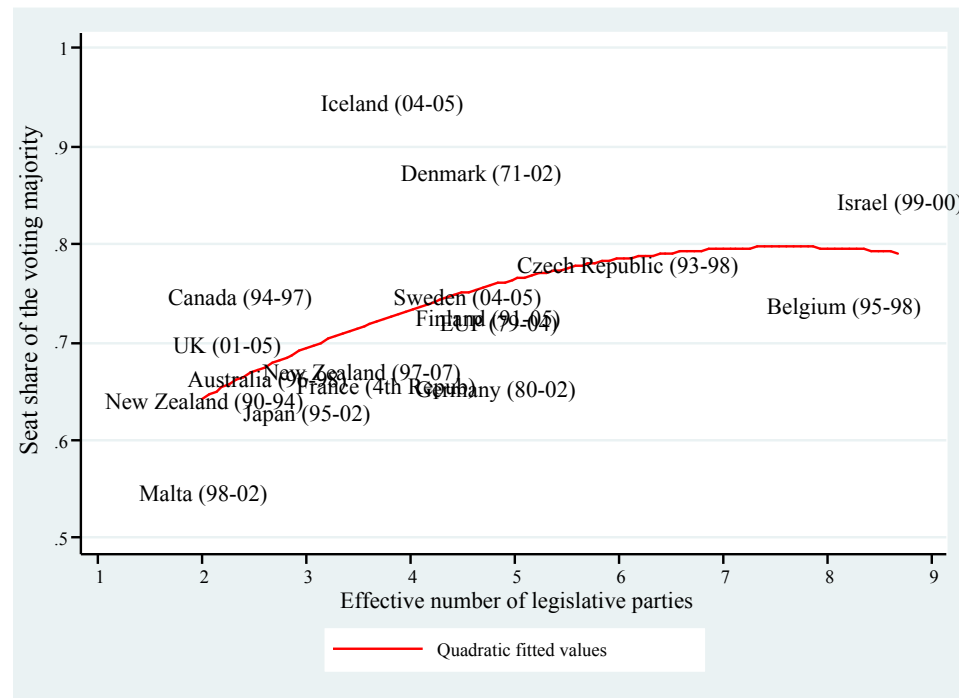
Indeed, preliminary evidence provides support for this proposition. A cross-national scatter plot (shown in Figure 1.1 below) reveals a positive relationship between electoral system proportionality and legislative consensus in parliamentary democracies. In Figure 1.1, the effective number of legislative parties is used as a proxy for

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<sup>14</sup> Non-partisan alliances may also result in majorities with a *smaller* seat share than that of the government, particularly if the governing coalition already has a very large seat share.

proportionality, while the average seat share of the voting majority is used as a measure of legislative consensus.<sup>15</sup>

Figure 1.1: Legislative consensus and electoral system proportionality across parliamentary democracies



*Note:* The vertical axis is the average seat share of the voting majority acquired from legislative vote data sets from each country. Thus, each country observation reflects the average majority seat share over the years in the vote data (specified in parentheses), and across all types of votes, including unanimous outcomes. See Appendix B and the first section of the bibliography at the end of this study for the sources of the legislative vote data sets for each country included here.

<sup>15</sup> Of course, the seat share of the voting majority is not a perfect measure of inter-coalitional agreement, as the seat share of the governing coalition may itself be high, in which case high intra-government unity would appear to have achieved a supermajority level, even though no support from opposition legislators has necessarily been acquired. However, in many multiparty cases the average level of agreement *is* above that of the governing coalition and so is indicative of some consensus. For instance, the 1999 Israeli government led by Ehud Barak of the One Israel Party, had a combined seat share of about 60 percent, yet the average majority seat share was about 85 percent, due to many unanimous votes. It might also be admitted that the effective number of legislative parties is not a perfect proxy for proportionality. For example, Malta, despite having the most perfect two-party system in Europe, has a proportional single-transferable vote system with a district magnitude of five seats.

The scatter plot in Figure 1.1 shows a positive non-linear correlation.<sup>16</sup> This suggests that more proportional electoral systems tend to be more consensual, (at least up to an effective number of about eight legislative parties), consistent with Proposition 1. The distance between the observations and the predicted values in Figure 1.1 is to be expected because, first, as Steiner et al. (2004, 76) emphasize, "institutions reduce variance in behavior, although they do not eliminate it." Also, this model does not control for a number of factors which vary across countries, such as different legislative voting norms and procedures.

### **1.3 Consensus and Governmental Institutions**

#### **1.3.1 Governmental institutions**

In parliamentary democracies, there is said to be a chain of delegation from the voters to the parliament, to the cabinet, to the ministers and then to the bureaucracies and local governments responsible for implementing policies (Gallagher, Laver and Mair 2011, 165-7). At each link in this chain of delegation, there is a possibility that the agent will take advantage of the information asymmetry and autonomy attached to his position by implementing policy closer to his/her preference and further from that intended by the principal. In the case of coalition government, principal-agent problems associated with the delegation of policy making responsibilities to cabinet ministers has received much scholarly attention. At the extreme, cabinet ministers are seen as completely autonomous

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<sup>16</sup> The  $R^2$  goodness-of-fit improves from .2366 to .2827 switching from the linear to the non-linear quadratic regression model, and the marginal effects z-score corresponding to the non-linear model is 2.34, significant at the .05 level.

in their ministerial post, able to draft legislation at their 'ideal point' maximizing their own benefit without due regard to the preferences of the cabinet (Laver and Shepsle 1996).

A number of mechanisms are deployed by parliamentary parties to prevent such "ministerial drift". Strøm, Müller and Smith (2010) sorts the mechanisms of coalition control into three 'arenas': executive, parliamentary and extra-parliamentary. *Ex ante* mechanisms are established prior to the delegation of policy authority to cabinet ministers. *Ex post* mechanisms may be established before the delegation as well but operate afterwards. An overview of these mechanisms are provided in Table 1.2 below, reproduced from Strøm, Müller and Smith (2010).

Table 1.2: Mechanisms and arenas of coalition control

	Executive arena	Parliamentary arena	Extra-parliamentary arena
Ex ante	Portfolio allocation	Investiture vote	Coalition agreements
Ex post	Mutual control in the cabinet; Junior ministers	Parliamentary questions; parliamentary committees	Coalition committees

*Note:* Table reproduced from Strøm, Müller and Smith (2010).

Not all of the mechanisms included in Table 1.2 are classified as governmental institutions. My understanding of governmental institutions corresponds roughly with what Strøm, Müller and Smith (2010, 258) refer to as the "the coalitions own extra-



constitutional mechanisms and venues for control".<sup>17</sup> The coalition agreement is one such mechanism.

Governing coalition agreements (GCAs) are the outcome of a post-election bargaining process which takes place between the leaders of parties who have agreed to participate in government. While GCAs vary in their comprehensiveness, content, and formality, they typically specify a distribution of ministerial posts, and spell out the rules under which the governing parties will cooperate in government such as collective ministerial responsibility, use of a coalition committee to resolve disputes among government parties, and the intention to use party whips on certain issues. Also, GCAs provide, in more or less detail, a policy programme for the coming term (Browne 1982, 349-51; Müller and Strøm 2008; Strøm, Müller and Smith 2010).<sup>18</sup>

Other mechanisms created which may help deal with ministerial drift include junior minister posts (Thies 2001). In aiming to limit ministerial drift, junior ministers may serve as an alternative to lengthy GCAs. Indeed, junior ministers are often appointed to executive "watchdog" positions, though they do not have a strong cabinet vote. Also, parliamentary committees can 'correct' ministerial drift by rewriting government bills before they are debated (Strøm, Müller and Smith 2010). In addition to these formal mechanisms for maintaining cabinet unity, Hazell (2012a), focusing on the current British

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<sup>17</sup> Strøm, Müller and Smith (2010, 530) also use the term government institutions in their discussion about coalition agreements, noting that, "Once a certain set of governance institutions has evolved in a particular country, these institutions tend to get replicated in subsequent coalitions."

<sup>18</sup> On coalition procedures for conflict resolution see also Bowler et al. (2014), and on rules affecting how cabinet decisions are made see Indridason and Kristinsson (2013). See also Bowler, Farrell and Katz (1999, 10) about party whips.

Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition, identifies informal means of intra-governmental conflict resolution, specifically, meetings held between the prime minister and deputy prime minister and/or among their advisors and departmental officers.

### **1.3.2 Governing coalition agreements as a source of government unity**

There has been contrasting views in the literature over what motivates coalition partners to craft these agreements. Eichorst (2014) and Timmermans (2003, 17-20) identifies two distinctive scholarly views on the relevance of GCA to parliamentary behavior. The first view emphasizes electoral incentives legislators have to use the GCA in a way which helps them to retain office, and downplays the extent to which GCAs guide legislators during the parliamentary term. According to this view, coalition party leaders exclude more contentious issues from the GCA while including pledges on policies which the partners already agree to and then capitalize on these pledges by implementing them with relative ease in the midst of the parliamentary session, thus demonstrating their capacity to govern effectively.

These authors tend to be skeptical about the extent to which GCA policy pledges actually serve as a guide for policy making when the cabinet's term of office is in full swing. For instance, Laver and Schofield (1990, 189) suggest that, "While (a coalition agreement) is unambiguously the immediate output of coalition bargaining over policy, we must none the less be wary about its real political significance. It might, after all, be little more than window dressing." Meanwhile, Luebbert (1986, 63) discounts the extent to which coalition agreements actually bind cabinet party leaders, asserting that,

"[P]arties do not, by forming the coalition, obligate themselves to support a policy that is at variance with their respective preferences."

The second view emphasizes the contract-like status of GCAs. From this perspective, coalition partners establish commitment on policy negotiations to limit ministerial drift (Moury 2013; Timmermans 1994, 113-6; Strøm, Müller and Smith 2010) and to reduce uncertainty (Mitchell 1999; Timmermans 2006; Timmermans and Moury 2006). The view that GCAs provide a focal point for policy commitment and act as a source of cohesion can be found in a number of publications (Strøm and Müller 1999; Hazell 2012a, 15; Leydet 2014, 20; Mitchell 1999, 272). Notably, De Winter, Timmermans and Dumont (2000, 322) refer to the GCA as a "coalition bible" and a source of legitimacy for ministers' policy stances. Also, Müller and Strøm (2008, 164) observe that, "Coalition agreements...are designed to cement deals that might otherwise become unstuck."

It has also been emphasized that GCAs need an enforcement mechanism such as junior ministers, and that by themselves GCA pledges may not limit ministerial drift (Indridason and Kristinsson 2013). Similarly, Strøm, Müller and Smith (2010, 529) emphasize that GCAs are not self-enforcing, and that GCAs, "are the script not the performance." Still, empirical evidence provided by Moury (2013) shows that GCA pledges do tend to get fulfilled. Focusing on Germany, Belgium, Italy and the Netherlands, Moury finds that, on average, about 70 percent of testable policy pledges from the GCA were considered by the cabinet during the parliamentary term, with

Belgium considering the highest level (79 percent), followed by Germany (77 percent), then the Netherlands (70 percent), and finally Italy (58 percent).

As was emphasized above, I have adopted the basic partisan-theoretic assertions of the Westminster model at the structural level. Similarly, at the governmental level, my theory begins from the position that GCAs, for the most part, are more than simply cheap talk, and that, when a policy priority is established in a GCA, it can be viewed as a commitment among cabinet ministers not only to advance that legislation, but also to work together in so doing. To arrive at the second theoretical proposition made below, I begin from the position that GCA policy pledges serve as a mechanism by which coalition partners can commit to support those policies during the parliamentary term, and that GCA pledges have important implications with regards to the availability of information about who will be supporting what policy, and in shaping the dynamics of partisan division.

### **1.3.3 Governing coalition agreements and legislative voting**

#### *1.3.3.1 Voting on legislative motions included in the coalition agreement*

My theory predicts that in non-majoritarian settings (with a proportional system of representation and power-sharing legislative rules), where a GCA pledge has been made on a particular legislative motion, there will be a stronger tendency for the outcome on that vote to reflect a government-versus-opposition divide, tending towards what we would expect to find in a Westminster majoritarian setting. I will contend that coalition

agreements can compensate, to some extent, for the lack of structural majoritarianism and majoritarian agenda control, and in so doing sustain the partisan nature of the legislative process even under multiparty government and power-sharing legislative rules. There are a few reasons why it is reasonable to expect this.

First, where a governing coalition has established a commitment to a particular policy, the minister tasked with drafting legislation which fulfills that pledge will feel less able to craft that legislation at his/her own 'ideal point' (that is, his/her most preferred outcome in an  $n$ -dimensional policy space). Where the GCA clearly limits ministerial action in this way, so that the preferences of their fellow cabinet ministers are given equal consideration to his/her own preference, ministers may feel more confident that the bills they draft will be supported by those other cabinet ministers.

Second, there are also some fairly clear reasons to expect that government parties will remain *internally* united while fulfilling a GCA pledge. First, governing party whips are likely to try harder to persuade backbenchers to vote with the government on bills in the government programme, given that the cabinet members have a collective interest in showcasing their capacity to govern effectively, for instance, by fulfilling coalition pledges. Second, especially if the bill was also in that party's election manifesto, the governing party backbenchers are likely to vote more cohesively on bills pledged in the GCA as the corresponding coalition policy commitments would probably not have been

made without the support of at least a supermajority of that party's backbenchers (Mitchell 1999).<sup>19</sup>

Third, coalition agreements are also likely to provide *opposition* MPs with strong incentives to vote with their party in opposition to the government bill. Opposition parties may have, either as individual parties or collectively, a desire to strategically oppose the legislative centerpieces of the government programme, that is, those policies identified as priorities in the GCA. In this way, the GCA can be seen as a legislative blue-print of the government's agenda which sets the stage for partisan conflict in the legislature. As Christiansen and Pedersen (2012) explain, "coalition agreements are not only important to intra-coalitional cooperation and coordination but also set the agenda for conflict between government and opposition."

The strategic opposition which takes place in a non-majoritarian setting, when considering legislation identified as a government priority in the GCA, bears some similarity to the model of strategic opposition voting presented by Dewan and Spirling (2011). That is, GCA commitments may be seen as a way for the governing coalition to bolster their positive agenda power by binding together the set of government parties and ministers in an otherwise fissiparous non-majoritarian parliamentary setting, and in so doing reducing the need for the government to appeal to opposition MPs, leaving

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<sup>19</sup> In some cases, backbench dissent may be *more* likely on bills with GCA commitment, given that backbenchers may have opposed the party leader's decision to negotiate away the purity of the party's stance on that issue from the time the bargain took place (Mitchell 1999, 278). However, Bowler, Farrell and Katz (1999, 14-6) emphasize that discipline is a "two way street" in that, while party whips may persuade their backbenchers to stay united, backbenchers also provide party leaders with information about what they prefer and are willing to support. Thus, party leaders should not be completely free to make commitments on policies which they know would lead to a backbench revolt.

opposition MPs feeling less empowered and thus compelled to engage in strategic opposition.

However, Dewan and Spirling's model of strategic opposition as applied to *majoritarian* settings differs from the type of strategic opposition I expect in a *non-majoritarian* setting in the presence of a clear GCA commitment. First, under power-sharing legislative rules, the capacity of non-government parties to have an impact on government bills is enhanced, even if the GCA galvanizes government MPs in favor of the pledged policy. That is, while the government's positive agenda power is enhanced, their negative agenda power remains attenuated. Therefore, although government ministers and backbenchers are more united on policy agreed to in the GCA, the enhanced capacity of opposition parties to influence legislation for instance in the select committee should concurrently reduce the *need* for non-government parties to strategically oppose the government.

Also, in a multiparty PR setting, it is more likely that opposition parties will be ideologically disconnected, in some cases bookending the more centrist coalition government, rendering credible commitments to unified strategic opposition implausible if desired. Still, given government commitment to a particular policy in a non-majoritarian context, I expect that individual opposition parties will feel more inclined to strategically oppose the government, though for reasons which differ slightly from those outlined in Dewan and Spirling's model.

### *1.3.3.2 Voting on legislative motions not included in the coalition agreement*

Several studies have focused on how uncertainty can provide incentives for party leaders to form oversized coalitions (Riker 1962; Dodd 1976; Carruba and Volden 2000). There may also be situations in which a similar logic is applicable to the formation of oversized alliances on specific legislative motions. The absence of a GCA commitment should instill more uncertainty in the mind of the minister advancing a bill that he will be able to rely on his fellow cabinet ministers and government backbenchers for support, for a couple interrelated reasons.

First, legislators are subject to various sources of pressure when choosing how to vote (Kingdon 1977), and cross-pressured legislators will be reluctant to take a firm stand in favor or opposed to a particular legislative motion, thus increasing uncertainty over whether a government minister has a majority in favor of his/her proposal (Saiegh 2011). The lack of a partisan policy commitment should render MPs more susceptible to these various non-partisan sources of influence, increasing uncertainty and the tendency for proposing ministers to build a larger alliance so as to ensure bill passage.

Second, uncertainty over the level of legislator support for a bill should increase because, where pre-established commitment is lacking, government ministers may be more tempted to "drift" towards their own preferred policy outcome and away from the previously established commitment, concurrently rendering that minister less certain that s/he will enjoy the full support of his/her fellow cabinet ministers. In turn, this may cause



that proposing minister to tailor his/her legislation so as to appeal to non-government MPs closer to the proposing minister's ideal point.

*If* a minister chooses to proceed with legislation in a context of uncertainty (that is, absent a pre-established GCA commitment on a particular issue), he is likely to feel a stronger need to bargain directly with or at least craft his legislation so as to appeal to non-government parties or MPs so as to ensure that his legislation will have sufficient support for passage. This was the case, for example, with the New Zealand/Singapore Closer Economic Partnership Bill of 2000, which was an "agree-to-disagree" arrangement between the Labour and Alliance governing coalition parties. After Alliance indicated their intention to vote against the bill, the Labour Party acquired support from the National Party, resulting in a bipartisan vote outcome (Malone 2008, 99; Boston and Bullock 2012, 358).<sup>20</sup>

Meanwhile, opposition party incentives on policies not prioritized in the government programme are likely to contrast with those felt when considering bills central to the government's programme. Opposition MPs may be less likely to strategically oppose the government if a government minister feels compelled to craft legislation so as to appeal to opposition MPs in order to ensure sufficient support for legislation. In such cases, opposition MPs may vote sincerely for the government's

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<sup>20</sup> It is often the case that executive cabinets will be working under a collective responsibility rule, which means that they will be expected to support each other *whether or not* a commitment to the bill was established. As Laver and Schofield (1990, 67) observe, "It is almost invariably the case that members of parties in the executive coalition will support (their coalition) in the legislature. It is by no means certain, however, that members of parties that are not in the executive coalition will oppose it in the legislature. The legislative coalition supporting the government may thus be bigger than the executive coalition forming it." Thus, I expect the effect of GCA commitment (or lack thereof) to be stronger on the government side where other mechanisms for maintaining coalition unity are weak.

proposal if preferred to the status quo. Opposition MPs may even feel compelled to bargain directly with a government minister, incentivized by the expectation of deferred reciprocity (Sartori 1987, ch.8).

That is, by supporting the government, opposition parties make it more likely that they will receive similar support for their own bills when they are in power. In a non-majoritarian parliament, this could be a fairly strong incentive, given that government ministers depend more regularly on the support of non-government parties to pass legislation, particularly in minority government situations though not necessarily. In such situations, government and opposition party leaders with longer time horizons may benefit from log rolling over consecutive parliamentary terms.<sup>21</sup> Having discussed these factors, I arrive at my second theoretical proposition, corresponding to the level of governmental institutions.

**Proposition 2:** In non-majoritarian settings, legislative motions lacking governing coalition agreement are more likely to result in a consensual vote outcome.

#### 1.4 Summary of the Theory

Figure 1.2 below provides an overview of the theory just discussed. Majoritarian electoral systems foster single-party majority governments while majoritarian legislative

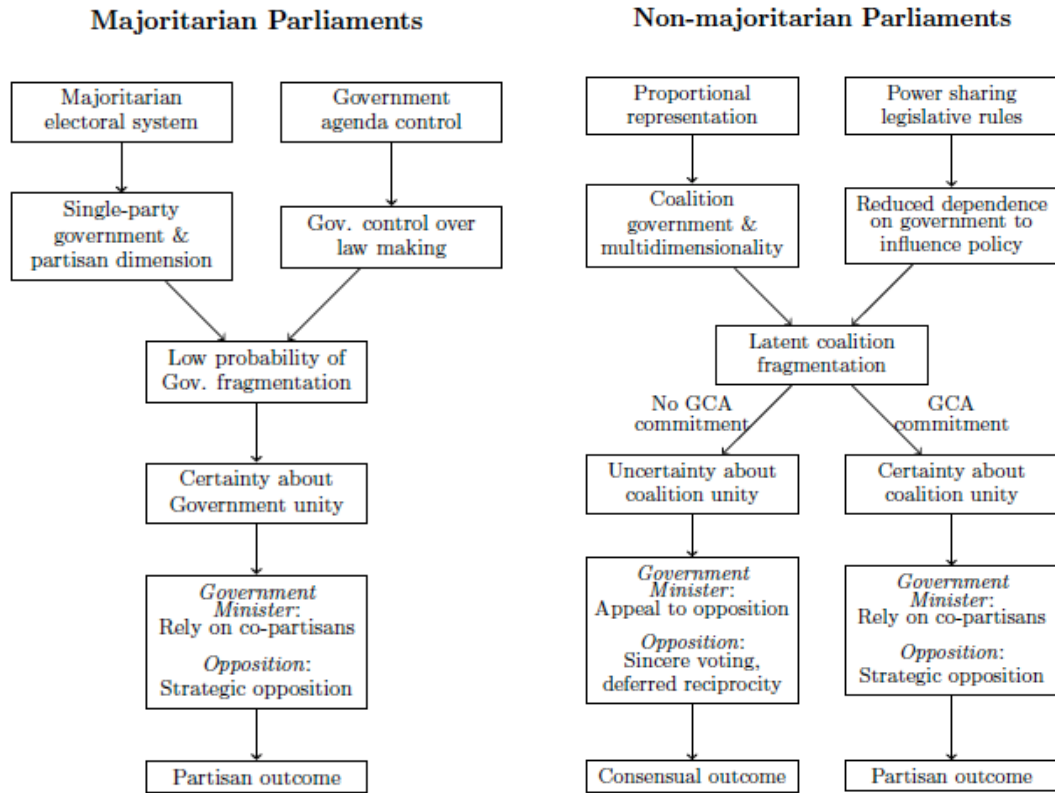
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<sup>21</sup> Discussing longer time horizons in the post-war Belgian context, Dewachter (1987, 348), comments, "As a result of the permanent necessity of cabinet coalitions, as well as the rather high instability of cabinets, the political elite has learned to anticipate the demands and vetoes of other parties, which are eligible for cabinet participation but which remain temporarily in opposition."

rules concentrate agenda setting powers in the hands of the government, making parliamentary parties more reliant on the government (or government status) to influence policy. These factors reduce latent government fragment, creating more certainty about intra-government unity, and leaving the opposition with little they can do but engage in strategic opposition to influence policy. In turn, these institutions foster the onset of a partisan equilibrium and regular government-versus-opposition vote outcomes.

Meanwhile, three attributes of non-majoritarian structural institutions are expected to increase latent fragmentation between coalition parties: multiparty coalition government, reduced dependence on government, and the increased number of latent issue dimensions over which a legislative majority might be formed. These factors set the stage for non-partisan vote outcomes, wherein members of the governing coalition vote with members of the opposition, or vice versa. However, even in a non-majoritarian setting, partisan unity can still be maintained with coalition mechanisms such as governing coalition agreements which can compensate to varying extents for a lack of majoritarianism at the structural level. At its most effective, such agreements can fully restore an equilibrium of partisan behavior.

Figure 1.2: Overview of the theory



I expect that in the absence of GCA pledges in a non-majoritarian institutional setting, the level of uncertainty about who will be voting on what side of the issue increases, and government ministers may feel compelled to craft legislation so as to appeal to opposition MPs. Meanwhile, Opposition MPs will be more inclined to vote sincerely for government bills and even to bargain with the government.

As was noted above, in a non-majoritarian parliamentary setting, the extent to which a lacking GCA commitment increases uncertainty may be limited by the presence of other mechanisms for intra-governmental unity such as a collective cabinet

responsibility rules. Therefore, where alternative mechanisms exist for maintaining government unity, the partisan inducing effects of GCA are likely to be more important on the opposition side, in that GCA commitments symbolize government's agenda and thus may provide opposition parties with strategic incentives to oppose the government's major policy plans.

### **1.5 Research Design and Roadmap**

Przeworski and Teune (1970, 36-7) observe that, "Comparative research is inquiry in which more than one level of analysis is possible and the units of observation are identifiable by name at each of these levels." In the following chapters I focus on legislative consensus at two levels of analysis: structural and governmental. The unit of analyses at the structural level is the electoral and legislative system. At the governmental level, the unit of analysis is the individual legislative motions. The empirical chapters which follow test the two propositions identified earlier—namely, that levels of consensus should be higher under non-majoritarian structural institutions (Proposition 1), and on bills which have not been pledged in the GCA (Proposition 2).

To test these propositions, I focus on three country cases: New Zealand (1987-2013), Belgium (1893-1923) and Britain (2010-2013). The selection of country-cases is based on a "most similar systems" design (Przeworski and Teune 1970) in that I focus on parliamentary systems of European origin.<sup>22</sup> Limiting my selection of country

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<sup>22</sup> Although New Zealand is not geographically located in Europe, it is part of the British Commonwealth and its political system (prior to the mid-1990s reform) was recognized as a prototype of the Westminster form of majoritarian democracy (Lijphart 1987).

cases based on these macro-level attributes allows me to model legislative consensus more parsimoniously.

However, this study also exploits key differences across cases, which allows me to revisit and further develop the theory in the conclusion. Key differences across the country cases include period of time, the level of democratization (Belgium still democratizing around World War I in contrast to contemporary New Zealand and Britain), the 'variety of democracy' (Britain being a Westminster majoritarian democracy, New Zealand transitioning from a Westminster to a centripetal democracy, and Belgium being a consociational democracy), and the type of governments under study (minimal winning coalitions in Britain and Belgium, and minority government in New Zealand).

I test Proposition 1 in New Zealand and Belgium where I have gathered new legislative vote data around their electoral system changes in the mid-1990s and World War I, respectively. I compare legislative behavior and outcomes before and after important institutional changes within these countries. This quasi-experimental approach allows me to hold constant many institutional and cultural factors as well as other characteristics of a country, maximizing the internal validity of my analyses by more effectively isolating the effects of the variables of interest (Lijphart 1971, 687; Steiner et al. 2004, 139). One drawback to conducting within-country studies focusing solely on parliamentary systems is the limit on external validity. Therefore, generalization of the results to presidential systems should be done cautiously.

I test Proposition 2 in all three countries. To do so, I code a set of legislative votes during periods of coalition government based on whether or not the main issue advanced in the bill or motion was among the policies prioritized in the government programme. The empirical analysis employs mixed-methods, relying primarily on quantitative methods and supplemented with qualitative analysis.

What follows are three empirical chapters, each dedicated to one of the country cases. I begin with a study of New Zealand, followed by Belgium, and then Britain. I conclude with a summary of the findings, some thoughts on further refinements to the model presented in this chapter, a discussion about the institutional implications of the analysis as well as some ideas for further research.

## **Chapter 2: Institutions and Parliamentary Consensus in New Zealand, 1987-2013**

### **2.1 Introduction**

Fundamental electoral system changes, from majoritarian to proportional systems of representation, at the national level have been rare in the post-war era. New Zealand was an outstanding exception to this rule. In the mid-1990s, the country underwent a switch from a single-member district plurality system (SMDP) (also referred to as "first-past-the-post" (FPP)) to a mixed-member proportional (MMP) system of representation. As is discussed below, this institutional change comes very close to an ideal quasi-natural experiment opportunity allowing us to assess the impact that electoral system changes can have on legislative behavior and outcomes. As Barker and McLeay (2000, 149) observe, "Because (New Zealand) is a stable and long-established democracy with a mature party system, the effects of proportional representation can be easily monitored and fairly easily assessed. In short, the electoral system variable can be isolated in so far as any one political variable can be isolated anywhere."

After the passage of the 1993 referendum approving MMP in New Zealand, National Party prime minister Jim Bolger observed that, "The country has spoken in a way that, I believe, says 'We want you collectively, ninety-nine Members of Parliament, to work more constructively and co-operatively together.' That's been a message that's been around for some time...and I accept that." Also after the passage of MMP, Alliance Party leader Jim Anderton anticipated that, "We are going to have a co-operative,



consultative and more consensus style of government. That's what the people actually voted for, and the old parties are going to have to get their head around it. We are in a new era" (quotes from Vowles et al. 1995, 1-2). In part 1 of this chapter, I use new legislative vote data to assess if the the electoral system change did in fact have an impact on parliamentary consensus. Part 2 of the study then focuses on the relationship between governing coalition policy pledges and legislative consensus after reform.<sup>23</sup>

## **2.2 Structural Institutions and Parliamentary Consensus in New Zealand**

### **2.2.1 Institutional reform in New Zealand**

#### *2.2.1.1 Electoral system reform*

New Zealand has a unicameral parliament with members of parliament (MPs) elected, prior to reform, via an FPP electoral system. Under FPP, New Zealand was characterized by single-party governments, with a disciplined two party system including the Labour and the National Party (Denemark 2001; Malone 2008, 131; Bowler, Farrell and Katz 1999, 6-7). New Zealand's political system was seen as a prototype of the Westminster form of democratic governance (Lijphart 1987). Calls for the reform of New Zealand's electoral system can be traced back to 1986, when the Royal Commission on the

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<sup>23</sup> I gathered vote data for part 1 of this chapter from the online Hansard archives provided by the Virtual Democratic Infrastructure Group, found at [www.vdig.net](http://www.vdig.net), recommended by New Zealand's parliamentary information service. To my knowledge, there is no reason to suspect that portions of New Zealand's voting records were left out of vdig's online archive. Therefore the data set which I use in this study should be an exhaustive account of final votes in the House during that time, or at least nearly exhaustive representative samples of final votes from each cabinet.

Electoral System released a report endorsing fundamental electoral system change (RCES 1986).<sup>24</sup>

In the 1980s New Zealand suffered from growing balance of payment deficits, overseas debt, and stagflation. The Labour government (1984-90) and the National government which followed (1990-92) responded to these difficulties by implementing a number of liberal economic policy reforms (Malone 2008, 29).<sup>25</sup> These developments coincided with growing public disapproval of both major parties and increasing support for a new electoral system (Denemark 2001, 81-3). In an attempt to gain voter support, the Labour and then the National Party unwittingly advanced a referendum on electoral system change.<sup>26</sup> Public support for institutional change was apparent following the direct referenda held in 1992 and 1993. During the first referendum in late 1992, 84.7 percent of the public voted for a change from the FPP system, and 70.5 percent identified mixed-member proportional (MMP) as the most desirable electoral system alternative in the second referendum held during the November 1993 general election (Easton 1999, 33).

New Zealand's MMP electoral system includes two "tiers". On the first tier are single-member districts (SMDs), and on the upper tier there is a single nation-wide

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<sup>24</sup> Some trace the initial calls for electoral reform back even further to the 1950s when public dissatisfaction with the two-party system over such issues as underrepresentation of the Māori population, and an unfair translation of votes to seats for small electoral parties was beginning to spread (Mason 2014). Underrepresentation of minor parties was a major underlying motive behind the disapproval of the FPP system in years immediately preceding MMP adoption as well (Denemark 2001).

<sup>25</sup> The term 'Rogernomics' was coined by journalists at the New Zealand Listener, an analogy to 'Reaganomics' emphasizing the similarities between the economic policies of Ronald Reagan and Labour Party Finance Minister Roger Douglas in the mid-1980s.

<sup>26</sup> See Denemark (2001) for a detailed account of events leading up to the referenda on electoral system change in New Zealand.

district used to allocate party-list seats. To acquire a party's proportional seat share, that party must surpass the threshold for representation which is to either win 5 percent of the national party-list vote or to win one of the SMDs. In addition, the indigenous Māori population is guaranteed five SMD seats so as to ensure the group gets adequate representation in the House of Representatives.

A number of scholars have focused on the contrasting incentives mixed-member electoral systems provide to legislators (Herron and Nishikawa 2001; Herron 2002; Stratmann and Baur 2002; Kite and Krampton 2007; Ugues, Vidal and Bowler 2012).<sup>27</sup> Shugart (2001) argues that mixed-member systems strike a balance between the electoral system 'extremes' of SMDP and pure party-list PR.

#### *2.2.1.2 Legislative system reform*

Several important parliamentary reforms were made to the Standing Orders in anticipation of the adoption of MMP (Barker et al. 2001, 311-3). These legislative rule changes together would enhance the policy influence of opposition parties vis-à-vis government parties. One important change was the proportional distribution of select committees positions. As the 1995 Standing Orders report states, “Members should be appointed so that the overall membership of the subject committees reflect the balance of the parties in the House” (Standing Orders 1995, 34). However, Malone (2008, 144)

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<sup>27</sup> One hypothesis relevant to this thesis is that bills introduced by members elected via party-list should be more partisan and thus more likely to produce a partisan (rather than a bipartisan) outcome. Using a probit regression, I specify a model with bipartisan as the outcome variable and a variable indicating whether the MP introducing the bill was list-elected as the main variable of interest, while controlling for the party of the MP introducing the bill and the parliament during which the vote took place, and clustering standard errors by the district of the introducing MP. The result does not achieve conventional levels of statistical significance ( $z=1.10$ ,  $n=117$ ).

shows that proportionality in the assignment of select committee chairs increased only gradually after reform.

Further increasing the influence of opposition parties, government ministers and committee chairs were deprived of casting votes in the select committees (McLeay 2000, 131; Barker et al. 2001, 312). The capacity of non-governing coalition parties to scrutinize bills was enhanced as well. For instance, among the Standing Order reforms was a provision requiring a three day stand-down between the initial readings of a bill, thus giving parties more time to review a bill before debating it (Malone 2008, 124). In addition, after reform, minority views were to be included in the committee reports sent to the House, and these reports became more important in the larger legislative process (McLeay 2000, 131; Barker et al. 2001, 312).

Another important reform concerns legislative amendments. Before reform, amendments supported by a simple majority of select committee MPs (nearly always formed by the governing party) would be automatically read into a bill during the second reading. Government amendments could thus be easily approved and opposition proposals easily defeated. However, after reform, amendments not approved unanimously in committee would need to be voted on separately by the House (Malone 2008, 147-8). Thus, if the government is able to build majority support for its amendments at the committee stage, they still need to clear the additional hurdle on the floor.

## **2.2.2 Assessing the impact of institutional reform**

### *2.2.2.1 Changes in the party system*

Tables 2.1 and 2.2 present descriptive information on the New Zealand House of Representatives from 1987 to 1996 (before reform), and from 1997 to 2007 (after reform) respectively, with each row containing information on an individual cabinet. The multiparty system began to develop after the MMP referendum was passed in 1993, as small parties such as Alliance and New Zealand First (NZF) acquired legislative seats. The effective number of legislative parties increased following the first MMP parliamentary elections in 1996, consistent with established theory on the effects of electoral systems on party systems (Duverger 1954; Clark and Golder 2006).<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> An interesting rejoinder to this argument is that, while the number of parties clearly increased around the time of reform, the electoral votes share of New Zealand's minor parties was the same in the mid-1980s (around 22 percent) as it was after reform in 2008 (Bowler and Donovan 2013, 69-70). Meanwhile, Curtin and Miller (2010, 132) refer to a 'multi-party mirage' in New Zealand, noting that "Without the one seat threshold rule, the result of the 2008 election would have been little different from the election of 1935 (under first-past-the-post)."

Table 2.1: Coalitions under FPP in New Zealand (1987-1996)

Parliament	Gov. Formation	Type of Government	Gov. party/ies (seats)	Non-gov. parties (seats)	End of Cabinet	ENP <sup>†</sup>
42	Aug. 1987	Single-party majority	Labour (57)	National (40)	1990 General Election	1.94
43	Oct. 1990	Single-party majority	National (67)	Labour (29), New Labour (1)	1993 General Election	1.76
44	Nov. 1993	Single-party majority	National (50)	Labour (45), Alliance (2), NZ First (2)	Ross Meurant (National) forms RoC	2.16
44	Sep. 1994	Majority coalition	National (49), RoC (1)	Labour (45), Alliance (2), NZ First (2)	Graeme Lee (National) forms CD	2.21
44	May. 1995	Minority coalition	National (48), RoC (1)	Labour (44), Alliance (2), NZ First (2), Future NZ (1), CD (1)	Ross Meurant dismissed as parliamentary undersecretary	2.31
44	Aug. 1995	Single-party minority	National (43)	Labour (42), United NZ (7), Alliance (2), NZF (2), RoC (2), CD (1)	Coalition agreement signed between National and United NZ	2.67
44	Feb. 1996	Majority coalition	National (43), United NZ (7)	Labour (42), Alliance (2), NZF (2), Conservative (1), CD (1), Independent (1)	Michael Laws (National) joins NZF	2.67
44	Mar. 1996	Minority coalition	National (42), United NZ (7)	Labour (42), NZF (3), Alliance (2), Conservative (1), CD (1), Independent (1)	1996 general election	2.73

*Note:* Coalition information is from Malone (2008, 46).

<sup>†</sup> "ENP" is the effective number of legislative parties (Laakso and Taagepera 1979; Lijphart 1984, 120).

Table 2.2: Coalitions under MMP in New Zealand (1997-2007)

Parliament	Gov. Formation	Type of Government	Gov. party/ies (seats)	Non-gov. parties (seats)	End of cabinet	ENP†
45	Dec. 1996	Majority coalition	National (44), NZF (17)	Labour (37), Alliance (13), ACT (8), United NZ (1)	Neli Kirton dismissed from cabinet (August 1997) and leaves NZF (1998)	3.76
45	Jul. 1998	Minority coalition	National (44), NZF (16)	Labour (37), Alliance (12), ACT (8), Independents (2), United NZ (1)	Coalition dissolved following dismissal of Winston Peters from cabinet	3.82
45	Aug. 1998	Minority coalition	National (44), Independents (4)	Labour (37), Alliance (12), ACT (8), NZF (8), Non-ministerial Independents (6), United NZ (1)	1999 general election	3.97
46	Dec. 1999	Minority coalition	Labour (49), Alliance (10)	National (39), ACT (9), Green (7),* NZF (5), United NZ (1)	2002 general election	3.45
47	Aug. 2002	Minority coalition	Labour (52), Progressive (2)	National (27), NZF (13), Green (9),* ACT (9), United Future (8)*	2005 general election	3.76
48	Oct. 2005	Minority coalition	Labour (50), Progressive (1)	National (48), NZF (7),* Green (6),* Māori party (4), United Future (3),* ACT (2)	2008 general election	2.98

*Note:* Coalition information is from Malone (2008, 46).

† "ENP" is the effective number of legislative parties (Laakso & Taagepera 1979; Lijphart 1984, 120).

\* Parties which made "Confidence and supply" or other types of formal support agreements with the government.

### *2.2.2.2 Changes in legislative vote consensus*

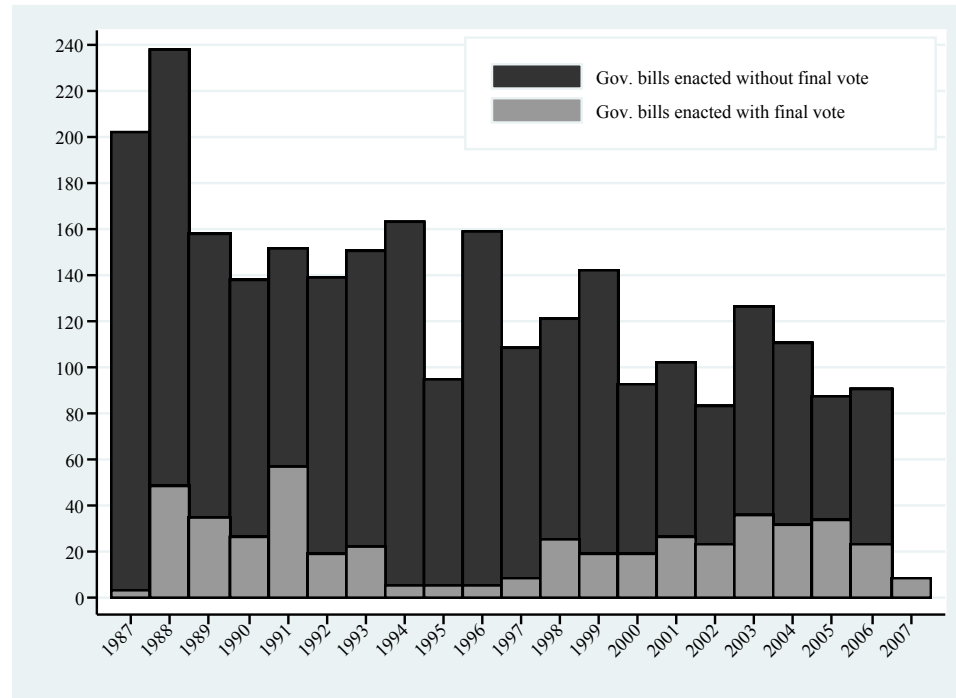
Proposition 1 predicts that there should have been an increase in legislative vote consensus after the country's electoral system reform. To assess the impact of New Zealand's institutional changes, I use a new data set of legislative vote outcomes from the House of Representatives spanning from December of 1987 to June of 2007, thus covering from approximately ten years before to ten years after the swearing in of the first MMP parliament in January 1997.<sup>29</sup> This time span should be sufficient to allow us to assess changes in legislative vote behavior after the institutional changes took place. There are a total of 490 final votes included in the data set. The total number of government bills enacted with and without a final vote are displayed in Figure 2.1.

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<sup>29</sup> The data ends and begins at these times because this is where the data made available at [www.vdig.net](http://www.vdig.net) begins and ends.



Figure 2.1: Total Government bills enacted with and without a final vote in New Zealand, 1987-2007



*Note:* Total government bills enacted are from Malone (2008, 203), and total final vote counts are based on vote data gathered from [www.vdig.net](http://www.vdig.net). Final vote counts for 1987 and 2007 are lower than the actual number since the availability of Hansard records from the 42nd and 48th parliaments was truncated. The bills enacted by final vote includes a small number of local, private, and member bills in addition to government bills.

As Figure 2.1 shows, most government bills are passed without a final vote. In New Zealand, both before and after reform, any MP can request a recorded vote.<sup>30</sup> Bills passed without a final vote are likely to be non-controversial, or at least not an issue upon

<sup>30</sup> According to the 1996 Standing Orders, prior to reform, divisions were requested (i) when a member does not agree with the presiding officer's decision that there was a majority in the voice vote, (ii) because the opposing party or parties does not wish to be seen to be supporting a particular Government policy, and (iii) "in the committee of the whole House because it is one way an Opposition can take some control of the time spent by the House on policies over which there is a major disagreement". After reform, New Zealand adopted the "three-tiered" party vote system used in the Second Chamber of the Netherlands Parliament. The three "tiers" are (i) first, a voice vote is held, (ii) second, if a party wishes to record how its members voted it can request a 'party vote', where each party is called and the whip indicates how many votes the party is casting for or against, and (iii) third, a personal vote may be requested by any MP, though this is rare (Boston et al. 1999, 238).

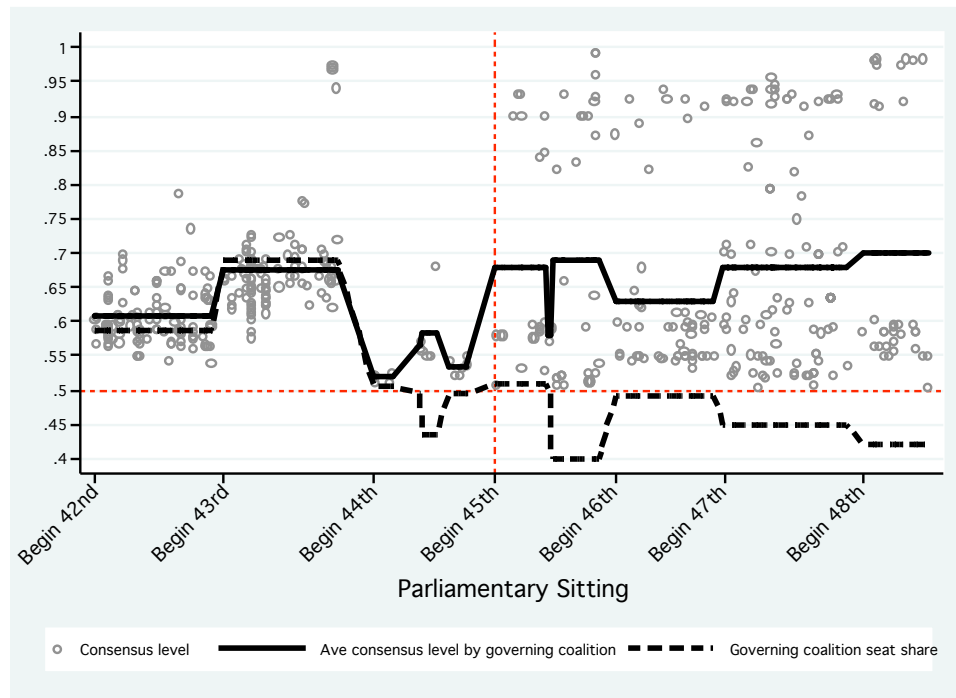
which MPs seek to distinguish themselves from other lawmakers. As Malone (2008, 97) points out, "as was the case under FPP, a large proportion of bills (as high as 75%) lack an ideological basis and are not overtly political." Thus, by focusing on bills enacted via final vote I am in effect limiting my analysis to contentious bills for which at least one MP requested a formally recorded division.

As can be seen, the total number of government bills enacted has declined steadily since 1987. During the last ten years under FPP, the average number of government bills enacted per years was 160 bills, compared to 107 in the ten years after reform, a 33.1 percent reduction. Malone (2008, 226) describes the post-reform House as having a "less hurried and more deliberative legislative process" given that (i) bills now spend more time in select committees often chaired by opposition party MPs, (ii) challenges facing minority government who seek to apply urgency to bills, and (iii) the increased time it takes to conduct inter-party negotiations on bills (Malone 2008, ch.9). Despite the decline in the total number of Government bills enacted, the total number of bills passed *with a recorded final vote* has remained approximately the same, 231 in the ten years before reform and 259 in the ten years after.

In Figure 2.2 below I display graphically the individual and average consensus levels under each governing coalition, as well as the governing coalition seat shares from 1987 to 2007. The average consensus level traces coalition seat share closely before the reforms, as we would expect given government agenda control, and incentives for

opposition parties to strategically oppose government bills where the legislative agenda has been monopolized (Cox and McCubbins 2005; Dewan and Spirling 2011).

Figure 2.2: Governing coalition seat share and consensus levels in New Zealand, 1987-2007



*Note:* Coalition seat share data is from Malone (2008, 46), and vote data was gathered from [www.vdig.net](http://www.vdig.net). Individual vote consensus levels indicate the percentage of MPs in agreement on final votes on Government bills. Average consensus levels are calculated for each governing coalition arrangement. Thus, multiple averages are calculated for the 44th and 45th parliaments. The vertical reference line indicates the swearing in of the first parliament elected via MMP, and the horizontal reference line indicates simple majority.

There is a clear change beginning with the 44th parliament, whose sitting extended from the approval of MMP in late 1993 to the first MMP elections in December 1996. During the 44th parliament, party system fragmentation increased in anticipation of the new institutional context (Barker et al. 2001, 298-9). After the 45th parliament is sworn into office, the average consensus level rises comfortably above the seat share of

the governing coalition, and a new set of vote outcomes with over eighty percent support emerges. After the reforms, parties were better able to influence policy outcomes without having to bear the costs of being in government. Thus it is not surprising that since reform all governing coalitions have been minorities, except the first National-NZF coalition of the 45th parliament.

Whereas before reform consensus traces government seat share very closely, after MMP reform, under minority government, the average consensus level appears to *mirror* the government seat share.<sup>31</sup> One plausible explanation of this mirroring under minority government is that as the seat share of the minority government declines, those ministers will feel an increased need to appeal to the major opposition party to ensure a winning majority, creating more bipartisan outcomes with Labour and National voting together (rather than mere minimal winning alliances). Thus, the average voting majority size is 'pulled up' as the seat share of the minority government goes down.

Although the development of a multiparty system reduced their seat shares considerably, Labour and National remained the two largest parties in the House by comfortable margins. Between 1987 and 1996, only 6 out of 231 final votes generated the support of both Labour and National (under 3 percent). However, after reform 70 out of 259 votes (about 27 percent) generated the support of both Labour and National. Most of

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<sup>31</sup> Regressing the average majority size on the seat share of the coalition government before reform the  $R^2$  value is .9230 with a t-statistic of 52.39. After MMP reform, the  $R^2$  value is .5239, with a t-statistic of -16.82.

the times that the main opposition party voted with the government, its votes were not needed to pass the legislation.

For descriptive purposes, Table 2.3 below shows the rate of bipartisan vote outcomes before and after reform for different issue areas. A vote outcome is counted as bipartisan if at least half of the voting MPs from the government party/ies vote with at least half of the voting MPs from the non-governing party/ies. Bipartisan outcomes very closely correspond to the vote outcomes with over 80 percent support in Figure 2.2, though a few bipartisan vote outcomes have less than 80 percent support such as the Racing Amendment Bill passed in the middle of the 44th Parliament which had a bipartisan outcome despite having 68 percent in favor.

Table 2.3: Bipartisan vote outcomes before and after reform in New Zealand

Policy area	Rate of bipartisan outcomes		Change in frequency of bipartisan outcomes
	Before reform	After reform	
National Defense	0/3 .00	5/5 1.00	1.00
Indigenous (Māori)	0/8 .00	12/17 .71	.71
Bureaucracy	0/13 .00	6/10 .60	.60
International Relations	0/6 .00	4/10 .40	.40
Environmental Law	0/8 .00	6/17 .35	.35
Constitutional Law/Criminal Justice	1/9 .11	9/21 .43	.32
Private Sector/Economy	3/33 .09	17/53 .32	.23
Government Services	0/15 .00	2/9 .22	.22
Local/Regional	0/16 .00	1/6 .17	.17
Welfare/Social Safety Net	0/22 .00	3/18 .17	.17
Multiple/Omnibus	1/17 .06	2/13 .15	.09
Monetary & Financial	0/42 .00	3/39 .08	.08
Family/Social	0/4 .00	0/26 .00	.00
State Industry/Resources	0/28 .00	0/13 .00	.00
Legal Framework for Economy	1/7 .14	0/2 .00	-.14
Total	6/231 .03	70/259 .27	.24

*Note:* Ratios reflect the number of bipartisan vote outcomes over the total number of final votes recorded for each government bill sorted by issue area, with percentages in the second row of each cell. Policy areas were established by author, based on clusters of issue areas which emerged in the data.

According to Minister Peter Dunne, economic issues such as labour relations and the sale of public assets, are matters upon which Labour and National will generally seek to establish a "point of difference" between each other. Thus, it is perhaps not surprising that bills concerning the economy underwent smaller increases in consensus than other types of bills. The socio-economic cleavage was established in New Zealand under the FPP system, and has carried over into the MMP era (Curtin and Miller 2010, 129-30).

### **2.2.3 Assessing alternative explanations**

New Zealand's institutional change comes close to an ideal quasi-natural experiment, given that so much is held constant before and after the reform. First, New Zealand was a well established democracy with a stable party system. Indeed, some even question the extent to which the party system changed as a result of the institutional reform, noting that the electoral votes share of New Zealand's minor parties in 2008 under MMP was the same as it was under SMDP in 1935 (Curtin and Miller 2010, 132) and during the mid-1980s (Bowler and Donovan 2013, 69-70).

Some have suggested that the increase in Labour-National bipartisanship was due to a reduced polarization between these parties. However, policy positions established in the parties' election manifestos (Klingemann et al. 2006) indicate that, if anything these parties moved *further away* from each other after the reforms.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Using the elections manifesto data from Klingemann et al. (2006), we find that the 'rile' scores (right-left score) prior to reform for Labour and National were -14.44 and -5.67, respectively, a distance of 8.77. After reform, the 'rile' scores for Labour and National were -29.70 and 12.22 respectively, a distance of 41.7.

Also held constant was a National Party government led by prime minister Jim Bolger, in power during the 44th and 45th parliaments before and after the first MMP elections. Low levels of public approval for the government *and* the electoral system was also found both before and after the transition (Barker et al. 2001, 321). In addition, New Zealand's 'centripetal' structure of government (Gerring and Thacker 2008)—unicameral legislature, unitary state, parliamentary system—remained the same, minimizing the number of institutional veto players who might otherwise confound the analysis. Still, there are a few possible confounding factors which ought to be addressed.

#### *2.2.3.1 Government discipline and strategic opposition*

Before concluding that there was in fact an increase in consensus due to the electoral system change, a few alternative explanations should be addressed. One potential issue is that prior to the reforms, disciplined government party voting and strategic opposition concealed the true level of agreement between lawmakers. While probably true to some extent, its unlikely that this would have fundamentally changed the visible vote outcomes. As Malone (2008, 25–6) observes, under FPP, a cabinet's choice of legislation to introduce is often determined by whether other members of their party would support the bill on the floor.<sup>33</sup> In such cases, governing party aye votes can be seen as mostly sincere.

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<sup>33</sup> Several authors have emphasized that party discipline is not only a top-down phenomenon. For instance, Norton (1981, 43) observed of the British parliament, "Failure to respond to backbench criticism from its own side of the House can lead to public, and hence embarrassing, dissent for the Government, or even, in extreme cases, defeat in the division lobbies." Cain, Ferejohn, and Fiorina (1987, 20), note that, "the threat of backbench rebellion can persuade the government not to introduce legislation or at least to modify it in some way." Similarly, Bowler, Farrell and Katz (1999, 14-6) stress that "party cohesion and discipline are very much two-way streets", in that backbenchers may influence party leaders choice of public policies to advance, just as party whips may persuade backbenchers to vote in-line with party leader preferences.



Meanwhile, while some pivotal opposition MPs may have actually preferred a government bill while voting against it, it is unlikely that the true level of agreement approximated that achieved in the more consensual vote outcomes under MMP, since under FPP, bills on which Labour and National largely agreed were usually implemented without a recorded vote. In either case, one might argue that majoritarian institutions are conflictual precisely because they cause legislators to engage in strategic partisan behavior. That is, strategic partisan behavior might be seen as an attribute of majoritarian electoral systems rather than a distinctive confounding variable.

#### *2.2.3.2 The presence of minor parties*

Another concern is that consensual bills were passed just as frequently under FPP, but there were no minor parties around to request a recorded vote. This would explain why none of the more consensual final vote outcomes after reform were unanimous: the minor party requesting the vote was also the one voting against the bill. However, this alternative explanation is at least partially refuted by the fact that the multiparty system began to develop during the 44th parliament prior to the first MMP elections, and yet, viewing Figure 2.2 it is clear that the set of consensual vote outcomes did not emerge until after the 45th parliament was sworn into office.

During the 44th parliament (the last elected via FPP), there were a number of minor party and independent MPs present in the House. There were two Alliance MPs (Jim Anderton of Sydenham and Sandra Lee-Vercoe from Auckland Central), as well as two NZF MPs (Winston Peters of Tauranga and Tau Henare of the Northern Māori

district) who had seats in the House. There was also one MP from the short lived Christian Democratic Party (Graeme Lee, formerly among the more socially conservative members of the National Party, and whose departure from National in September 1994 cost the National Party their majority status). In addition, two MPs from the Right of Center Party and seven MPs from the United New Zealand Party (who eventually joined the National Party) were in the 44th Parliament, as was one Independent. Yet, none of these MPs requested a roll call vote on a government bill which resulted in a bipartisan outcome during the 44th Parliament.

The one bipartisan vote outcome during the 44th Parliament, recorded on the Racing Amendment Bill, was introduced by National's John Falloon Minister for Racing on December 6, 1994. The Racing Amendment Bill (No. 2) was passed with a bipartisan vote where 21 out of 31 Labour MPs joined 24 out of 25 National MPs in favor of the bill. Sixty-eight percent of all voting MPs were in agreement on the final vote.

The Hansards do not indicate who requests recorded votes. However, the roll call vote on the Racing Amendment Bill indicates that only National and Labour MPs participated in the final vote. Neither Alliance nor NZF MPs were present for the vote. Nor did Graeme Lee of the newly formed Christian Democratic Party or Peter Dunne, leader of the newly formed United NZ Party, join in the vote despite Dunne's subsequent

coalition formation with National in February 1996. This suggests that if these minor parties did request the vote, it was not because they wished to record their dissent.<sup>34</sup>

### 2.2.3.3 *The party vote system*

A related concern raised by Kam (2009) is that the party vote system, adopted in 1996, conceals the true level of intraparty dissent after reform. Unlike the former roll-call vote system in which each MP casts a personal vote, under the party vote system, party leaders cast votes on behalf of their party, after which individual MPs have a chance to request a roll call vote at which time they can cast a dissenting vote, though requests for a personal vote are rare.<sup>35</sup> While the distribution of the voting majority sizes depicted in Figure 2.2 appears continuous, this is not because a large number of personal votes were called, but rather because the number of absences within each party varied over the set of votes from each parliamentary sitting.

Although party vote cohesion remained high before and after the reforms in New Zealand, it is hard to say how much intraparty dissent was suppressed due to the new voting system. One way to see if this makes a difference is by treating *each party* rather than each MP as a single vote. Treating each party as a unitary actor (and thus counting

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<sup>34</sup> The 1996 Standing Orders note that the voting rules prior to MMP reform did not allow MPs to abstain from voting in a division. Rather, MPs who wished to not indicate an aye or nay vote had to "stay outside the locked doors and they are then not shown as being present when the vote is taken" (Boston et al. 1999, 239). It is possible that one of these minor party or independent MPs requested the recorded vote and then decided not to participate, but this seems unlikely.

<sup>35</sup> Between the swearing in of the first MMP-elected parliament and March 28, 2013, Labour rebellions occurred on only four final votes on principal (i.e., non-amendment) government bills: The Land Transport Act 1998, the Prostitution Reform Act 2003, the Civil Union Act 2004, and the Sale and Supply of Alcohol Act 2012. Meanwhile, National rebellions only occurred in two cases: the Prostitution Reform Act 2003, and the Civil Union Act 2004. Although these are rare cases, it does at least show that dissent can happen under the new party vote system.

each party rather than each MP as a single vote) we find that the percent of legislative parties voting with the majority increased from a mean average of 43 percent under FPP to 60 percent under MMP. Meanwhile, treating *each MP* as a single vote, we find that the percent of MPs voting aye increased from a mean of 63 percent under FPP to 67 percent under MMP. Thus, even when treating each party as a single vote, we still see a substantial increase in the percentage of consensual vote outcomes after reform.<sup>36</sup>

#### 2.2.3.4 *Minority government*

Finally, we might ask if the underlying cause of the increase in bipartisan vote outcomes is minority government, rather than the electoral system *per se*. During the 44th parliament, the last under FPP, the National Party formed a minority government, during which time there was twelve votes recorded. One of these recorded votes generated a bipartisan outcome, when 21 out of 31 Labour Party MPs joined the National Party in voting for Racing Amendment Bill (No. 2) on December 6, 1995. During the National-NZF majority coalition government of the 45th parliament, the first elected under MMP, there were 24 votes recorded, out of which 7 were bipartisan. Thus, only about 8 percent of the recorded votes by the minority government prior to reform were bipartisan, while about 29 percent of the recorded votes by the majority government after reform were

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<sup>36</sup> If we count each *MP* as a single vote *prior to reform* and compare that rate of bipartisanship (63 percent) to the rate of bipartisanship when treating each *party* as a single vote under the party vote system *after reform* (60 percent), then the level of consensus actually declines slightly. However, it should be noted that the 63 percent level of agreement prior to reform is not due to inter-party consensus but rather because the National Party had a 69 percent seat share during the 43rd parliament. Thus, one might argue that there was a decline in consensus after reform only if we consider the seat share of the government itself to be a measure of consensus among the voting populace subsequently maintained by the National Party when voting cohesively in the legislature. However, in this study I am primarily interested in *parliamentary* consensus between government and opposition rather than consensus levels achieved among voters at the general election.

bipartisan. If the cause of the increased rate of bipartisanship was minority government *per se*, the rate of bipartisanship under majority government after reform would have been lower, and that under the minority government prior to the first MMP parliament higher.

Another way to assess whether minority government is the cause of the increase in consensus, is by looking at minority government in other majoritarian Westminster Parliaments, such as Britain. In Britain, there was a brief period of minority government during the Wilson-led Labour cabinet from February to October 1974, and then during the Callaghan-led Labour cabinet from 1977-79 (Blondel 1996). If minority government has an independent effect on consensus, then there should have been a spike in consensual voting during this brief period of minority government in Britain.

Cowley (2002, 37) shows that there was a spike in the average *size of rebellion* by government MPs in 1974 during minority government (rebellion size averaged about thirty MPs during that year), though by 1979 the average size had returned to normal levels of about five MPs. If one looks at the *number of divisions* under minority government in 1974 on which there was at least one government MP rebellion, there were more rebellious divisions than in previous years, though this number is not larger than the number of rebellious under subsequent *majority* governments (Cowley 2002, 23).<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> In 1974, the spike in number of votes with rebellions were not very large, though the number of rebels on those votes was particularly high, at about 30 MPs. Underscoring the difference between these ways of measuring rebellion, Cain, Ferejohn and Fiorina (1987, 207) posit that, "the MP who disagrees vehemently about a single bill or issue is less independent than one who scatters his or her dissents across different bills in different policy areas."

If a government was elected in New Zealand with a comfortable majority under MMP, and outcomes then reverted back to a pattern of government-versus-opposition voting, this would provide strong evidence that government minority status, rather than the electoral system *per se*, explains the increase in bipartisanship. As it currently stands however, the evidence suggests that the transition to non-majoritarian structural institutions had a significant positive effect on legislative consensus in New Zealand, providing very strong support for Proposition 1 identified in the introductory chapter to this study.

### **2.3 Coalition Agreements and Parliamentary Consensus in New Zealand**

The evidence presented above suggests that the institutional reforms in New Zealand caused an increase in consensus. However, the FPP/MMP electoral system variable cannot explain why, after reform, some bills had bipartisan support while others did not. In this part of the chapter I focus on a more specific explanatory variable—the presence or absence of government commitment on individual legislative bills after MMP reform.

#### **2.3.1 Government bills and coalition commitments under MMP**

In this part of the study, I utilize another new data set including all principal government bills passed into law since the first MMP-elected parliament (the 45th) up to the middle

of the 50th parliament.<sup>38</sup> I code each final vote on a principal government bill based on whether or not the government identified the primary issue from a bill as a priority in its policy programme. To do so, I searched the government programme for key words from the purpose of the bill found in the wording of the legislation itself, provided at [www.legislation.govt.nz](http://www.legislation.govt.nz).<sup>39</sup>

There is some difference across the post-reform cabinets in terms of the sources where these commitments are published. During the first half of the 45th parliament, the National Party forged a minimal-winning coalition with New Zealand First (NZF) (Barker et al. 2001). The National-NZF coalition was the only government since the 45th parliament to have detailed their policy programme in a published coalition agreement (GCA) document, rather than in a speech from the throne.<sup>40</sup> Therefore, bills passed during the first MMP National-NZF coalition are coded as having commitment if the policy is found in this GCA document.

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<sup>38</sup> Principal government bills become an *original* Act of Parliament, in contrast to government bills which amend a previously established Act of Parliament. The data set used here includes final votes on all principal government bills passed from the beginning of the 45th parliament up to March 28, 2013. The data set used for the previous part of this chapter included both principal and government amendment bills. That data was from [www.vdig.net](http://www.vdig.net), hence the truncation of the data in 1987 and 2007. For consistency and to extend the data closer to the present time, I gather the names of all principal government bills from [www.legislation.nz.govt](http://www.legislation.nz.govt), and then gather data corresponding to those bills.

<sup>39</sup> According to the New Zealand Parliamentary Information Service, "There is no definitive way to determine how government bills have been treated in terms of agreements between coalition partners." Thus, aside from the rare case where a pledge fulfillment is openly acknowledged, we are left to our subjective judgement in determining whether or not a bill actually fulfills a particular pledge. I code a bill as included in an agreement if the similarity between the main issue of the bill and that from the established coalition agreement is sufficient to suggest purposive pledge fulfillment rather than mere incidental overlap.

<sup>40</sup> The coalition agreements and confidence and supply agreements from MMP-elected cabinets are provided in the appendices of Boston et al. (2000), Boston et al. (2003), Levine and Roberts (2007), Levine and Roberts (2010), and Johansson and Levine (2013). Speeches from the throne are found at [www.beehive.govt.nz](http://www.beehive.govt.nz).

After the National-NZF coalition split in mid-1998 following the departure of NZF's Winston Peters from the coalition, National continued to govern during the 45th as a single-party minority, with the support of several independent MPs. Thus, during the second half of the 45th parliament, I use the National Party election manifesto from 1996 as an indicator of government policy priority.

For the Labour-led minority coalition governments of the 46th, 47th, and 48th parliaments, as well as the National Party governments of the 49th and 50th parliaments, the government policy priorities are identified in the speech from the throne (the very brief GCA documents indicate that the government's policy objectives are laid out in the speech).<sup>41</sup> These speeches are drafted by the governing party leaders and delivered in the House of Representatives by the Governor-General before the beginning of the parliamentary term. Government bills passed during the 46th-50th parliaments are therefore coded as having commitment if the primary issue dealt with in a bill was identified in the Governor's speech as a policy priority of the government.

In the analysis below, I also account for the presence of a "confidence and supply agreement." Confidence and supply agreements are forged between the leaders of the governing coalition and the leaders of a non-governing party. Typically, in these agreements the non-governing party leader agrees to support the governing coalition on specific policies, but is not bound by collective responsibility rules and so is free to vote

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<sup>41</sup> The National Party governed as a single-party minority government during the 49th and 50th parliaments with confidence and supply from ACT, United Future, and the Māori Party.



against the government on issues not included in the support agreement (Boston and Bullock 2012).

There were no published confidence and supply agreements during the 45th parliament to my knowledge.<sup>42</sup> During the Labour-led minority coalitions of the 46th, 47th, and 48th parliaments, confidence and supply agreements were established with the Green Party, with the Green and United Future parties, and with the Green, United Future, and NZF parties, respectively. During the National single-party minority governments of the 49th and 50th parliaments, confidence and supply agreements were established with ACT, United Future, and the Māori Party.

In sum, for each observation (i.e., final vote on a principal government bill) the main explanatory variable (*commitment*) is coded as 1 if commitment to a bill is found in either the GCA (for parliament 45.1), in the National Party election manifesto (for parliament 45.2), or in the speech from the throne or a confidence and supply agreement (for parliaments 46-50). I also include a dummy variable (*confidence*) in the statistical models estimated below, as confidence and supply commitments are conceptually distinct from policy pledges made among government parties.

Table 2.4 provides an overview of government commitments and confidence and supply agreements pertaining to principal government legislation passed since MMP

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<sup>42</sup> According to Malone (2008, 46), there was no formally established confidence and supply agreement between the governing parties (National and NZF) and non-government parties during the 45th parliament (see Table 2.2 above). While they did not establish formal agreements, Barker et al. (2001, 314-5) note that the National-NZF government did enjoy the support of ACT and United New Zealand for a number of its policy objectives, effectively increasing the size of the coalition seat share. Indeed, during the first half of the 45th parliament, Peter Dunne (leader of the United New Zealand Party) voted with the government on 17 of 20 final votes (principal and amendment bills), while ACT voted with the government on 14 of 20 recorded final votes.

reform. About 34 percent of all principal government bills have overlapped with government commitments. Only about 1 percent of the bills had only a confidence and supply agreement. Most of the bills whose major issue was pledged in a confidence and supply agreement was also found in the speech from the throne (about 8 percent of all government bills had commitment from both sources).

Table 2.4: Government pledges and confidence and supply commitments on government bills in New Zealand

Parliament	Government commitment only <sup>a</sup>	Confidence and supply commitment only	Government <i>and</i> confidence and supply commitment	Total Gov. bills passed
45.1	4	NA <sup>b</sup>	NA <sup>b</sup>	15
45.2	12	NA <sup>b</sup>	NA <sup>b</sup>	26
46	14	0	0	29
47	22	1	2	63
48	3	1	11	42
49	18	0	6	53
50 <sup>c</sup>	17	1	2	35
Total	90	3	21	263

<sup>a</sup> For parliament 45.1 (National-NZF coalition) government commitment includes commitments established in the National-NZF GCA document. For parliament 45.2 bills are coded as having government commitment if the issue of the bill was recognized as a policy priority in the National Party election manifesto from 1996. For parliaments 46-50, government commitment is based on policy priorities established in the speech from the throne.

<sup>b</sup> No confidence and supply agreements were established during the coalitions of the 45th parliament.

<sup>c</sup> Data from the 50th parliament goes up to March 28, 2013, and is thus an incomplete account of the 50th parliament still underway as I write this.

### **2.3.2 Confidence and supply agreements and vote unity**

In New Zealand, the minority status of the governing coalitions renders unity among governing parties very important, and unity among governing coalition party leaders is all but guaranteed with collective ministerial responsibility. However, in minority government situations, unity within the governing coalition is not sufficient to build a majority and minority governments still depend on non-governing parties for legislative support to build a majority. Boston and Bullock (2012) also discuss how innovative governmental institutions such as agree-to-disagree provisions, confidence and supply agreements and 'memoranda of understanding' (another type of support agreement) between governing and legislative parties have facilitated a high level of governing coalition flexibility when it came to the formation of non-partisan legislative alliances.

One way to assess how well these governmental institutions have worked is by looking at the rates of dissent between confidence and supply parties and the government where such agreements have been established. Table 2.5 below displays the number of times a confidence and supply party voted against the government given different types of commitment: (i) when bill commitment was established in the speech from the throne, (ii) when commitment to legislation was established between the legislative party and the government via a confidence and supply agreement (or other types of support agreements), and (iii) where neither of these types of commitment are found. I do not include information on dissent among government parties as governing coalition parties

nearly always voted together in New Zealand (at least on final votes on principal government bills) regardless of the presence or absence of commitment.<sup>43</sup>

Table 2.5: Confidence and supply party votes against government bills given different types of policy commitment

Parliament	Confidence and supply agreement	Bills with speech commitment	Bills with no commitment
46	0/0	1/10	0/4
47	0/2	9/16	11/28
48	0/5	1/1	3/12
49	0/6	0/7	7/16
50	0/2	2/7	2/7
Total	0/15 (.00)	13/41 (.32)	23/67 (.34)

*Note:* Parliament 45 is omitted as there were no confidence and supply agreements made for those governments. Dissent on bills *with a confidence and supply agreement* would be found where any party who formed an agreement with the government ended up voting against the legislation agreed to. Dissent on bills *with speech commitment* is found where any confidence and supply party votes against the government on a bill which the government established as a policy priority in their post-election speech from the throne. Dissent on bills *with no commitment* is found where any confidence and supply party votes against the government on a bill found neither in the government's speech from the throne nor in a confidence and supply agreement which that party established with the government.

Focusing on final votes over principal government bills, not once did a party who established a confidence and supply agreement with the government oppose the government on that bill. Thus, it appears that confidence and supply agreements "work"

<sup>43</sup> Only one final vote on a principal government bill divided the parties of a governing coalition. This was the Prostitution Reform Bill, voted on June 25, 2003, during the Labour-Progressive coalition of the 47th parliament. This issue was not prioritized in either a confidence and supply agreement nor in the speech from the throne, consistent with the idea that government parties are more likely to split where coalition agreement is lacking. It was a very close outcome which ended with a rare request for a personal (roll call) vote. The bill was passed with 60 in favor and 59 against, and one abstaining (Chouldhary of the Labour Party). There were nine Labour Party rebellions and both Progressive Party MPs voted against the bill. All nine Green Party MPs voted for the legislation even though they did not commit to support the government on the issue of prostitution.

in that they hold the parties to the agreement together by the time a final vote comes up. This is not surprising, given that the cooperation agreements include pledges not to oppose the government on matters of confidence and supply (Boston and Bullock 2012, 356). Although Proposition 2 focuses on governing coalition agreements, this finding is consistent with the underlying logic of Proposition 2, in that support agreements establish a commitment between the governing coalition and a pivotal legislative party.

Meanwhile, there are a number of cases in which legislative parties vote against bills included in someone else's confidence and supply deal. Confidence and supply parties voted against the government on 32 percent of the bills pledged in the speech from the throne. Rates of opposing votes from confidence and supply parties on bills without speech *or* confidence pledges is higher still at 34 percent.

### **2.3.3 Coalition agreements and bipartisan vote outcomes**

In the Introduction to this dissertation, I proposed that bills with coalition commitment should sharpen partisan division between government and opposition. In New Zealand, the governing coalition agreements (GCAs) indicate a shared commitment to the government's policy programme. For example, in the 1999 Labour-Alliance agreement, it reads, "The key directions for the first term of the coalition will be outlined in the speech from the throne at the opening of Parliament...[and] the policy of the government will be determined between the parties on an ongoing basis through the normal processes of government policy development."

However, the GCAs established under mixed-member proportional (MMP) have also identified collective responsibility as a rule and have also established committees dedicated to resolving disputes between governing parties.<sup>44</sup> The commitment to collective ministerial responsibility suggests that intra-government unity should be sustained with or without a policy pledge, though flexible agreements allow non-partisan alliances to be formed. Also, the minority status of government places additional pressures on the governing parties to remain united so as to build a majority more easily. Thus there should be little uncertainty in the eyes of the proposing ministers about the forthcoming support from their co-partisans. However, among non-government parties, there may still be some incentives for opposition parties to strategically oppose the government on legislation linked to a policy pledge, or to vote sincerely for bills not included in the government programme. Taken together, I expect the effect of government policy commitments on bipartisan vote outcomes to be negative but not very strong.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> For example, in the 1999 Labour-Alliance coalition agreement it states, "The coalition government will operate within the convention of collective cabinet responsibility, subject to the provisions of this agreement, and the expectation is that cabinet decisions will be taken by consensus. There will be a standing coalition management committee comprising the two leaders, their deputies and the two senior whips."

<sup>45</sup> There is also a potential endogeneity issue that intra-government agreement causes commitment rather than the other way around. To guard against this, I also create a *manifestos* variable indicating whether the main issue of the bill was committed to in the election manifestos of the main governing parties from each parliament. As it turns out, very few of the bills are prioritized in the governing parties' manifestos (about 11 percent). I tried including this control variable in the statistical models used below, but it does not change the results significantly. Also, manifestos are not available for the National Party government of the 49th and 50th parliaments reducing the number of observations in an already small-*n* model. For these reasons I leave the manifestos variable out of the models estimated below.

**Hypothesis 1:** Government commitment to a bill will have a negative but weak effect on bipartisanship in New Zealand.

The data set used here includes all principal government bills passed since MMP reform. Only about half of these bills, however, were passed with a recorded party vote. Table 2.6 below shows the number of principal government bills passed with and without a recorded party vote by parliament in New Zealand since MMP reform. In legislatures where a recorded vote must be requested by legislators, such as New Zealand, requests for votes are probably not random and there is thus a potential for selection bias in using vote data to draw inferences about the causes of vote unity (Hug 2006; Stecker 2014). Because the vote data used here was based on a comprehensive list of principal government bills provided by [www.legislation.nz.govt](http://www.legislation.nz.govt), this data set includes bills which did and did not generate a recorded party vote on the third reading, I use a censored probit selection model, appropriate where the dependent variable of both the outcome and selection equations are dichotomous.

Table 2.6: Frequency of recorded votes on enacted principal government bills under MMP in New Zealand

Parliament	Gov. bills passed with party vote	Gov. bills passed without party vote	Total Gov. bills passed
45.1	8	7	15
45.2	6	20	26
46	14	15	29
47	45	17	62
48	18	24	42
49	29	24	53
50	16	19	35
Total	136	126	262

*Note:* The latest Act included in this data set passed third reading on March 28, 2013, before the 2014 general election marking the end of the 50th parliament.

Like the Heckman selection model, the censored probit model estimates the coefficients of two equations: in this case, a selection equation explaining the decision to request a recorded vote, and an outcome equation explaining why the vote outcome was partisan or bipartisan. A bipartisan vote outcome is found where at least half of the MPs from the governing coalition votes with at least half of the MPs from the set of opposition MPs.<sup>46</sup> Otherwise, votes are coded as having a partisan outcome.<sup>47</sup>

<sup>46</sup> Confidence and supply parties are placed in the opposition category when creating this bipartisan variable. This makes more sense than placing them in the government category, as the percentage of all government bills which any one confidence and supply party forged an agreement with the government on is small. And as Table 2.5 shows, rates of support party dissent are much higher in the absence of a confidence and supply agreement.

<sup>47</sup> A continuous measure of consensus—the seat share of the voting majority—is another way consensus could be measured in this case. I use the bipartisan measure of consensus for the selection model because the Heckman selection model fails to converge using the continuous majority seat share dependent variable. Results using both measures of consensus are subsequently reported.



The main explanatory variable in the outcome equation is government commitment to the bill, and this is coupled with a control variable indicating the presence of a confidence and supply agreement. I also include in the outcome equation a variable indicating whether or not the committee which dealt with the bill was chaired by a member of the opposition. This can be seen as a test of Proposition 1 which contends that non-majoritarian structural institutions—including power-sharing legislative rules such as opposition committee chair assignments—should foster more consensus. Information about committee chairs is gathered from Malone (2008, ch.7) for the 45th through the 48th parliaments, and from [www.parliament.nz](http://www.parliament.nz) for the 49th and 50th. I expect that a bipartisan outcome will be more likely when the select committee tasked with developing legislation is chaired by a member of the opposition, as legislative committee chairs have the capacity to shape the development of legislation making government bills more acceptable to opposition parties.

A number of studies have focused on incentives for requesting recorded votes (Carey 2009, 70; Crisp and Driscoll 2012). In New Zealand, one factor is that dissenting parties or MPs may wish to make public their opposition on a particular government bill. Such a desire to publish one's opposition is likely spurred by the political issue being dealt with (Lynch and Madonna 2013). In the selection model, I therefore use the select committee to which the bill was sent as a proxy for issue area, to explain party vote

selection.<sup>48</sup> In Table 2.7 below I list the different committees and the number of principal government bills referred to each committee since MMP reform.

Table 2.7: Number of principal government bills referred to various select committees since MMP reform in New Zealand

Select Committee	Number of Bills Referred	Select Committee	Number of Bills Referred
Justice and Electoral	48	Finance and Expenditure	16
Māori Affairs	36	Foreign Affairs, Defense and Trade	16
Commerce	25	Transport and Industrial Relations	15
Primary Production	23	Social Services	11
Government Administration	20	Law and Order	8
Not found <sup>a</sup>	19	Health	7
Local Government and Environment	17	Education and Science	2

<sup>a</sup> For some bills, the select committee data was not provided, nor could this be reliably inferred based on the information available.

In addition to issue area, I expect that bills committed to by the government will be more likely to generate a request for a formally recorded party vote. This is consistent with the expectation that bills with commitment are likely to result in a more sharply

<sup>48</sup> Data at [www.parliament.nz](http://www.parliament.nz) provides information about bills including the select committee the bill was referred to. Unfortunately, bill data from the parliamentary website only goes back through bills passed during the 48th parliament, before which bill data becomes increasingly unavailable. For the 45th through the 47th parliament bills, I used the Hansard records provided by [www.vdig.net](http://www.vdig.net). Unfortunately, [www.vdig.net](http://www.vdig.net) does not provide select committee information either. Thus, I often had to infer which select committee dealt with a bill. I did so based on the title of the bill, or the ministerial post of the member who opens the final reading debate on the bill (which I assume to be the member in charge of the bill, unless otherwise specified in the debate).

partisan outcome: to oppose a centerpiece of the government programme, an opposition party may be tempted to request an opportunity to record their dissent. Therefore, I include the *commitment* and *confidence* variables in the selection equation. The committee dummy variables are not included in the outcome equation, as there needs to be at least one explanatory variable in the selection equation that is not in the outcome equation. Finally, I include a variable indicating whether the select committee to which the bill was assigned was chaired by an opposition MP. This can be viewed as another way to test Proposition 1, in this case focusing on the impact of legislative rules. I expect consensus levels to be higher when bills are assigned to a select committee chaired by an opposition MP. The results of the censored probit model are displayed in Table 2.8.

Table 2.8: Bipartisan vote outcomes and coalition commitments in New Zealand, censored probit models

covariate	Outcome equation (DV: Bipartisan vote outcome)			Selection equation (DV: Party vote request)		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
commitment	-.0580 (.2092)	-.1464 (.2592)	-.0725 (.2331)	.3136 (.2529)	.2855 (.2707)	.2880 (.2577)
confidence		.3357 (.2915)	.3181 (.2591)		.1664 (.5025)	.2379 (.4899)
opposition comm. chair			.4601* (.2819)			-.0541 (.0951)
committee dummies	—	—	—	included	included	included
constant	-.6186** (.3045)	-.5982* (.3370)	-.7064*** (.2464)	.0805 (.2239)	.0854 (.2255)	.1359 (.2266)
observations	136	136	136	262	262	262
Log likelihood	-261.7577	-261.2198	-258.2092	—	—	—
Likelihood ratio test	0.3487	0.3715	0.2576	—	—	—

Note: \*\*\*  $p \leq .01$ , \*\*  $p \leq .05$ , \*  $p \leq .10$ . Cells include estimated coefficients and robust standard errors clustered by parliament in parentheses.

In all three models, policy commitments decrease the predicted probability of a bipartisan vote outcome, though the impact on the predicted probability of a bipartisan vote outcome is not very strong. Interpreting the outcome equation from model 3, commitment decreases the predicted probability of a bipartisan vote outcome by less than

one percent.<sup>49</sup> Meanwhile, assigning a bill to a select committee chaired by an opposition MP increase the probability of a bipartisan vote outcome by about 17 percent, a significant finding supporting Proposition 1. Focusing on the selection equation from model 3, bills sent to the Foreign Affairs, Defense and Trade committee are significantly less likely than bills sent to the Commerce committee to generate a party vote request, while bills sent to the Transport and Industrial Relations committee are significantly more likely to generate a party vote request. Continuing with model 3, government commitment increases the predicted probability of a party vote request by about 2 percent.

The likelihood ratio test indicates that the residuals of the outcome and selection equations are not correlated, suggesting that there is no need for the selection model (at least, based on variables included in these models). I therefore rerun the outcome models this time using both the bipartisan and the continuous majority seat share measures of consensus.<sup>50</sup> The results are shown in Table 2.9 below.

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<sup>49</sup> This interpretation is found via a few basic steps. Referring to model 3, starting with no commitment, we first want to find the normal density function at  $f[-.0764 - .0725(0)] = f(-.0764)$ . Referring to the normal distribution table, we find that for  $z = -.0764$ , the normal density is about .0319. Multiplying this value by the estimated slope coefficient of  $-.0725$ , we obtain  $-.0023$ , indicating the predicted effect of policy commitment on a bipartisan vote outcome. I use these same steps to interpret subsequent probit models throughout the study as well.

<sup>50</sup> As was noted earlier, the Heckman selection model with the continuous measure of consensus fails to converge, which is why I relied solely on the bipartisan measure of consensus in the censored probit models.

Table 2.9: Consensus and coalition commitments in New Zealand, probit and OLS regression

covariate	DV: Bipartisan vote outcome (Probit)			DV: Seat share of voting majority (OLS)		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
commitment	-.2980 (.2713)	-.2157 (.2627)	-.4031 (.2868)	-.0574 (.0372)	-.0444 (.0347)	-.0683* (.0339)
confidence	.3478* (.2024)	.3209* (.1810)	.1470 (.1724)	.0613 (.0354)	.0575 (.0315)	.0392 (.0207)
opposition comm. chair		.6507** (.2814)	1.560*** (.3528)		.1049*** (.0298)	.1827*** (.0325)
committee dummies			included			included
constant	.0339 (.2033)	-.0588 (.2020)	-.7343*** (.2435)	.7542*** (.0225)	.7381*** (.0236)	.6731*** (.0235)
observations	137	137	133	137	137	137
$R^2$	0.0098	0.0353	0.1544	0.0249	0.0697	0.237

Note: \*\*\*  $p \leq .01$ , \*\*  $p \leq .05$ , \*  $p \leq .10$ . Cells include estimated coefficients and robust standard errors clustered by parliament in parentheses. Pseudo  $R^2$  are used for probit models 1-3. For models 4-6, the dependent variable is the seat share of the voting majority on individual vote outcomes.

The results are roughly similar to what we found with the censored probit models.

Government commitment decreases the predicted probability of a bipartisan vote outcome, but the effect is not very strong. In OLS model 6 the effect of commitment on the majority seat share reaches conventional levels of statistical significance. In that model, government commitment on a bill is predicted to decrease the size of the voting majority by about 7 percent, or eight MPs in the House of Representatives.

Confidence and supply agreements are found to increase the probability of a bipartisan vote outcome in models 1 and 2. This makes sense, in that confidence and

supply parties are part of the 'opposition' and thus agreement between these parties and the government increases the level of bipartisanship, making a 'bipartisan' aggregated outcome more likely. However, this finding is actually contrary to what I would expect based on Proposition 2, which would predict that in the *absence* of a confidence and supply agreement there should be an increase in the degree of uncertainty about who the government can rely on to support a bill and thus increase the probability that a governing party would reach out to the *major* opposition party.

Opposition committee chairs have a consistent and strong impact on legislative consensus, providing further support on Proposition 1 which focused on electoral *and* legislative structural institutions. Focusing on model 6, assigning a bill to a select committee chaired by an opposition MP increases consensus on that bill by a predicted 18 percent, about 22 MPs. Given that the 1996 Standing Orders deprived select committee chairs of a casting vote, I interpret the effect of opposition select committee chair not as a veto player effect as much as a deliberative effect, in that opposition committee chairs can guide and influence the discussion over the bill.

## **2.4 Conclusion**

The evidence presented in this chapter provides strong support for Proposition 1. There was a clear increase in consensus after New Zealand implemented its mid-1990s reforms. Other potential confounders such as minority government do not undermine this institutional explanation of consensus. Also, bills assigned to select committees chaired by opposition MPs are much more likely to result in a bipartisan final vote outcome,

providing further empirical support for Proposition 1, this time focusing on legislative rules. The electoral system and legislative rule changes in New Zealand caused a significant increase in consensus in the country. Less empirical support is found in favor of Proposition 2 however, which asserted that bills which were part of the government's policy agenda will be more likely to produce a partisan vote outcome. However, confidence and supply agreements are found to increase unity between the partners to the agreement, consistent with the premise of Proposition 2 that policy commitments should bind those parties to the agreement when voting on the corresponding piece of legislation.



## Chapter 3:

### Institutions and Parliamentary Consensus in Belgium, 1893-1923

#### 3.1 Introduction

Since World War II, New Zealand has been the only nation-state in the developed world to have permanently undergone the fundamental transition from a single-member district plurality (SMDP) system to a proportional system of representation (mixed-member proportional to be exact) at the national level.<sup>51</sup> As Lijphart observed, "one of the best-known generalizations about electoral systems is that they tend to be very stable and to resist change" (quoted in Cox 1997, 18). For other examples of such transitions in the developed world we can look to the period when western Europe adopted its PR systems before World War II. This transformation occurred in two waves, one before World War I (Belgium, Finland, Portugal, and Sweden), and another after World War I (Austria, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, and Switzerland) (Alesina and Glaeser 2008).

Of these cases, Belgium is a useful country to focus on for a few reasons. First, Belgium was the first to adopt PR at the national level in 1899 making it a historically

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<sup>51</sup> France adopted a PR system for the National Assembly in 1986, but then promptly switched back to a two-round majoritarian electoral system after one year. Another near exception to this rule is the Japanese Diet, which in 1994 passed two laws that reformed the electoral system from the single nontransferable vote, to a mixed-member majoritarian system (Reed and Thies 2001). Many countries adopted a mixed-member electoral system in recent decades, including a number of post-communist countries, and Italy in the 1990s (see Shugart and Wattenberg 2001).

important case.<sup>52</sup> Second, Belgium has since become an exemplar of consociational democracy (Lijphart 1980), and the roots of Belgium's current institutional setting can be found in the country's early institutional changes between 1893 and 1921.<sup>53</sup> Third, historical legislative vote data from the Chamber of Representatives is available from this period, and provides a window through which changes in party politics can be viewed. In what follows, I provide a concise overview of Belgium's institutional transformation, and then use new legislative vote data gathered from the annals of the Belgian Chamber of Representatives to test Propositions 1 and 2 described in the Introduction to this study.

### **3.2 Structural Institutions and Parliamentary Consensus in Belgium**

#### **3.2.1 Institutional reform in Belgium**

Belgium's adoption of PR in 1899 was one reform among a series of institutional changes which together comprise the country's early institutional transformation. This transformation is summarized in Table 3.1 below. The major institutional changes include the implementation of universal male suffrage in 1893, the adoption of PR in 1899, and the switch to one-man one-vote after World War I (Van Eenoo 2003).

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<sup>52</sup> Thomas Jefferson had devised a method in 1792 for allocating seats among states in the U.S. Congress which is similar to Victor d'Hondt's divisor-based list-PR system in its results though distinct in its constituencies. Jefferson's method was used to allocate seats among the states based on the U.S. census, rather than by distributing legislative seats among parties based on a list-PR election result.

<sup>53</sup> As Witte, Craeybeckx and Meynen (2000, 73) observe, "The expansion of democracy was one of the most fundamental political transformations in Belgian history. It created the basis of Belgian society as we know it and the developments one century ago still determine politics to this day."

Table 3.1: Electoral system transformation in Belgium from 1893 to 1921

Years	Electoral system	Suffrage	Legislative parties
pre-1894	Two-round majoritarian <sup>a</sup>	Limited to elite minority	Catholic and Liberal
1894-1899	Block vote <sup>b</sup>	All male citizens (elite plural vote)	Catholic, Liberal and Socialist
1899-1914	Open-list PR <sup>c</sup>	All male citizens (elite plural vote)	Catholic, Liberal, Socialist, Daensistes
1914-1919 <sup>d</sup>	—	—	—
1921-	Open-list PR <sup>c</sup>	All male citizens (one-person-one-vote)	Catholic, Liberal, Socialist, Nat-Flam, Communist

<sup>a</sup> Between 1830 and 1894, Belgium used a two-round system, where the winner of each district in either round had to acquire an absolute majority (Van Eenoo 2003).

<sup>b</sup> During this period, a block vote system was used, where the party acquiring the plurality of votes in a district would get all the seats from that district (Stengers 1980, 56).

<sup>c</sup> The Inter-parliamentary Union database indicates that, for the lower chamber, each party submits one party list for each of the 11 multi-member constituencies (with between four and 24 seats each), and that seats are distributed according to the d'Hondt method. Vote splitting is not provided for, but preferential voting with respect to the same list is possible. See also Dewachter (1987, 323-5) for a discussion on the selection of candidates to party lists in Belgium.

<sup>d</sup> During German occupation regular parliamentary business was suspended.

### 3.2.1.1 Belgian politics before 1894

In the 19th century two major historical developments occurred in Belgium:

independence from The Netherlands in 1830, and industrialization. Independence coincided with the establishment of Belgium's own electoral and political party system.

At the time, the country's political system was dominated by two major political parties,

the Liberal and Catholic Party and the right to vote was limited to wealthy, educated

males. Industrialization fostered urbanization and eventually the organization of a

working class left-wing opposition to the socio-economic policies of the Liberal and Catholic parties, both of whom favored a very liberal form of capitalism.<sup>54</sup>

Harsh living conditions attracted many workers towards socialism (Witte, Craeybeckx and Meynen 2000, 57-8). Working class militants participated in a number of labor strikes, often brutally suppressed by the Belgian government, in the mid-late 19th century. However, it wasn't until 1893 that the revolutionary threat posed by the socialists led policy makers under Catholic Party prime minister Auguste Beernaert to adopt universal male suffrage. However, the wealthy and well educated were given plural votes in order to maintain a Catholic majority.

A prominent idea running through theories of democratization emphasizes that a ruling elite, faced with a credible revolutionary threat, may provide major concessions to the opposition so as to avoid a full-scale revolution (Rokkan 1970; Boix 1999; Acemoglu and Robinson 2001; Przeworski 2009). This theory seems particularly applicable in Belgium, where the expansion of the right to vote was catalyzed by two concurrent developments: elite co-optation, and the ability of the social democrats to persuade the working class to seek integration into the political system, rather than its complete overthrow.

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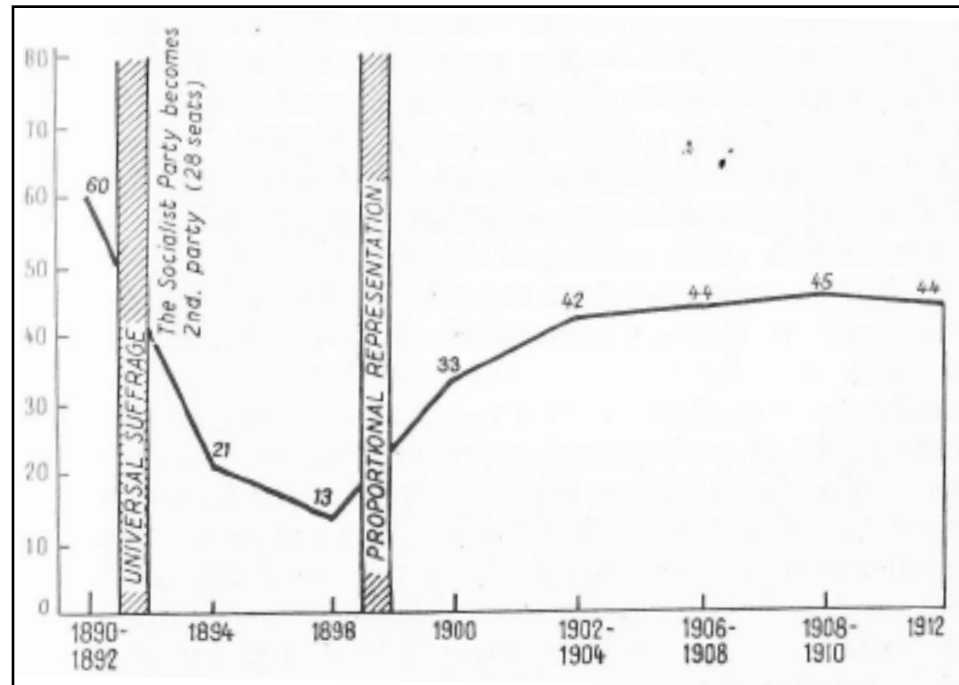
<sup>54</sup> As Witte, Craeybeckx and Meynen (2000, 52) note, "It mattered little whether a one-party Liberal government or a Liberal-Catholic coalition ruled since the economic interests of the bourgeoisie always came first."

### *3.2.1.2 From universal male suffrage to proportional representation*

With the adoption of universal male suffrage in 1893, the results of the general election left the Catholic Party with a comfortable majority, but the Socialists had emerged as a larger opposition party than the Liberals. The Socialists continued to organize strikes, seeking further concessions such as one-man one-vote. The progressive wing of the Liberal Party saw PR as a way to restore their party's seat share in the lower chamber and even threatened the Catholic government with the introduction of a Liberal-Socialist electoral coalition (Witte, Craeybeckx and Meynen 2000, 81).

Meanwhile, the conservative Catholics wanted to quell the Socialist breakthrough and attempted to prevent the pending Liberal-Socialist alliance from solidifying. The Catholic party also feared the consequences of the 1894 regional division which pitted rural catholic Flanders against socialist industrial Wallonia (Lorwin 1972, 394-5). By adopting PR in 1899, the Catholic Party led by prime minister de Smet de Naeyer was able to prevent the Liberal-Socialist coalition, prevent the country from breaking apart into regions, and restore the Liberals as the main opposition party (see Figure 3.1 below).

Figure 3.1: 'Rescue' of the Belgian Liberal Party by PR



Note: Figure is from Duverger (1954, 247). The y-axis indicates the number of seats held by the Liberal Party in the Chamber of Deputies.

### 3.2.1.3 From proportional representation reform to World War I

During the first decades of the 20th century, it became clear to the Socialists that they had reached the limits of their political influence under the plural vote system. The left-wing of the Socialist Party organized new general strikes in 1902, and later in 1913, in pursuit of one-man one-vote. With more moderate "pro-system" tendencies now embedded, the Socialist Party leadership called off the 1913 strike after receiving word that King Albert and Catholic Party prime minister Charles de Brocqueville were willing to initiate constitutional reform. World War I, however, put these constitutional reforms on hold (Witte, Craeybeckx and Meynen 2000, 81).

After the German Army invaded in August of 1914, the Belgian government relocated to non-occupied Le Havre. King Leopold II had died in 1909 and was succeeded by his nephew Albert who would lead the country during World War I. Socialist Party leaders aligned themselves with the de Broqueville Catholic Party government, and became part of a national solidarity movement along with the Liberal Party led by Paul Hymans. The Socialist Party's patriotism exhibited during the war, reduced the mistrust of the Conservatives and confirmed that Belgian socialism had become an integral part of the political system.

#### *3.2.1.4 Post-World War I reform*

After the Nov. 11, 1918 armistice ending World War I, King Albert had realized that there was a need for radical change if the unity of the country and the monarchy were to survive. The 1917 Russian revolution and left-wing revolutionary action in central and eastern Europe had underscored the need to integrate socialist opposition movements rather than suppress them. Part of this integration strategy was to continue with the grand coalition organized during the war. The first three governing cabinets after World War I were composed of grand coalitions including all three major parties, the first two were led by Delacroix, and the third by Edmond Carton de Wiart, both of the Catholic Party. In his November 28, 1918 inauguration speech, prime minister Delacroix promised one-man one-vote, which was approved in 1919 ahead of the constitutional revision implemented in February 1921 (Witte, Craeybeckx and Meynen 2000, 107-8). Women's voting rights

existed at the municipal level by then but a breakthrough at provincial and national levels would only come after World War II.

### 3.2.2 Assessing the impact of institutional reform

I have thus far provided a concise overview of political developments coinciding with Belgium's institutional transformation from 1893 to 1921. New legislative vote data gathered from the Belgian Chamber of Representatives online archives of legislative debate records provides a vantage point for further assessments of changes during this period. Table 3.2 below provides some descriptive information about the data.

Table 3.2: Overview of the Belgian legislative vote data

Session years <sup>†</sup>	Catholic Party prime minister	Number of votes in data	Institutional stage
1890-91	Beernaert	55	Pre-universal male suffrage
1894-95	de Burlet	83	Universal male suffrage, elite plural vote
1895-97	de Smet de Naeyer I	110	Universal male suffrage, elite plural vote
1901-03	de Smet de Naeyer II	70	Universal male suffrage, elite plural vote, PR
1921-23	Theunis	187	Universal male suffrage, one-man-one-vote, PR

<sup>†</sup> Parliamentary sessions in Belgium last one year, with terms of parliament lasting up to two years prior to World War I, and up to four years afterwards. The legislative debate transcripts available at the Belgian Chamber website are scans of the original legislative transcripts.

Legislative vote data was gathered from each of the major phases of the institutional transformation: before 1894, between 1894 and 1899, after 1899, and after World War I. The data gathered includes sufficient observations to provide representative samples of legislative voting during each of these institutional stages. Although there are gaps in the



vote data during this larger transformative period, each data set comprising the larger body of vote data acquired is a complete set of a particular parliamentary session.

### *3.2.2.1 Trends in consensus*

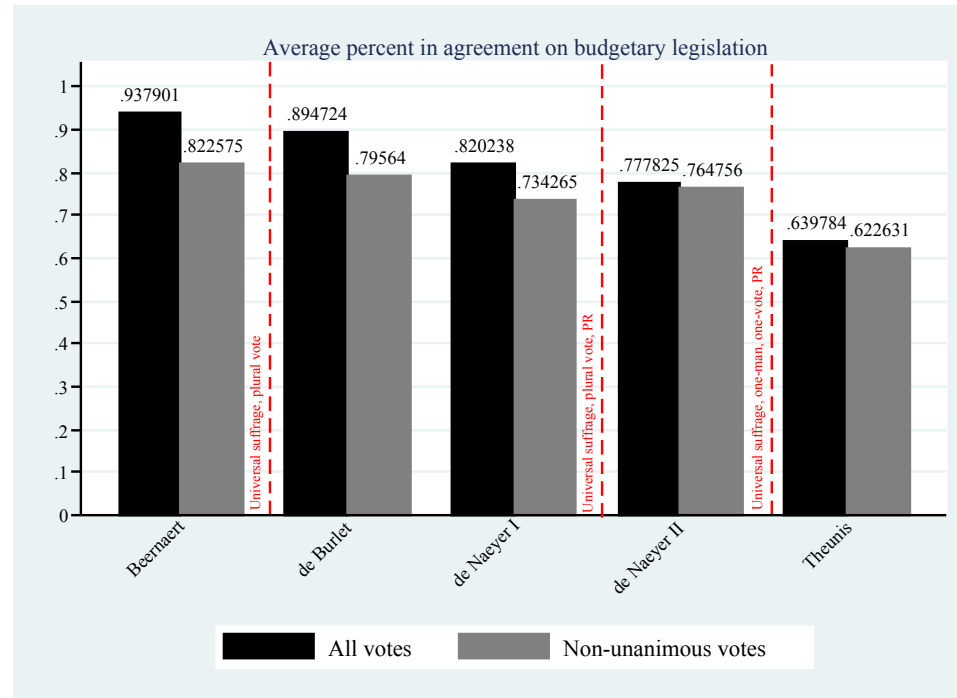
The data allows me us assess whether the adoption of PR and the transition to Belgium's contemporary multiparty system coincided with an increase in consensus as had occurred in New Zealand. Measured as the seat share of the voting majority, developments in Belgium did not coincide with an increase in consensus. As is shown in Figure 3.2, focusing on budgetary legislation (the policy area most frequently voted on in final votes), the average level of consensus in Belgium's Chamber of Representatives actually appears to have declined over the course of the country's institutional transformation.

Budgetary legislation had by far the most observations of all policy area categories, about (34 percent of the bills), and was followed at a distant second by regulatory legislation at about 9 percent of the bills.<sup>55</sup> Viewing all legislation pooled together (that is, budgetary and non-budgetary alike), there is no clear linear trend in consensus levels upward or downward. I focus on budgetary legislation as this is most relevant to the socio-economic cleavage, which was 'politicized' during the institutional transformation, for reasons which will be discussed further below.

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<sup>55</sup> Regulatory legislation can be further broken down, in the order of frequency, as follows. Among regulatory legislation, bills regulating: state property/contracts (19.5 percent of all regulatory bills), industrial relations (15.2 percent), commodities (15.2 percent), company management (10.8 percent), miscellaneous (10.8 percent), property management (8.7 percent), utilities (8.7 percent), maritime issues (6.5 percent), and fraud (4.3 percent).

Figure 3.2: Declining consensus levels during Belgium's institutional transformation



Note: The y-axis measures the average percent of legislators from the Chamber of Representatives in agreement on budgetary legislation under each prime minister ordered chronologically across the x-axis. The grey bars measure consensus on less than unanimous final vote outcomes, and the black bars measure consensus for all final votes including those with unanimous outcomes. Dashed vertical lines indicate major institutional reforms.

A policy area variable was created by translating the title of each bill from French to English and then categorizing each bill based on the translated bill title.<sup>56</sup> The issue areas I identify with more than 10 bills in the data set are: budgetary (with 167 recorded votes), regulatory (46), provincial (42), international trade (39), judicial (28), military (26), international relations (20), post-war issues (16), colonies (14), education (14), bureaucracy (12). In addition, there were 11 divisions each on elections, railways, and

<sup>56</sup> Bill titles usually provided unambiguous information about which type of issue was dealt with in the legislation. For example, a bill titled "*Loi portant reglement definitif du budget de l'exercice 1892*" is translated as "Act for final settlement of the budget for the year 1892", and this bill is classified as part of the "budget - annual" issue area.

taxation, plus seven more issue areas with less than ten observations. The budgetary issue area could be further broken down into more specific budgetary categories such as the annual budgetary allocation, and allocations to different ministerial posts.

To illustrate the decline in consensus over this period and to demonstrate the subcategories of budgetary issue areas, I regress consensus level on an elapsed date variable spanning the entire reform period with regressions sorted by budgetary category (see Table 3.3 below). Note that the number of observations in the regressions used for Table 3.3 is very low, ranging from 3 to 17. In all but one of these budgetary issue areas, the beta coefficient is negatively signed, and is statistically significant in half of the budgetary issue areas. Running the same 'over-time' regression with all the data (including both budgetary and non-budgetary legislation), the t-statistic for the elapsed time variable is -2.40 ( $p=.017$ ,  $n=493$ ). Running the regression with all the data while controlling for all policy areas the t-statistic is -3.59.

Table 3.3: Majority size on budgetary issues regressed on elapsed day variable spanning transitional period in Belgium, OLS regression

Budgetary allocation	t-statistic	observations	Budgetary allocation	t-statistic	observations
credit (additional)	-6.87	3	credit (and transfer)	-1.47	7
ministry of foreign affairs	-3.57	9	ways and means	-1.46	8
income & expenditure	-3.06	17	annual	-1.41	15
ministry of war	-2.49	7	credit (temporary)	-1.32	9
police	-2.44	8	ministry of industry	-1.05	7
public debt	-2.24	11	ministry of agriculture	-0.83	10
repayments	-2.13	9	credit (interim)	-0.76	5
ministry of interior	-1.93	9	ministry of justice	-0.5	7
ministry of finance	-1.56	8	ministry of railways	0.07	7
			all	-5.87	167

*Note:* The dependent variable (majority size) is based on both unanimous and non-unanimous outcomes. Policy area variable was created by author, based on bill titles translated from French to English. The total number of observations is greater than the sum of the observations listed in the regressions because some budgetary categories only had one or two observations and so could not be used for regression analysis.

These findings from Belgium suggest an important qualification to Proposition 1: the consensus inducing effect of PR is unlikely to be immediately apparent if the institutional change coincides with democratization. In Belgium, prior to the 1893 reform, the two major parties agreed on the fundamentals of the liberal economic system. Disagreements were found for instance on the secular-clerical cleavage, or on relatively minor economic issues, but not over more fundamental matters concerning redistribution, worker protections, and the economic system itself. Thus, the entrance of the Socialist

Party into the legislature "politicized" the socio-economic cleavage and increased the seat share of the MPs voting in opposition on such issues, as is reflected by the drop in consensus over time on budgetary matters.<sup>57</sup>

#### *3.2.2.2 Party system transformation*

Table 3.4 below shows the seat shares of each the parties, as well as the effective number of legislative parties in the Chamber of Representatives every other general election over the institutional transformation period. Consistent with Duverger's hypothesis, there was an increase in the effective number of parties after the implementation of PR in 1899, as there was after universal male suffrage was adopted in 1893 and after the one-man one-vote reform in 1919.

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<sup>57</sup> As De Winter, Timmermans and Dumont (2000, 301) explain, "The Belgian party system started out as a two-party system in the nineteenth century, with Catholics and Liberals basically opposed on the issue of the religious neutrality of the state. After the breakthrough of the Socialists at the end of that century and *the politicization of the socioeconomic left-right cleavage*, Belgium had a clear-cut example of a two-and-a-half-party system until at least 1965" (emphasis added).

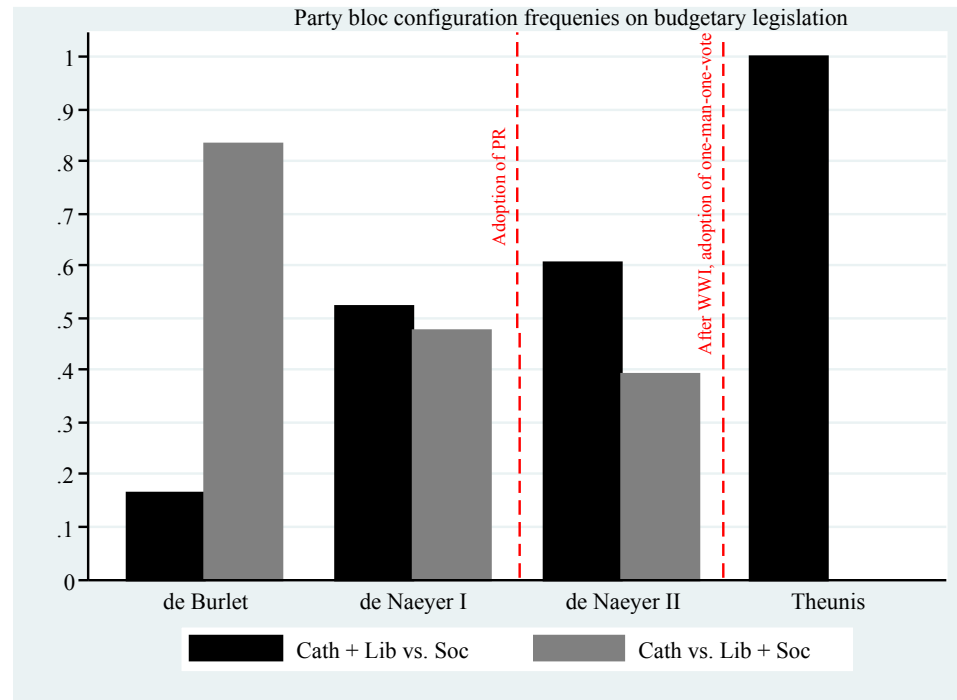
Table 3.4: Political party seat totals and shares in the Belgian Chamber of Representatives, 1890-1925

Party	<i>Pre-reform</i>	<i>Universal male suffrage</i>		<i>PR + Universal male suffrage</i>			<i>PR + one-man, one-vote</i>	
	1890	1894	1898	1902	1906	1910	1921	1925
Catholic	94 (.681)	104 (.684)	112 (.737)	96 (.578)	89 (.536)	86 (.518)	80 (.430)	78 (.417)
Liberal	44 (.319)	20 (.132)	12 (.079)	33 (.199)	45 (.271)	44 (.265)	33 (.177)	23 (.123)
Socialist		28 (.184)	28 (.184)	35 (.211)	31 (.187)	35 (.211)	68 (.366)	78 (.417)
Daensistes				2 (.012)	1 (.006)	1 (.006)		
Nat.-Flam.							4 (.022)	6 (.032)
Communist								2 (.011)
Others							1 (.005)	
Total Seats	138	152	152	166	166	166	186	187
ENLP	1.77	1.93	1.72	2.39	2.53	2.61	2.85	2.75

*Note:* Cells contain the number of seats held and the seat share in parentheses. Data is from Gubin et al. (2003). The Effective number of legislative parties (ENLP) measure is from Laakso and Taagepera (1979).

The emergence of contestation on the socio-economic dimension is evinced by the shift of the Liberal Party from opposition before reform to coalition partner with the governing Catholic Party after World War I. This realignment is shown by the frequency of times that most Liberal Party MPs voted with most of the Catholic Party MPs. Figure 4.3 below shows the frequencies of different divisions after 1894 when the Socialist Party first acquired seats. Note that the Catholics and Socialists almost never voted together during this period, and this combination is thus not included in the figure.

Figure 3.3: Belgian Liberal Party realignment from opposition to government



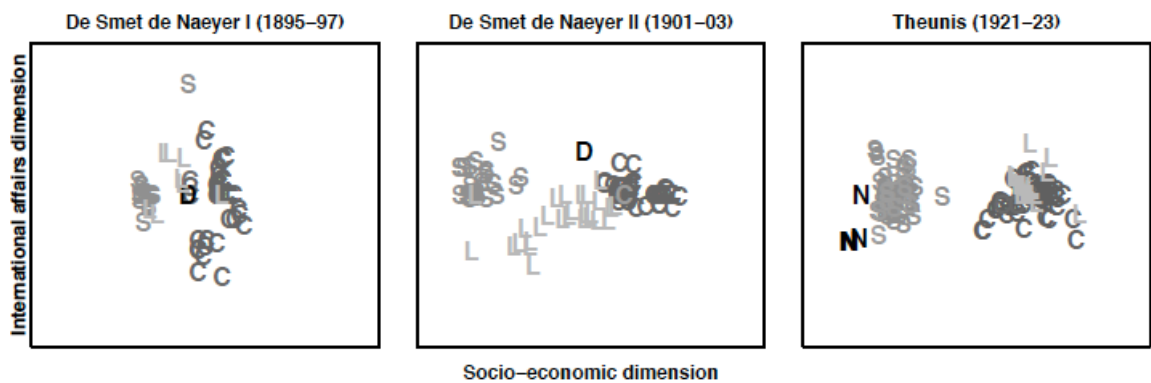
*Note:* Black bars indicate the percentage of non-unanimous vote outcomes under each prime minister, ordered chronologically, where the Catholics and Liberals voted together on budgetary legislation against the Socialists. Gray bars indicate the percentage of vote outcomes in which the Catholics voted against the Liberals and the Socialist party. These votes do not include the unanimous vote outcomes, though inclusion of unanimous votes does not change the results significantly.

As with the explanation of the increasing size of the opposition in legislative votes, the realignment of the Liberal party is likely a result of the politicization of the socio-economic cleavage. That is, the entrance of the Socialist Party into the political system as a clear alternative to liberal capitalism for voters, gradually 'revealed' the consensus of the Liberal and Catholic Party on the fundamentals of the economy.

Another way to observe party system transformation in Belgium is with multidimensional scaling. The spatial theory of voting holds that legislators' political

preferences can be represented in an abstract  $n$ -dimensional space, and that legislators will tend to vote for the alternative closest to their 'ideal point', that is, more preferred outcome in a policy space (see Armstrong et al. 2014, 5-7). I opt for the non-parametric Optimal Scaling (OC) procedure introduced by Poole (2005). OC does not make strong assumptions about the functional form of the error distribution of the legislators' utility functions. Thus, OC is seen as preferable to parametric scaling tools such as NOMINATE in the presence of unstable characteristics such as variation in party cohesion, and strategic voting. Figure 3.4 shows the movement of the Liberal Party to the side of the Catholic Party as well as the decline in consensus over the transitionary phase.

Figure 3.4: Optimal Classification scaling of the Belgian Chamber of Representatives during de Smet de Naeyer I and II, and Theunis cabinets



*Note:* S=Socialist Party, L=Liberal Party, C=Catholic Party, D=Daensistes, N=Nationalist Flemish Party. Ideal points are estimated with less than unanimous votes from three institutional periods: Before PR (1895-96 and 1896-97 sessions), just after PR (1901-02 and 1902-03 sessions), and after World War I (1921-22 and 1922-23 sessions). Ideal points are estimated using the OC software package for the R statistical program (see Poole 2005; Armstrong et al. 2014).



The most divisive issue dimension is identified as socio-economic (e.g., budgetary matters, income and employment, financing of ministries, granting of credit, and railroad issues). I identify the second dimension as 'international affairs' over which the divisions between parties were less severe. International issues generated a mixture of partisan and bipartisan outcomes, such as international trade (protectionism and liberalization), military budget and militia regulation, as well as colonial matters. Although the secular-clerical issue dimension was an important source of division between Liberals and Catholics, final votes on government bills over related issues such as education and family and gender issues were surprisingly rare during the cabinets focused on here.

### **3.3 Coalition Agreements and Parliamentary Consensus in Belgium**

In Proposition 2, I proposed that when a coalition agreement has been established on a bill, the coalition parties are more likely to vote cohesively in favor of this legislation and that opposition parties will be more likely to strategically oppose the government on the main policies from its programme. In this part of the paper, I examine how the policy commitments of the Catholic-Liberal governing coalition affected legislative vote outcomes in the Chamber of Representatives during two sessions under the George Theunis cabinet from 1921-23.

#### **3.3.1 Government bills and coalition agreements after the transition**

In Belgium, government party leaders didn't begin writing down policy agreements until 1958, and it wasn't until the early 1960s that these agreements began to be published after the cabinet was sworn into office (De Winter, Timmermans and Dumont 2000, 329).

Between the end of World War I and 1958, governing coalition policy priorities were laid out in the post-election declaratory speech to parliament. I coded bills from the 1921-22 and 1922-23 parliamentary sessions based on whether or not the main issue dealt with in the bill was identified as a policy priority in the speech given by Catholic Party prime minister Georges Theunis on December 21, 1921.<sup>58</sup>

The first three post-war coalitions between November 1918 and December 1921 were grand coalitions including the Socialist, Liberal and Catholic parties. It makes sense to begin with the Theunis government as this was the first coalition after the aforementioned grand coalition governments and thus could also be seen as the first parliamentary sessions with "normal" contested politics. In both Theunis sessions analyzed here, the governing coalition included the Catholic and the Liberal Parties, with the Socialist Party as the major opposition.

### **3.3.2 Analysis**

#### *3.3.2.1 Coalition agreements and bipartisan vote outcomes*

De Winter, Timmermans and Dumont (2000, 300) have observed that, "In order to reduce the high potential of uncertainty and shirking, political parties have developed a multifaceted and sophisticated set of coalition maintenance mechanisms." The need for such mechanisms should apply especially in contemporary Belgium where by 1981, fourteen parties were represented in the Chamber of Representatives. However, in first

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<sup>58</sup> The previous 'declaratory speech to parliament' had been given on November 22, 1918. These speeches were found in the legislative debate annals provided at the Belgian Chamber of Representatives parliamentary website, the same source from which I gathered the roll call vote data.

days of Belgium's coalition government after World War I, there was a three party system dominated by the Socialists, Liberals and Catholics (De Winter and Dumont 2003, 255-6). Even in the early years of coalition government coalition agreements were established and policy programmes declared in a parliamentary speech.

Apart from the changes to the electoral system and suffrage expansion, much of the original constitution has remained in tact (De Winter and Dumont 2003, 253). Articles 63 and 64 of the 1831 Constitution, established by The National Congress after independence, declared that ministerial responsibility applies to all public acts of the king (Dewachter and Clijsters 1982, 190). More recently, the 1992 and 1995 Belgian coalition agreements stipulated that even on policies not committed to in the coalition agreement, the governing parties would be expected to remain united (De Winter and Dumont 2003, 264). This suggests that during the transitional period under study here, the principle of collective ministerial responsibility applied to government ministers.

Therefore, the potential for coalitional partners (in this case the Liberal-Catholic partnership) to create a 'coalition split vote' where one of the governing parties votes against the other should be very low. Indeed, as we saw in Figures 3.3 and 3.4, intra-government unity was quite high during the Theunis sessions. However, the Socialist Party may be more likely to join the government on bills not identified as a policy priority in their declaratory speech. The opposition Socialist Party is likely to have stronger incentives to oppose the government on the centerpieces of the government's

legislative agenda, namely those identified in the speech as coalition priorities (Christiansen and Pedersen 2012).

**Hypothesis 1:** Bipartisan outcomes should be more likely on bills whose main issue was not identified as a policy priority in the government's post-election parliamentary speech.

The test the first hypothesis regarding bipartisan vote outcomes, I use a probit model. The main dependent variable is *bipartisan*, coded 1 if at least half of the Socialist Party MPs vote with at least half of those from the government coalition (Catholic and Liberal MPs), and 0 otherwise. The main independent variable is *commitment*, coded 1 if the government emphasized the bill issue area in the speech, and 0 otherwise. I also include a *policy area* factor variable as a control. The inclusion of this factor variable should account for varying degrees of contestation across different issues areas.

In addition, to control for the possible effects of Senate opposition to the bill, I include a *Senate time* variable, indicating the logged number of days from the day the bill was passed in the Chamber to the day it was passed in the Senate. This time variable should capture how important the bill was to the Senate and in so doing control for the desire of the Senate to veto the bill. As was noted in the Introduction, like the lower chamber, the Senate was also controlled by a Catholic Party president throughout the transitionary years under study here. Controlling for time in the Senate is important because Belgium has had a 'symmetrical' bicameral system, where the legislative powers

of the upper and lower chamber are balanced. Table 3.5 shows the probit estimates including these variables.

Table 3.5: Government commitment and bipartisan vote outcomes during the Theunis governments of 1921-23, probit models

Covariate	All bills			Budgetary bills excluded		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
speech commitment	-1.81*** (.2272)	-1.73*** (.2401)	-2.33*** (.5902)	-1.09*** (.2700)	-1.02*** (.2850)	-1.93*** (.6468)
Senate time (logged)		-.070 (.0956)	.017 (.1481)		-.053 (.1094)	.023 (.1502)
policy area dummies			included			included
constant	1.12*** (.1656)	1.27*** (.2955)	-.071 (.6679)	1.16*** (.1708)	1.26*** (.3281)	-.460 (.7696)
observations	169	148	95	125	110	57
pseudo- $R^2$	0.314	0.2915	0.484	0.1249	0.112	0.2218

*Note:* \*\*\*  $p \leq .01$ . Cells contain beta coefficients with standard errors in parentheses. Models include all votes from Theunis cabinets (1921-23) including unanimous votes. There are less observations in the fixed-effects models due to the collinearity of several of the issue area dummies.

Confirming hypothesis 1, the estimates provided in Table 3.5 reveal a highly significant negative relationship between bills included in Theunis's speech and bipartisanship. However, one concern with models 1-3 is that budgetary legislation almost always generates a partisan outcome and almost always was coded as part of the government's agenda. (Forty-one out of the forty-four budgetary bills from the two Theunis sessions had government commitment and a partisan outcome). Thus, budgetary

legislation may be driving the results in support of the hypothesized negative relationship between government commitment and bipartisan voting.

Excluding the budgetary legislation, there is much greater balance on the government commitment and bipartisan vote outcome variables. Rerunning the probit models with the budgetary bills excluded the results still confirm the expectation that bills lacking government commitment will be significantly more likely to produce a bipartisan vote outcome. Referring to model 4, we find that on non-budgetary legislation, coalition commitment reduces the probability of a bipartisan vote outcome by about 41 percent.

#### *3.3.2.2 Coalition agreements and party vote unity*

I also expect unity within government parties to be higher on bills included in the speech because, generally, government whips are expected to place more pressure on backbenchers to vote cohesively on legislation which is central to the government agenda. Also, preferences of party leaders often match those of the party's rank of file, so the government's priorities should also reflect consensus among the backbenchers of the governing parties in agreement, increasing intra-party cohesion. However, I expect this effect to be limited by collective cabinet responsibility. I also expect that more opposition MPs will vote with the governing coalition on bills excluded from the government programme outlined in the declaratory speech.

**Hypothesis 2:** Government unity should be higher on government bills identified in the government speech as a policy priority.

**Hypothesis 3:** A larger share of opposition MPs should vote with the governing coalition on bills without government commitment.

To test the second hypotheses, I calculate unity scores for the government coalition.

Similar to the measures used in my chapter on Britain, the unity score for some party or coalition  $i$  on legislative motion  $j$  is calculated as

$unity_{ij} = |percentAye_{ij} - percentNay_{ij}|$ , where

$percentAye_{ij} = totalAye_{ij} / (totalAye_{ij} + totalNay_{ij} + totalAbstain_{ij})$ , and

$percentNay_{ij} = totalNay_{ij} / (totalAye_{ij} + totalNay_{ij} + totalAbstain_{ij})$

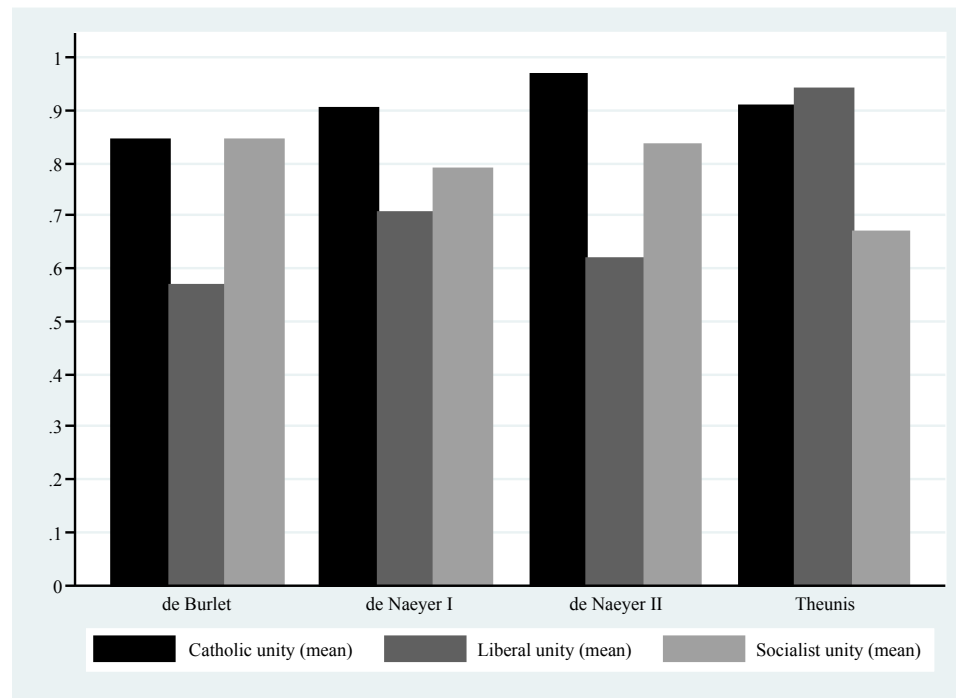
(Carey 2009).<sup>59</sup> Figure 3.5 below shows average unity scores for the Catholic, Liberal and Socialist Parties, during the transition on less than unanimous votes. Average unity within the governing Catholic Party remained over 80 percent during the transitional period, comfortably higher than that for the Liberal Party (except during the Theunis

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<sup>59</sup> This is very similar to the well known Rice scores of party cohesion. In fact the only adjustment is the inclusion of abstaining votes in the denominator in the calculation of the percent aye and percent nay. As Carey (2009, 94-5) explains, levels of nonvoting are substantial in most legislatures, and its failure to take this into account could be seen as a limitation of the Rice score. To illustrate the difference between Rice and Unity scores, in the 1921 Belgian Chamber of Representatives when the Socialist Party votes 44 against, zero vote in favor, and 1 abstain the party receives a perfect Rice score, but a unity score of .9615.

premiership when it was about the same), and well above the intra-party unity for the Socialist party.

Figure 3.5: Catholic, Liberal and Socialist intraparty unity during the transitionary period in Belgium



Note: Figure shows the average unity scores on non-unanimous votes for the Catholic, Liberal and Socialist Parties under different cabinets (ordered chronologically on the horizontal axis) during the transitionary period.

Models 4-6 in Table 3.6 below test hypothesis 3 about the effects of government commitments on opposition voting behavior. The dependent variable used modifies the opposition's unity score slightly. The dependent variable for models 4-6 is the share of the opposition voting with the government, which is equal to  $oppositionUnity_j$  if  $bipartisan_j = 1$ , and  $1 - oppositionUnity_j$  if  $bipartisan_j = 0$ , on legislative vote  $j$ . That is, the share of the opposition MPs voting with the government is equivalent to the unity of the



opposition if the government and opposition are voting together. However, if it is a partisan outcome, then the share of the opposition voting with the government would be indicated by the share of the opposition rebelling against their own party. In the OLS regression models shown in Table 3.6 below, coalition commitment is again the variable of interest, and policy area dummies and the time the bill spent in the Senate are included as control variables again as well.

Table 3.6: Effect of policy commitments on government unity and share of opposition voting with government during the Theunis cabinets of 1921-23, OLS regression

Covariate	DV: Government Unity			DV: Share of Opposition Voting w/ Gov.		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
speech commitment	.0412* (.0244)	.0433 (.0275)	.0209 (.0421)	-.2861*** (.0564)	-.2821*** (.0588)	-.2185** (.0910)
Senate time (logged)		-.0134 (.0114)	-.0187 (.0114)		-.0600** (.0243)	-.0586** (.0247)
policy area dummies			included			included
constant	.9306*** (.0165)	.9590*** (.0333)	1.015*** (.0536)	.8617*** (.0381)	1.007*** (.0714)	.8087*** (.1158)
observations	169	148	148	169	148	148
$R^2$	0.0168	0.0261	0.2652	0.1335	0.1668	0.3602

*Note:* \* $p \leq .10$ , \*\* $p \leq .05$ , \*\*\* $p \leq .01$ . Cells include beta coefficients with standard errors in parentheses. Models include all votes from Theunis cabinets (1921-23) including unanimous votes. There are fewer observations in models 2, 3, 5, and 6 because the date the Senate (or the Chamber of Representatives) passed the bill was not always included in the legislative records from the Chamber's annals.

Policy priorities have a statistically significant positive effect on government unity in model 1, consistent with hypothesis 2. Speech commitment is predicted to increase government unity by about two MPs (just over 1 percent on the unity score). When policy

area fixed-effects are controlled for in model 3, although speech commitment is still predicted to increase government unity, this fails to reach conventional levels of statistical significance. The mild support for hypothesis 2 in models 1-3 is not surprising given the norm of collective cabinet responsibility which took hold in Belgium.

Meanwhile, opposition Socialist Party MPs are found to be much more likely to vote with the government on bills not identified as a policy priority in the speech from the throne, confirming hypothesis 3. Coalition commitment is predicted to decrease the share of Socialist Party MPs voting with the government by about 9 percent, or about six fewer Socialist MPs voting with the government.

While bills *not* included in the government programme generated the support of nearly all Socialist Party MPs, legislation with a pre-established coalition agreement split the Socialist Party into three camps: for, against and abstaining. There were 92 final votes without commitment during the Theunis cabinets, and on these votes about 86 percent of the Socialist MPs voted with the government. Where commitment was lacking, about 77 final votes, this percentage drops to about 58 percent. The default position for many Socialist Party MPs appeared to be to support the government. This is perhaps a reflection of Belgium's consociational style of governing and is consistent with Proposition 2 which asserts that bills with government commitment should generate more partisan division than those lacking such commitment.<sup>60</sup>

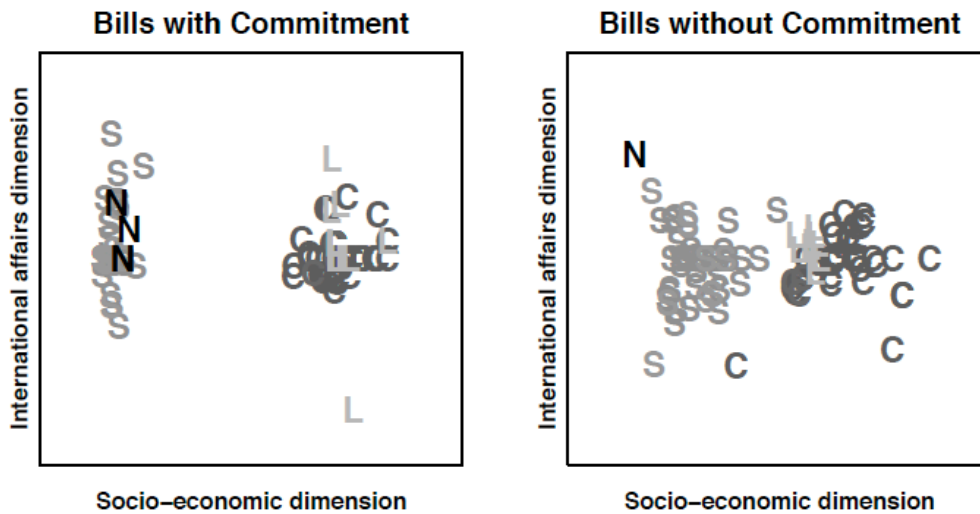
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<sup>60</sup> A potential endogeneity issue is that the prime minister emphasizes policies in his declaratory speech that he knows will be *more* contentious, though this seems unlikely. Recall that electoral incentives (as opposed to the commitment-based incentives) normally associated with coalition agreements indicate that members of a governing coalition choose to prioritize bills that are *less* contentious and thus easier to enact (Eichorst 2014).

The effect of government commitment on the cohesion of the Socialist Party can also be shown with the Optimal Classification scaling method used before. Figure 3.6 shows Optimal Classification ideal point estimates during the 1921-22 and 1922-23 sessions based on votes for government bills with and without a speech commitment.

As with the previous use of OC scaling in Figure 3.4, I identify the second dimension as 'international affairs' over which the divisions between parties were less severe. For example, although the Theunis cabinet was the first non-grand coalition to form after World War I, there was a high level of consensus on post-war issues such as securing reparations from Germany.

Figure 3.6: Optimal Classification scaling of voting in Belgian Chamber of Representatives with and without government policy commitment, 1921-23



*Note:* S=Socialist Party, L=Liberal Party, C=Catholic Party, N=Nationalist Flemish Party. Ideal points estimated with all vote data—including unanimous and budgetary legislation—from both 1921-22 and 1922-23 sessions. Ideal points are estimated using the OC software package for the R statistical program (see Poole 2005; Armstrong et al. 2014).

It is apparent in the figure that policy pledges had more of an impact on the Socialist Party than it did on the unity of the governing coalition, consistent with the statistical results provided in Table 3.6. On bills without commitment, the Socialist Party MPs appear closer to the Catholics and Liberals ideologically. Yet on issues prioritized in the cabinet's speech from the throne, Socialist Party MPs appear to become galvanized against the government's legislation on the socio-economic dimension. As we can see the level of polarization between the Socialists and the Liberals and Catholics is far greater on bills advancing a policy identified as a government priority in the speech from the throne.

### **3.4 Conclusion**

In the post-World War II era, Belgium came to be recognized as "the best example of the consociational type" of democracy (Lijphart 1980, 1), just as New Zealand prior to its mid-1990s reform was recognized as an exemplar of Westminster majoritarianism. In Belgium, it appears that, contrary to developments in New Zealand, the transition to multi-party politics did not have an immediate positive effect on consensus, and actually decreased it on budgetary legislation. I argue that this is because of the overwhelming impact of democratization in the country.

While the adoption of PR in Belgium decreased consensus in the near-term, these reforms arguably set the stage for future consensus building. Dewachter and Clijsters (1982) observe that since 1950 an elite consensus developed in Belgium which explains many of the post-war political developments in the country. The consensus consists of

broad agreement among political leaders on several dimensions, including the role of the crown, the operation of the parliamentary system, the dominance of parties, philosophical pluralism, classic liberal rights, Brussels as the center of Belgian political power, European integration, and five objectives of the welfare state—nearly full employment, economic growth, internal and external monetary stability, and a relative redistribution of income. According to Dewachter and Clijsters (1982, 216), "The government's fundamental task is to guard, to execute, and to adapt this consensus."

Another expression of the consensus which subsequently developed in Belgium is arguably found in the federalist reforms of the post-war era. In Belgium there have been six post-war federalist reforms in 1970, 1980, 1988-89, 1993, 2001-03, and 2011, with each reform increasing the autonomy of the major regions of the country—Flanders, Wallonia, Brussels and the German-speaking community in the east of the country. While the onset of political contestation, particularly over socio-economic issues such as budgetary allocations, fostered the realignment of the Liberal Party and partisan polarization, the voting records indicate that the opposition party had stronger incentives to oppose the centerpieces of the government's policy programme.

## **CHAPTER 4:**

### **INSTITUTIONS AND PARLIAMENTARY CONSENSUS IN BRITAIN, 2010-2013**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

Like New Zealand prior to its reforms in the 1990s, Britain is recognized as an exemplar of majoritarian parliamentary democracy (Lijphart 1999). The recent formation of a Conservative-Liberal Democratic Party coalition government provides a rare opportunity to test Proposition 2, concerning the effects of coalition agreement pledges on legislative vote outcomes in an otherwise majoritarian context. In this chapter, I use legislative vote data from the current coalition government to assess if Proposition 2 holds in a majoritarian Westminster context. I begin with a review of the development of Britain's current majoritarian system, discuss a few aspects of British consensus in the post-war era, and then proceed to my analysis of the current coalition government.

#### **4.2 Structural Institutions and Parliamentary Consensus in Britain**

##### **4.2.1 Institutional reform in Britain**

###### *4.2.1.1 The establishment of majoritarian institutions in the 19th century*

In the 19th century there were important institutional developments in Britain. Among them were the Reform Acts of 1832, 1867, and 1884. These acts together would restructure the electoral system into an early version of its current form, altering the electoral district boundaries, changing the districts from two-seat to single-member districts, and expanding the right to vote to all males.

There was a period of "classical parliamentary government" from 1832 to 1867, during which time the locus of statutory power was located in the parliament rather than the government (Norton 1981, 15). During that time, although cabinets were responsible for policy, parliament often replaced one government with another without suffering a dissolution and regularly overruled ministerial policy. However, the suffrage expansion of the Electoral Reform Acts fostered the transfer of legislative power from the parliament to the cabinet. Norton (1981, 18) observed that, "[After 1867] The task of the House of Commons became one of supporting the Cabinet chosen at the polls and passing its legislation...By the 1900s, the Cabinet dominated British government'."

In addition to the massive expansion of the franchise, there were a number of important legislative procedural rule reforms undertaken in the 19th century which "diminished the power of the individual Member and of minorities, while strengthening the Government, backed by its parliamentary majority" (Norton 1981, 19). These new legislative rules included: introduction of the closure and guillotine (used to end legislative debate), empowerment of the Speaker of the House to direct an MP to discontinue a speech, application of the 'rule of progress' to the Committee of Supply, and extension of the rule against dilatory motions on the same question to all proceedings.

One of the important consequences of mass enfranchisement, the rise of the mass party, and increasing concentration of legislative power in the hands of the cabinet ministers was a growth in party discipline and unity. As Cox (1987, 65) explains, "As the ministry became more important, more men wished to belong to it, and Premiers could

use the carrot of advancement and the stick of non-advancement to enforce discipline".

Thus it is perhaps not surprising that unity within the two major political parties, (then the Conservative and Liberal parties), increased significantly in the late 1860s and 1870s (Cox 1987, 25).<sup>61</sup>

#### *4.2.1.2 Majoritarian institutions in Britain today*

Developments of the 19th century—widespread suffrage, the single-member district electoral system and majoritarian legislative rules, as well as a two-party system characterized by high levels of intra-party unity—continued into the 20th and 21st centuries, as did government control over the plenary agenda.

Today, the legislative process of the House of Commons is organized into several stages (Leach, Coxall and Robins 2011, 236-9). The first reading of the bill is purely formal with no debate. The second reading of a bill involves a full debate on the principle of the bill. Next is the committee stage where the bill is examined and scrutinized in detail and outside interest groups are consulted. Amendments may be proposed by the Government, by government backbenchers, by opposition MPs, or occasionally by interest groups consulted in committee. The distribution of seats in the select committees is proportionate to that in the Commons, so that the governing majority also has a majority vote in committee. Thus, most amendments passed in committee will be those favored by the governing party/ies.

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<sup>61</sup> Butt (1969, 99) observes that, although the Labour Party was slowly replacing the Liberal Party by the interwar period, "it was not until after 1945 that Labour was finally accepted as a governing party in the fullest sense."



At the report stage the amended bill is considered by the entire House of Commons. Further amendments may be considered before proceeding to the third reading. The bill then goes through the same stages in the House of Lords, after which the Commons and the Lords consider each others' amendments before the bill is passed to the crown for Royal Assent. Government bills are very rarely defeated in this process, and the level of parliamentary scrutiny of government bills is often limited (Leach, Coxall and Robins 2011, 238-9).

Döring (1995) identifies Britain as one of only two West European democracies in which the government has full control over the plenary agenda. Kam (2009, 6) observes that Westminster parliamentary governments have "a double monopoly of power: first, the cabinet's near monopoly of executive and legislative power and second, a single party's monopoly of the cabinet itself." The opposition's opportunities to influence the legislative process are limited to the twenty "Opposition Days", when the opposition can decide which topics will be debated. There are about the same number of "Private Member Days" in Westminster in which private member bills can be introduced (Bowler 2010). Questioning the prime minister is another means by which the opposition can influence developments in the parliament. In the other 170 plenary sitting days per parliamentary year, the Government determines what will be debated and decided in the House. Aside from these limited exceptions, opposition MPs can only prolong legislative debate, or perhaps introduce "Early Day Motions" (Kellermann 2013).

Collective ministerial responsibility and intra-party discipline continue to hold the governing parties together and the country's single-member district plurality (SMDP) electoral system continues to limit the effective number of legislative parties. The disproportional electoral system deprives the Liberal Democrats of their fair share of the legislative seats, while providing the Labour and Conservative parties with more than their fair share (Bogdanor 1984). This, in turn has fostered a norm of single-party majority governments. There have only been a few post-war exceptions to this norm of single party majority government, including the Labour Party minority governments of the 1970s and the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition government.

#### **4.2.2 Trends in consensus in Britain in the post-war era**

##### *4.2.2.1 Consensus on the economic system*

Although the British parliament is recognized as a majoritarian rather than a consensual legislature, the political parties have not been without consensus on overarching themes. After World War II, there was said to be a consensus in favor of Keynesian economic policy and a mixed economy (Dutton 1991). However, following a successful vote of no confidence against the James Callaghan Labour Government in 1979, and the subsequent election of Margaret Thatcher to the prime ministerial position, some observed the onset of a neoliberal revolution (Levy, Zysman and Kagan 1997). This new paradigm generated a consensus of its own when central aspects of the liberal ideology were adopted by the

New Labour governments led by Tony Blair and Gordon Brown.<sup>62</sup> Even with consensus on some economic fundamentals, in addition to agreement on the democratic 'rules of the game' in the political sphere, partisan legislative divisions continue to be a regular fact of life in the British House of Commons.

#### *4.2.2.2 Trends in government and opposition unity since the John Major cabinet*

Britain's majoritarian institutions have ensured that a norm of government-versus-opposition would remain more common than inter-coalitional consensus. In a country such as Britain, where divisions tend to be partisan, a rebellious vote—where a backbench member of a party votes against the dictates of the party whip—might also be seen as a consensual vote, in that, although the overall vote outcome remains partisan, individual non-partisan votes make the outcome less sharply partisan.

Rates of rebellion within the major British parties—Labour, Conservative, and Liberal Democrat—have varied in the post-war era, but have tended to remain low (Norton 1981, 27). As Cowley and Stuart (2012) note, over the post-war era, "rebellion has always remained the exception, cohesion the norm." In fact, the 2010-12 session was the first in the post-war era in which a majority of divisions produced at least one government backbench rebellion. However, Cowley (2002) reports that each successive post-war period of government saw more votes with at least one rebellion than its predecessor.

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<sup>62</sup> Coates (2009) identifies three "legs of New Labour's economic project" as: (1) "a faith in the new growth theory" which limits the role of government in the economic system, (2) a determination not to return to corporatism, and thus not strengthening the labour unions vis-à-vis management, and (3) a fiscally conservative approach to the economy.

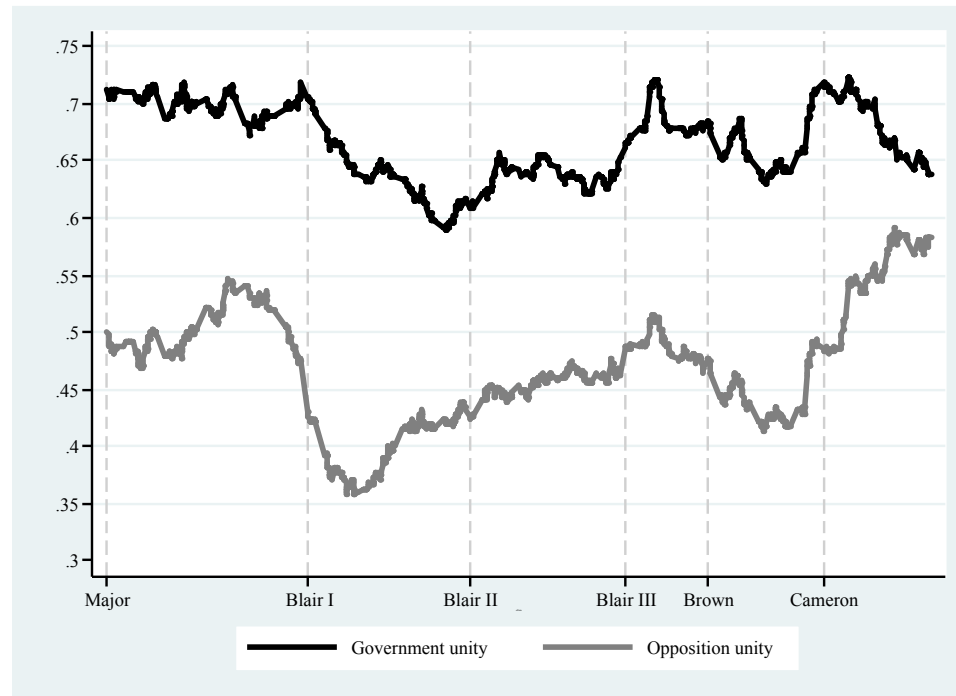
Figure 4.1 below shows levels of unity within the government and opposition camps since the John Major cabinet took office in 1991. The unity score used in Chapter 3 focusing on Belgium is used here as well. However, I include total absent rather than total abstain in the denominator to calculate the percent in favor and opposed since abstentions are unusual in the Commons. The House of Commons only allows abstentions by voting twice, once for and once against a motion (Cowley and Stuart 2014, 8-9). The trends shown in Figure 4.1 begin with the John Major premiership. Therefore, the unity score on the government side is the unity score for the Conservative Party from 1991 to 1997 and of the Labour Party during the three Blair cabinets as well as for the Gordon Brown cabinet. Finally, the government unity score treats the Liberal and Conservative parties as a single party since the Cameron-Clegg cabinet began in 2010.

The unity score for the opposition treats all non-government parties as part of an opposition 'coalition', even though this may be far from the reality in the Commons. Thus, given the large number of opposition parties, it is not surprising that opposition unity has been consistently lower than that of the government party/ies, although opposition unity has risen nearly to the level of government unity since the Gordon Brown cabinet. The figure shows that government unity has remained relatively high since 1991.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Looking at the percentage of divisions in which at least one government MP rebelled, the rates of government rebellion have climbed steadily and dramatically since the end of World War II to unprecedented levels during the 2010-12 session (Cowley and Stuart 2012). Figure 3.1 does not reflect this increase because, while the percentage of divisions to see at least one rebellion has increased, the average size of rebellions (that is, number of MPs rebelling on any one vote) across divisions may be quite different (e.g., the average rebellion included only six MPs during the 2010-12 session, despite the record setting number of divisions with at least one rebellious vote.).

Figure 4.1: Government and opposition unity since the John Major cabinet



*Note:* Time series lines indicate government and opposition unity since the John Major cabinet began in 1991. Unity scores are calculated for all types of divisions (clause votes, main readings of a bill, deferred divisions, et cetera). Data for Blair I through Cameron is from [www.publicwhip.org.uk](http://www.publicwhip.org.uk) and that for Major from [www.voteworld.berkeley.edu](http://www.voteworld.berkeley.edu).

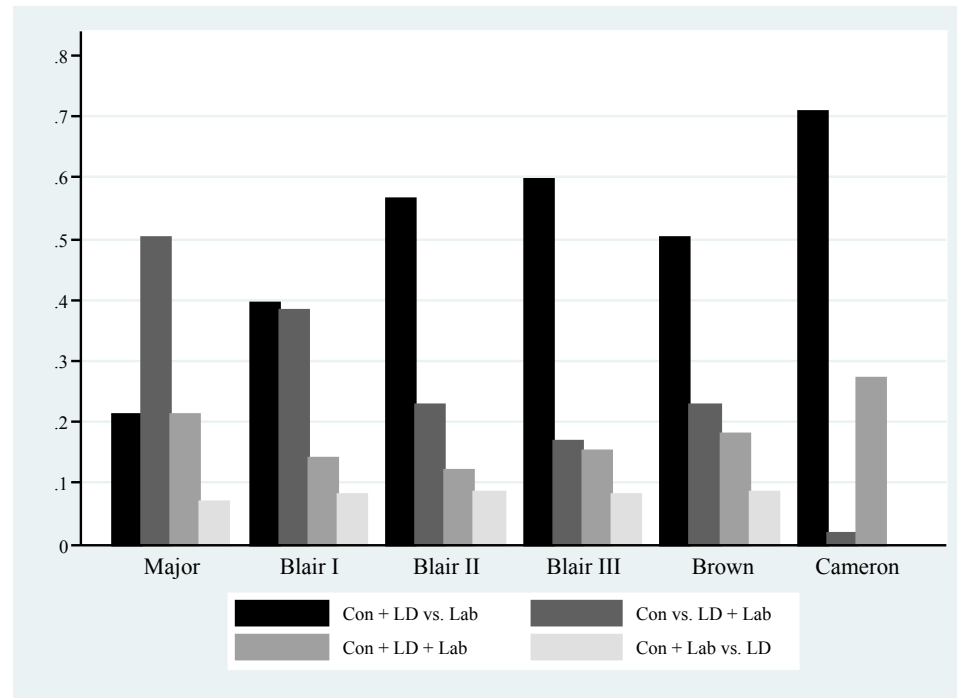
Also interesting in Figure 4.1 is that the trends in government and opposition unity seem to be in sync with each other. One possible interpretation is that, as government unity declines the government will in such cases have a greater need to reach out to opposition MPs to build a majority and the opposition will be more willing to support the government in such cases. I made a similar assertion while articulating my theory in the Introduction, albeit focusing on non-majoritarian parliaments. If lower coalition unity scores can be seen as an indication of more non-partisan vote outcomes, and if non-partisan voting can be viewed as a type of consensual voting, then the onset of

the New Labour government coincided with an increase in consensus, though opposition unity had already begun to decline before Blair became prime minister.

#### *4.2.2.3 Trends in party alliances since the John Major cabinet*

We can also examine rates of inter-party agreement, focusing in particular on the three major parties: Conservative, Labour and Liberal Democrat. A rate of inter-party agreement measures the percentage of all divisions that resulted in some particular party bloc configuration. For example, in Figure 4.2, the black bars indicate the percentage of all votes where at least half of the Conservative Party MPs voted with at least half of the Liberal Party MPs but against at least half of Labour Party MPs. In Figure 4.2, the rates of different party bloc configurations are displayed for each cabinet since the John Major government of 1991.

Figure 4.2: Interparty agreement rates since John Major



*Note:* Bars depict trends in average rates of agreement between Conservative (Con), Labour (Lab), and Liberal Democratic (LD) parties since the John Major cabinet began in 1991. Averages are calculated with all types of divisions (clause votes, main readings of a bill, deferred divisions, et cetera). Data for Blair I through Cameron is from [www.publicwhip.org.uk](http://www.publicwhip.org.uk) and that for Major from [www.voteworld.berkeley.edu](http://www.voteworld.berkeley.edu).

The rates of votes where majorities from the Conservative, Liberal and Labour Parties all agree has remained below 30 percent, though it seems to exhibit a convex trend since the Major cabinet, hitting a trough during the second Blair cabinet and then steadily climbing to a rate of nearly 30 percent of divisions during the current coalition cabinet. Situations in which the Conservative Party aligns with the Labour Party in opposition to the Liberal Democrats has been consistently low (below 10 percent during all six cabinets) and became non-existent during the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition government.

The most striking trend has been the realignment of Liberal Democrats from voting with the Labour Party against the Conservatives during the 1990s, to voting with the Conservative Party in opposition to the Labour Party by 2010.<sup>64</sup> The 20 percent increase in votes with Conservative-Liberal Democratic party agreement following the onset of coalition government is undoubtedly also due to coalition formation itself, which led the parties to compromise in forging the governing coalition agreement (GCA) along with the establishment of mechanisms for the resolution of coalition issues (Hazell and Yong 2012).

### **4.3 Coalition Agreements and Parliamentary Consensus in Britain**

#### **4.3.1 Government bills and coalition commitments during the 55th parliament**

##### *4.3.1.1 The governing coalition agreement*

Following the 2010 British general elections, no party in the House of Commons had an outright majority (see Table 4.1 below), and the Liberal Democrats were in a good position to bargain with the Conservatives as a potential coalition partner (Quinn, Bara and Bartle 2011). Rather than govern as a single party minority, Conservative Party leader David Cameron formed a minimal winning coalition with Nick Clegg of the Liberal Democratic Party.

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<sup>64</sup> This trend bears some resemblance to the realignment of the Liberal Party in Belgium during their institutional transformation (see Chapter 3). However, in this case the realignment of the Liberal Democrats is not due to the emergence of a new political party, as was the case in Belgium. Nor can we attribute this realignment to a major institutional transformation.



Table 4.1: Results of the 2010 British general election

Party	Vote share (%)	Change in vote share 2005-10	Number of Commons seats	Change in seats 2005-10
<b>Conservative</b>	<b>36.0</b>	<b>3.6</b>	<b>305<sup>†</sup></b>	<b>95</b>
Labour	29.0	-6.2	258	-90
<b>Lib Dem</b>	<b>23.0</b>	<b>1.0</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>-5</b>
UKIP	3.1	0.9	0	0
BNP	1.9	1.2	0	0
SNP	1.7	0.2	6	0
Green	1.0	0	1	1
Independents	0.8	0.4	1	0
Sinn Féin	0.6	0	5	0
DUP	0.6	-0.3	8	-1
Plaid Cymru	0.6	0	3	1
SDLP	0.4	-0.1	3	0
UCU-NF	0.3	-0.2	0	-1
Alliance	0.1	0	1	1
Speaker	0.1	0	1	0

*Note:* Table is reproduced from Yong (2012b, 27). Government parties are in bold type. The effective number of legislative parties, calculated as  $1/\sum p_i^2$  where  $p_i$  is the seat share of party  $i$ , is 2.62. All parties not included in the governing coalition are classified as opposition parties.

<sup>†</sup>This table excludes the delayed election in the constituency of Thirsk and Malton, later won by the Conservative Party raising their number of seats to 306.

The 2010 Conservative-Liberal Democrat governing coalition agreement (GCA) is organized into 31 issue areas, and within each issue area there are a number of more specific policy pledges, 398 in total. Looking at major pieces of government legislation from the first two sessions, I find that at least one important issue from most of these bills can be found in both parties' manifestos and in the GCA. In fact, many of the GCA

pledges were pulled from the parties' election manifestos sometimes verbatim.<sup>65</sup>

However, there is more variation in both the number of GCA pledges and party election manifesto commitments on specific clauses and clause amendments.

Comparing the GCA to the parties' election-year manifestos it is found that both the Conservatives and Liberal Democrats won significant policy gains in the final agreement (Quinn, Bara and Bartle 2011; Yong 2012b). The Liberal Democrats' made gains in their four manifesto priorities: fairer taxes, a pupil premium, a green economy, and political reform, while the Conservatives' priorities of deficit reduction, cracking down on immigration, national defense and Euroscepticism were all prominent in the GCA as well.

In addition to mutual agreements such as the alternative vote referendum, financial sector reform, and preparations for the 2012 Olympic Games in London, there were also a few pledges where the parties "agree-to-disagree" including on Trident nuclear weapons, new nuclear plant construction, transferable tax allowances for married couples, and university tuition fees. Clegg and Cameron also agreed to hold a free vote on the repeal of the Hunting Act.

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<sup>65</sup> For example, in the 2010 Conservative Party election manifesto, it reads, "We will introduce honesty in food labelling, if necessary through legislation, so consumers can be confident about where their food comes from", while in the GCA it reads, "We will introduce honesty in food labelling so that consumers can be confident about where their food comes from and its environmental impact."

## **4.3.2 Analysis**

### *4.3.2.1 Testing Propositions 1 and 2 in Britain*

In the introductory chapter to this dissertation, I identified two propositions. The first asserted that non-majoritarian structural institutions—specifically, proportional representation (PR) coupled with power-sharing legislative rules—should induce more consensual voting than their majoritarian counterparts. Testing the proposition within a county requires variation in these institutions. There have been some important structural institutional developments in the UK in the post-war era, such as a select committee reform in 1979 (Norton 2005, 28; Cain, Ferejohn and Fiorina 1987, 216) the late 1990s devolutionary reforms and the adoption of proportional electoral systems in the devolved regions.

In 1988 Charter 88, a pro-reform group named after the Glorious Revolution of 1688, advocated a number of fundamental constitutional reforms including an electoral system based on PR. However, a referendum on the adoption of PR for Westminster was never introduced (Leach, Coxall and Robins 2011, 182-3). An Alternative Vote referendum was advanced by the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition in 2010, but the referendum was soundly defeated with almost 68 percent opposed to the reform in

May of 2011. In fact, there has not been a fundamental change of the electoral system for the House of Commons since the Reform Acts of the 19th century.<sup>66</sup>

The current Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition government provides an opportunity to test Proposition 2, which holds that under coalition government, legislation which was pledged in the governing coalition agreement (GCA) should generate sharper partisan divides than bills lacking such commitments. GCA pledges should help to hold the government together when those bills are advanced in the Commons.<sup>67</sup> Yong (2012c) provides a number of interview excerpts which underscore this logic as it applies in the British Parliament. For example, one Liberal Democrat minister said:

"Where we've had to go along with things in the Coalition Agreement which we never really liked, we're gritting our teeth and holding our nose, and we're doing it because it's an agreement"

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<sup>66</sup> Although I cannot currently provide original research from the 19th century Reform Acts, the statistics presented by Cox (1987, 23-4) conform to the basic expectations set forth in the Introduction to this dissertation: As Britain adopted its contemporary majoritarian electoral system and legislative rules around the time of the second Reform Act in 1861, (i) intra-party unity for the Conservative and Liberal parties increased (though not as much for the Conservative Party on unwhipped votes), and (ii) interparty conflict (measured with the index of likeness) between the Conservative and Liberal parties increased.

<sup>67</sup> As Paun and Hallifax (2012, 8) observe, "Proposed policies that were not explicitly agreed in 2010 (including the NHS and Lords reform plans) have increasingly encountered opposition on the grounds that they are "not in the coalition agreement"." Also, Waller (2012, 74-5) notes that a mantra developed among the ministers that 'if it's in the Programme we are doing it; if it's not, we aren't.' And Yong (2012c, 98), describes the British GCA as, "a contract, the terms of which both parties felt obliged to adhere to; and on many issues this adherence was expected to be unquestioning, because the compromises reached were finely tuned on both sides"

Where a GCA pledge was lacking, there was an expectation that MPs would be less committed on those issues (Yong 2012c, 99). However, I expect that this GCA effect should be limited if other governmental institutions, both formal and informal, hold the parties together irrespective of the level of commitment established in GCA policy pledges.

In the 2010 Conservative-Liberal Democratic Party GCA, it states that, "The principal of collective responsibility, save where it is explicitly set aside, continues to apply to all Government Ministers." This collective responsibility rule was reinforced by the creation of a coalition committee established to provide a forum for the resolution of disputes among the coalition partners. Therefore, I do not expect GCA commitment to have a very strong effect in holding the Liberal Democratic and Conservative parties together.<sup>68</sup>

Indeed, majorities from the Liberal Democrat and Conservative parties almost always voted together during the first two sessions of coalition government. In only six divisions (on motions pertaining to government bills) from the first two sessions (2010-12, 2012-13) did a division pit a majority of Conservatives against a majority of Liberal Democrats on motions pertaining to major government legislation. Such divisions are sometimes referred to as a 'coalition split vote' (Cowley and Stuart 2013, 6). Coalition split votes from the first two sessions include:

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<sup>68</sup> An interesting anecdotal case reported by Cowley and Stuart (2013, 6) is the vote to overturn a Lords amendment to the Electoral Registration and Administration Bill, in which case the Liberal Democratic Party whips guided the party's backbenchers to vote *contrary* to the Conservative Party on an issue included in the GCA!

- Clause 183 on the air passenger duty, part of the Finance (No. 2) Act 2013
- Clause 7 concerning the rate of supplementary charge, part of the Finance (No. 3) Act 2011
- Lords's Amendment 25 on employee shareholding, part of the Growth and Infrastructure Act 2013
- Lord's Amendment 5 on the Boundary Review Commission, part of the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013
- Second reading of the Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act 2013
- Third reading of the Justice and Security Act of 2013

Only two of these six divisions—that over the air passenger duty, and the Lord's amendment on the Boundary Review Commission—was there a coalition agreement pledge which seemed to establish a relevant commitment on the issue. A close call was on July 10, 2010 on the second reading of the House of Lords Reform Bill (included in the GCA) when twenty-six Liberal Democrats and ninety-one Conservative MPs dissented, though majorities of both parties still favored the legislation.

Another motion which fostered a split within the government parties (but where majorities from both were still in agreement, in this case opposed) was Amendment 1221 on Abortion Services (not included in the GCA), from the Health and Social Care Act 2012. On that vote, which took place on September 7, 2011, the Conservative Party split three ways. All told, during the first and second sessions, 374 of 427 divisions on major government legislation were partisan (about 88 percent) with majorities from the

Conservative and Liberal Democratic parties voting together against Labour in opposition.<sup>69</sup>

#### 4.3.2.2 *Coalition agreement and intra-coalition unity: hypotheses*

Although bipartisan outcomes have been rare, rebellions have not been (Cowley and Stuart 2012). Thus, while the *leaders* of the Conservative and Liberal Democratic parties remain mostly united throughout the parliamentary term I expect that the size of government rebellions (that is, the number of MPs rebelling) on individual motions should be significantly lower on motions with a GCA pledge.<sup>70</sup>

I expect rebellions within the government coalition to be smaller on bills included in the GCA, for a couple reasons. First, party whips are likely to place more pressure on backbenchers to vote cohesively on legislation which is central to the government programme, and legislators themselves may feel more obliged to support their party on their coalition's major policy objectives. Furthermore, party leader preferences to some extent match the preferences of the rank of file of that minister's party (Bowler, Farrell and Katz 1999, 14-6), so the GCA should also reflect a genuine consensus between

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<sup>69</sup> Since the number of bipartisan outcomes is so low, I use a rare events logistic regression model (Tomz, King and Zeng 1999; King and Zeng 1999a; 1999b) to assess the affect of GCA on bipartisan outcomes controlling for whether there was prior agreement between the Liberal Democrats and Conservative Parties according to their election manifestos. Correcting for the rare events bias, the effect of GCA commitment on the predicted probability of a bipartisan outcome is in the expected (negative) direction and nearly surpasses the conventional threshold for statistical significance ( $\beta = -.7058$ , s.e. = .4347,  $z = -1.624$  and  $p = .1052$ ).

<sup>70</sup> Coalition unity becomes more difficult to maintain as the next election approaches, as the parties become increasingly tempted to emphasize their distinctive attributes to appeal to voters in the general election (Kettle 2014; Paun and Hallifax 2012). More generally, party leaders may become increasingly tempted to take credit for coalition successes and to place blame on coalition partners for unpopular aspects of the government's performance. However, these tendencies should be minimal during the first two parliamentary sessions focused on here, because the 2015 election had not drawn near yet.

backbenchers and party leaders, increasing intra-party cohesion. If the bill was not part of the party's manifesto, then it may be *less* likely that such backbench support will be forthcoming. However, on average I expect the aforementioned inducements to cohesive party voting to outweigh those tempting legislators to act rebelliously.

**Hypothesis 1:** Governing party unity should be higher on legislative motions agreed to in the GCA.

In addition, the presence or absence of GCA pledges should have an impact on strategic opposition, as the opposition Labour Party along with the minor opposition parties are likely to have stronger incentives to oppose the government on the central pieces of the government's legislative agenda, namely those identified in the GCA as coalition priorities (Christiansen and Pedersen 2012).

**Hypothesis 2:** The share of opposition MPs voting with the government should be smaller on motions pledged in the coalition agreement.

#### *4.3.2.3 Conceptualizing the link between coalition pledges and legislative motions*

To assess the impact of GCA pledges on vote outcomes, I use House of Commons vote data from the first (2010-12) and second session (2012-13) of the 55th parliament. This



data is acquired from [www.publicwhip.org.uk](http://www.publicwhip.org.uk).<sup>71</sup> I focus in particular on divisions over motions pertaining to major government bills.<sup>72</sup> There are a total of forty-two government bills included in the data, each composed of policies advanced via a varying number of more specific motions, amounting to a total of 427 observations (i.e., divisions) in the data set.

The variable of interest is whether or not a legislative motion is pledged in the GCA. To assess whether a particular motion was pledged in the GCA, I first identify the main issue area pertaining to a legislative motion by reading into the legislative debates from the Commons Hansard. One can identify the gist of a particular legislative motion, sometimes as easily as looking at the headline of the debate in the Hansard. Usually however, identifying the core issue(s) requires reading part of the debate. Usually, the MP advancing the motion provides a clear summary statement clarifying the topic at hand, before launching into his/her case for the proposal.

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<sup>71</sup> The raw data requires clean-up in the title of the bill being voted on. I did this clean-up by finding the divisions in the Hansards and then identifying the debate headline in the Hansards indicating the bill and procedure corresponding to the division.

<sup>72</sup> These motions include procedural motions on the plenary agenda (schedules and programme motions), clauses, new clauses, and clause amendments (the later by far the most numerous of the types of division), motions on Lords amendments, as well as divisions over the second and third readings of a bill). 'Major government bills' would not include private member bills or miscellaneous motions such as 'motions to sit in private', opposition day motions, and other types of motions not dealing with government bills.

Once the gist of the issue is identified, key word searches are applied to the GCA to see if the government made a commitment to the issue.<sup>73</sup> It is challenging to determine in an 'objective' way whether or not a pledge has been fulfilled (Laver and Schofield 1990, 192-3). Many times, specific policy proposals seem to have, at best, only a distal connection to a more abstract GCA pledge. For example, although the Parliamentary Voting System Bill had a clear link to a GCA pledge to advance a referendum on the Alternative Vote electoral system, can a clause within the bill dealing with electoral district demarcations in Wales also be seen as connected to that same pledge?

Amendments and clauses provide the "guts" of the bill. Such amendments may get quite technical and detailed and may be too distal from an overarching policy pledge to be binding upon the government MPs. There is some breaking point beyond which the distance between the policy topic of a specific legislative motion and that of the most clearly relevant pledge on a larger bill subsuming that motion renders that GCA pledge non-binding. An illustrative example of the existence of this breaking point is found in a comment of a Liberal Democrat peer discussing the idea of abiding by the dictates of the party whips,

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<sup>73</sup> Occasionally, it is stated explicitly in the legislative debate, or in the summary of the bill at [www.parliament.uk](http://www.parliament.uk) that a bill fulfills a particular GCA pledge. However, far more often, one is left to assess subjectively whether the GCA did in fact establish a commitment on the issue. The "coalition pledge tracker" data found at The Guardian provides the source of information which confirms pledge fulfillments, but very few of these sources are actual legislation. The Pledge Tracker URL is: <http://www.theguardian.com/politics/interactive/2010/aug/12/coalition-pledge-tracker>. Last accessed July 12, 2014.

"[W]hy should they [abide by the dictates of the party whips] if its not in the Coalition Agreement...One prime little example of that was the Europe bill, where there was reference in the Coalition Agreement *but not very precise reference* to what the bill actually said. And so, several of us simply worked on the basis that we would not be whipped on that..." (quoted in Hazell 2012b, 166; emphasis added).

My coding criteria were fairly conservative in that I required a close link between the motion and the GCA pledge. For example, I usually coded programme motions, which lay out a plenary time table for advancing the legislation in the House, as "not included" in the GCA, even though the bill which that plenary motion pertains to may itself clearly be part of the GCA. Usually, technical policy details, though part of a bill which is clearly pledged in the GCA, are coded as "not included" in the GCA. There must be a fairly clear link between a specific policy issue and a GCA pledge to be coded as committed to in the GCA.

Two important criteria in making such judgment calls should be highlighted: opposition or backbencher *challenges* to government pledges, and *contradictions* of government pledges by the government themselves. Where an opposition MP or government backbencher advances a legislative motion clearly challenging a pledged government policy, such motions are coded as included in the GCA, for even though this motion is not fulfilling a government pledge, the issue being challenged is still a policy priority of the government and so should still galvanize government MPs *in opposition* to

the challenge. Also, when the government's own motions appear to contradict their own pledge, such motions are coded as "not included" in the GCA. For example, the British GCA included a pledge to "restore rights to non-violent protest", which seems contrary to the clause to the Police Reform Act of 2011 expanding police powers to crack down on protests in Parliamentary Square. Therefore, this clause was coded as not included in the GCA.<sup>74</sup>

#### *4.3.2.4 Model specification and estimation*

Table 4.2 below provides the results of several OLS regressions. In models 1-3, the dependent variable is the measure of government unity as described for use in Figure 4.1. The unity score can be interpreted as a measure of consensus in that MP rebellions on otherwise partisan vote outcomes increase non-partisanship incrementally, leading to a more consensual or at least a less sharply partisan outcome. The GCA commitment indicator is the variable of interest. I also include several control variables, including whether the initiator of the motion was from the government or opposition camp, and dummy variables for the type of legislative procedure.<sup>75</sup> I also use robust standard errors, clustered by bill, for all models.

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<sup>74</sup> This point also reveals a potential problem with merely searching for key words which match a GCA pledge in order to determine if a pledge was fulfilled or not. Without a qualitative reading of the debate, researchers cannot tell if that pledge is being fulfilled or being contradicted (in both cases the key words come up on the search results, and so without a thicker understanding of the motion could be coded incorrectly as a fulfilled pledge). Though contradictions were few in number, in some studies such incorrect coding of pledge fulfillment could affect causal inference.

<sup>75</sup> It is worth including the procedure factor variable because, as Stecker (2014, 1) notes, "there are good reasons for expecting that institutional effects on party unity do not work equally across different types of motions". The modal types of procedures in the current British House of Commons include procedural motions on the plenary agenda (schedules and programme motions), clauses, new clauses, and clause amendments, motions on Lords Amendments, as well as divisions from the second or third reading of a bill (divisions are very rarely held on the first reading).

One potential problem with drawing inference from the estimates is endogeneity. That is, it may be that Conservative-Liberal Democrat consensus caused inclusion of the policy in the GCA rather than vice versa. Indeed, some scholars have emphasized the electoral incentives associated with GCA usage, contending that parties include policies to which they already agree so as to easily demonstrate a capacity to govern effectively by implementing these policies (Eichorst 2014). To deal with this potential endogeneity issue, I include a dummy variable indicating whether the issue is included in both the Conservative and the Liberal Democratic Party 2010 election manifestos.

Holding constant the *manifestos* variable just described should help to deal with this endogeneity issue. I also include an interaction between GCA pledge and the manifestos variable, so as to capture any conditional effects that manifestos have on the effect of GCA pledges on government unity. The expectation is that if a bill is pledged in both parties' manifestos (that is,  $manifestos_j = 1$  on motion  $j$ ), this should enhance the effect of the GCA pledge on government unity.

Table 4.2 shows estimates with government unity as the outcome variable (hypothesis 1), while Table 4.3 shows estimates with the percentage of opposition MPs voting with the government as the outcome variable (hypothesis 2). The aforementioned endogeneity issue should not apply when considering opposition vote behavior, as opposition agreement would presumably not cause inclusion of a pledge in the GCA. Therefore, I don't include the manifestos variable in those models.

Table 4.2: Government unity and coalition agreement in the British House of Commons, OLS regression

Covariate	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
GCA pledge	.0136 (.0091)	.0124 (.0101)	.0134 (.0107)	.0186 (.0141)
manifestos	-.0112 (.0144)	-.0307 (.0551)	-.0272 (.0536)	-.0256 (.0558)
GCA x manifestos		.0213 (.0606)	.0182 (.0590)	.0186 (.0607)
Government MP initiator			-.0113 (.0111)	-.0121 (.0193)
procedure dummies				included
constant	.8099*** (.0103)	.8102*** (.0104)	.8152*** (.0089)	.8179*** (.0175)
observations	427	427	427	427
$R^2$	0.005	0.0056	0.0106	0.028

Note: \*\*\*  $p \leq .001$ . Cells contain slope coefficients with robust standard errors clustered by bill in parentheses.

Table 4.3: Share of opposition MPs voting with government as a function of coalition agreement pledge in the British House of Commons, OLS regression

Covariate	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
GCA pledge	-.0067 (.0142)	-.0115 (.0149)	-.0424* (.0235)
Government MP initiator		.0512*** (.0200)	.0366 (.0261)
procedure dummies			included
constant	.2776*** (.0130)	.2547*** (.0100)	.2761*** (.0190)
observations	427	427	427
$R^2$	0.0004	0.0234	0.1369

Note: \*\*\* $p \leq .001$ , \* $p \leq .10$ . Cells contain slope coefficients with robust standard errors clustered by bill in parentheses.

Table 4.2 indicates that while GCA pledges do have a positive relation to government unity, this is not a very powerful effect in the British House of Commons. The regression estimates suggest that GCA commitment does have a positive effect on government unity, though this effect does not appear very strong. In all models the beta coefficient is positively signed as expected, and in model 1 the slope coefficient for commitment is in 'the ballpark' of statistical significance. Interpreting substantively, a GCA pledge is predicted to reduce the size of a government revolt by about one MP. Somewhat counterintuitively, the manifestos variable appears to have a negative effect on government unity, though this effect is far from statistically significant. The interaction variable between GCA and manifestos is not significant either.

Table 4.3 meanwhile provides some support for hypothesis 2, that opposition MPs will be more likely to vote with the government on bills not included in the GCA. This effect is significant at the .10 level in model 3. On government bills with a coalition commitment, the percent of opposition MPs voting with the government is predicted to decline by about 4 percent, about 11 opposition MPs.

Where the government has established a shared commitment to enact a particular policy, those government party leaders will have little need to craft the legislation so as to appeal to opposition MPs. In this sense, GCA pledges can be seen as reinforcing the government's ability to vote as a unified majority in favor of its preferred policy, over the opposition minority (that is, its positive agenda power). In such situations, the opposition

may benefit from strategically opposing the government and in so doing force the government to rely entirely on its own MPs for voting support, resulting in a policy outcome closer to the median opposition MP preference, similar to the model of strategic opposition posited by Dewan and Spirling (2011). However, the empirical analysis (at least, focusing on the Commons legislative vote data) suggests that the the GCA pledges have a limited impact on coalition unity in Britain.

#### *4.3.2.5 Exact matching*

Matching entails pre-processing data by "matching" observations (in this case legislative motions), by some set of covariates, creating subclasses of matched observations with varying assignment to treatment or control (in this case, the presence or absence of a GCA pledge). Thus, matching creates groups for comparison which are statistically more comparable (Ho et al. 2007).

In Table 4.4 below, I show average treatment effect of GCA on government unity for subclasses of matched legislative motions advanced by Conservative Party MPs. The average treatment effects are positive for four out of the five subclasses of legislative motions, with an estimated treatment effect of .0443 on the government unity score (about seven less MP rebellions).



Table 4.4: Average treatment effect of coalition agreement pledge on government unity where legislative motion is introduced by Conservative MP

Bill	Date of divisions	Procedure	Ave. Gov. Unity (GCA=1)	Ave. Gov. Unity (GCA=0)	Ave. Treatment Effect
Parliamentary Voting System	Oct 25, 2010	New Clause	.8832 (n=2)	.7445 (n=1)	0.1387
Parliamentary Voting System	Feb 15, 2011	Lords Amendment	.8626 (n=2)	.8228 (n=2)	0.0398
Legal Aid, Sentencing	Nov 1, 2011	New Clause	.8269 (n=1)	.8104 (n=1)	0.0165
Welfare Reform	Feb 1, 2012	Lords Amendment	.8922 (n=4)	.8608 (n=3)	0.0314
Growth and Infrastructure	Apr 16, 2013	Lords Amendment	.7143 (n=1)	.7582 (n=1)	-0.0439
Combined	—	—	.8602 (n=10)	.8177 (n=8)	0.0443

*Note:* Average treatment effects are calculated as the difference between the average government unity score for treated observations (GCA=1) and the average government unity score for controlled observations (GCA=0). Motions are matched exactly based on the bill, date of the division, and procedure.

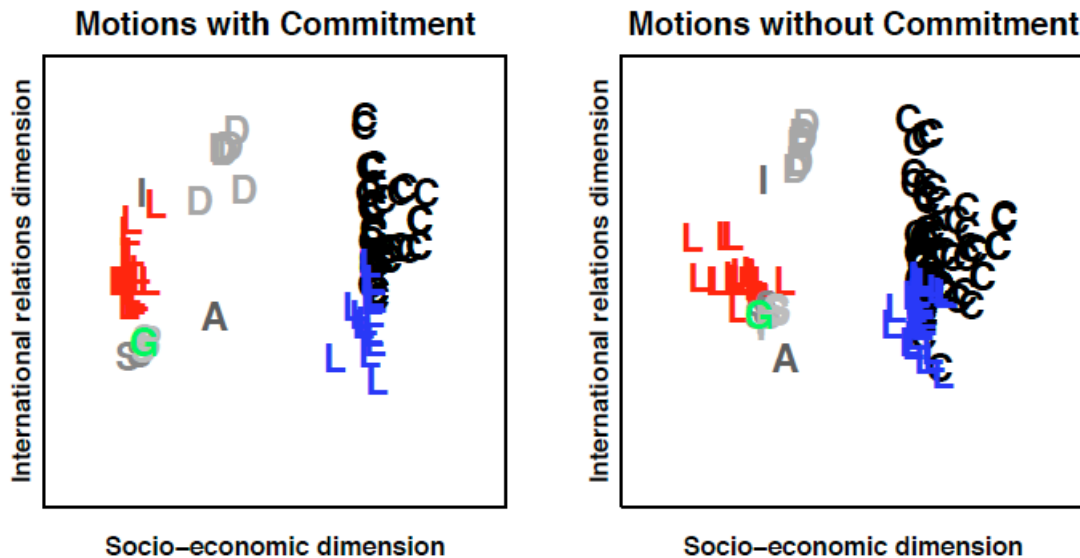
I match divisions "exactly" based on date of the vote, the bill which the motion pertains to, the legislative procedure, and the party of the MP who initiated the motion. The number of observations remaining after exact matching is relatively small (n=51). Therefore, it is not surprising that when I conduct the regression analysis with all the preprocessed data, controlling for the subclass (that is the groups of exactly matched legislative motions), I again find a positively signed but statistically insignificant result ( $\beta=.008$ , s.e.=.0079,  $p=.312$ ).

#### 4.3.2.6 Optimal Classification scaling

Next, I use the vote data to assess the impact that GCAs have on party cohesion in Britain using Optimal Classification scaling. Figure 4.3 below depicts the ideal point estimations

for the British House of Commons during the first two sessions of the 55th parliament. The two major 'latent dimensions' depicted in the Optimal Classification ideal point estimates in Figure 4.3 appear to be socio-economic (common in all national parliaments), as well as an international relations dimension, including, for instance the very divisive European Union issue.

Figure 4.3: Optimal Classification scaling of British House of Commons with and without government policy commitment, 2010-13



*Note:* C = Conservative; L (blue) = Liberal Democrat; L (red) = Labour; D= DUP; A = Alliance; I = Independent; S (darker) = SDLP; S (lighter) = SNP. Scaling uses votes from all types of procedures. Polarity is estimated using William Cash (very conservative on the EU/international relations dimension), and Nick Clegg (very conservative on the socio-economic dimension). Ideal points are estimated using the OC software package for the R statistical program (see Poole 2005; Armstrong et al. 2014).

Consistent with the statistical findings, the presence of a GCA commitment has some impact on voting behavior, though this does not appear very large. Overall, the OC ideal point estimates reveal a polarized Commons. It does appear however that the cluster

of government MPs breaks up a modest amount in the absence of GCA commitment. Similarly, it appears that the Labour Party MPs, as well as Green Party MP Caroline Lucas along with the Scottish National Party MPs move closer to the Governing coalition centroid on the socio-economic dimension in the absence of GCA policy commitments.

In sum, focusing solely on legislative vote data from the 2010-13 Commons sessions, GCA is found to have a limited effect on division behavior. However, it could be that divisions data from the Commons does not adequately capture the full effect of coalition agreements on the legislative process in the Commons. I therefore conclude the empirical portion of this chapter by conducting brief case studies, which will allow me to "put some flesh around the statistical barebones" (Steiner 2004, 139). In particular, I examine four very important pieces of legislation developed during the first session of the 55th parliament: The Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Bill, The Fixed-Terms Parliaments Bill, The European Union Bill as well as The Health and Social Care Bill (NHS reform).

### **4.3.3 Bill case studies**

#### *4.3.3.1 Alternative Vote referendum and reducing the size of the House of Commons*

Early in the first session of the parliamentary term, the Liberal Democratic and Conservative Party cabinet began work on fulfilling their pledges. Among the first issues to be dealt with was electoral system reform and the size of the Commons. In their 2010 election manifesto, the Conservative Party pledged to sustain the single-member district

plurality (SMDP) system, while the Liberal Democrats pledged to advance a more proportional single transferable vote system. On the reduction of MPs in the Commons, the Conservative Party pledged to reduce the number of MPs by 65 seats, while the Liberal Democrats pledged to reduce the number by 150.

As a result of the post-election bargaining Clegg and Cameron pledged to "bring forward a Referendum Bill on electoral system reform...as well as for the creation of fewer and more equal sized constituencies." These policies were both advanced in the Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Bill (PVSC), according to Hazell (2012b, 159), to ensure that the Conservatives would vote to put forward the AV reform and the Liberal Democrats would support the more modest reduction in the size of the Commons to 600 MPs.

This did not prevent David Cameron from encouraging voters to reject AV during the campaign in 2011. Hazell (2012b, 160-1) described the progress of the bill as "very tightly whipped" and one senior Cabinet Office official interviewed by Hazell is quoted observing, "The passage of the PVSC was *a major piece of glue*. Both sides knew they could fight alongside each other under serious enemy fire and win, and win on something where neither side wanted the other bit of that bill" (Hazell 2012b, 161; emphasis added). Thus the PVSC bill suggests that GCAs can hold parties together where they would otherwise be opposed.

There were forty-seven divisions recorded on the PVSC bill, more than any other bill during the first and second sessions. The average government unity score over these

divisions was about .87, higher than the overall average government unity score of about .81, consistent with Proposition 2 given the GCA commitments on the bill. The average government unity scores on PVSC divisions with and without GCA commitment are about the same. However, the *range* of unity scores is wider on motions lacking a GCA pledge (74 to 94 percent), as compared to the government unity score on motions with GCA commitment (82 to 93 percent), suggesting that GCA pledges fostered more stability in the level of government unity.

#### *4.3.3.2 Fixed-term parliaments*

Another constitutional reform advanced by the Government was to establish a five-year parliamentary term limit. This was included in the Liberal Democratic Party election manifesto, which pledged to "Introduce fixed-term parliaments to ensure that the Prime Minister of the day cannot change the date of an election to suit themselves". Meanwhile, the Conservative Party manifesto made no pledge on the issue. The GCA included a pledge to establish a five year fixed-term parliament. Therefore, this would appear to be a bargaining 'win' for the Liberal Democratic Party.

Although the content of the bill was established consensually within the cabinet, the Bill encountered government MP opposition at the committee stage. There, Conservative Party MP William Cash tabled a series of amendments, and forced divisions on three of them: (i) removing the provision for a two-thirds majority to dissolve parliament, (ii) removing the 14-day cooling off period after a successful vote of no confidence, and (iii) requiring each new Parliament to choose whether to apply the terms

of the bill. Six Conservative MPs voted against the Government on each Amendment (Hazell 2012b, 163). The Bill also encountered opposition in the House of Lords, where an amendment requiring that each new parliament re-approve the fixed-term rule was passed by Labour peers with the help of six dissident Conservatives. The amendment was subsequently removed in the Commons, with nine Conservatives rebelling.

There were eighteen recorded divisions on the Fixed-term Parliaments bill in the Commons. The number of Conservative dissenting votes on government motions ranged from two (on a clause regarding early elections) to eleven (the second reading of the bill). At the third reading, six Conservatives voted nay. Meanwhile, no Liberal Democratic Party MP dissent was recorded on any of the government motions. These Conservative rebellious votes, coupled with perfect Liberal Democrat unity is consistent with the fact that the former did not make a pledge on the issue in their party manifesto while the latter did. Without the coalition agreement, however, the level of Conservative MP rebellion would likely have been even higher.

On the eighteen Commons divisions recorded to the bill, the average level of government unity was about 81 percent, the same as the average government unity score over all votes from the first and second sessions. The level of government unity was about 80 percent on motions lacking a pledge, and about 84 percent on motions which were included in the GCA, consistent with Proposition 2.

#### *4.3.3.3 The European Union Bill*

The Conservative Party's 2010 election manifesto pledged to "amend the 1972 European Communities Act so that any proposed future Treaty that transferred areas of power, or competences, would be subject to a referendum." The Conservative manifesto also pledged to "introduce a United Kingdom Sovereignty Bill to make it clear that ultimate authority stays in the country, in our Parliament".

The Liberal Democratic Party manifesto also indicated a commitment to "an in/out referendum the next time a British government signs up for fundamental change in the relationship between the UK and the EU", though generally the Liberal Democrats have been less 'eurosceptical' than the Conservatives. For instance, in a Liberal Democratic Party policy consultation document focusing on Europe, the party declares that they "have a proud track record as the most consistently pro-European party in British politics".<sup>76</sup> Seemingly, to appeal to both the pro-EU Liberal Democratic feelings as well as the Conservative eurosceptical position, the GCA stated, "The Government believes that Britain should play a leading role in an enlarged EU, but that no further powers should be transferred to Brussels without a referendum."

The successful bargaining over the European Union issue did not prevent coalition MP dissent however. Indeed, the 'middle ground' position established in the GCA would be followed by both Conservative and Liberal Democratic Party MP dissent. During the Commons debates eurosceptic Conservative MPs tried "to strengthen the

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<sup>76</sup> This document can be found at: <[http://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/libdems/pages/2015/attachments/original/1390842863/112\\_-\\_Europe.pdf?1390842863](http://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/libdems/pages/2015/attachments/original/1390842863/112_-_Europe.pdf?1390842863)>. Last accessed July 17, 2014.

sovereignty clause and tighten the referendum lock" (Hazell 2012b, 166). One example of this is found in amendment 41 to clause 18 advanced by Conservative backbencher William Cash on January 11, 2011. In the division on Cash's clause amendment, 93 percent of opposition MPs were absent and about 92 percent of Government MPs voted against Cash's measure. Twenty-seven government MPs supported Cash's clause amendment yielding a government unity score of 77 percent, below the average unity score of 81 percent.

In the House of Lords, the Government was defeated on four amendments, and in the case of two of these the Liberal Democratic rebels were decisive. The biggest rebellion of nineteen Liberal Democratic Party peers was over a sunset clause which would have limited the referendum lock to the current Parliament. One factor increasing such rebellions was the absence of a precise GCA pledge. In a conversation with Yong (2012c, 99), a Liberal Democratic Party peer underscored the importance of the GCA on the issue of Europe,

"[If] you look at the Coalition Agreement it does make some references to referenda on treaty change, which we should have accepted, reluctantly... We agreed to add [it] ...to the sacred list of things where there had to be a referendum. But we saw absolutely no reason whatsoever why that should then be extended to 56 other issues...that's why we felt perfectly free to be against it".



While whipping in the Commons was described as "very tight" on the European Union Bill (Hazell 2012b, 166) party whipping was lighter in the House of Lords making the Liberal Democrat rebellion more likely in the absence of GCA. However, these four government defeats were subsequently overturned in the Commons. All told, the GCA did seem to help hold the coalition MPs together in the Commons on the EU bill, as the average government unity score was higher on motions with a corresponding pledge in the GCA (about 85 percent), than on those without a GCA pledge (82 percent).

#### *4.3.3.4 NHS Reform*

The final issue I examine in this part of the study is the National Health Service (NHS), a topic which received more pledges than any other in the GCA (thirty pledges in all). It included a commitment of both parties to an NHS that was free at the point of use and available to everyone based on need. Two-thirds of the NHS section could be crudely identified as coming from the Conservative Party and the other third from the Liberal Democratic Party (Waller and Yong 2012). Based on this fact alone, I would expect there to be more Liberal Democratic Party rebellions, especially in the absence of a GCA pledge.

Another issue was over the contentions between the governing parties over the proper reforms for the NHS. While both parties emphasized 'decentralization' (Waller and Yong 2012, 178), the Conservatives sought to pursue this end with greater involvement of the private sector. Decentralization for the Liberal Democrats meanwhile was to be driven by greater localization and democratic accountability. These differences would

become relevant as the parties introduced the Health and Social Care Bill in January 2011.

During the second reading of the bill, it passed with a comfortable majority, with no coalition MPs dissenting, though Liberal Democratic Party MP Andrew George from the Commons Health Select Committee abstained. Opposition to the bill grew during the committee stage between February 8 and March 31 of 2011. The Health Committee had a Government majority of 11 Conservatives and 3 Liberal Democrats. The committee stage for The Health and Social Care Bill would be the longest committee stage for a bill since 2002, with 28 sittings and over 100 divisions (Waller and Yong 2012, 179).

At the Liberal Democratic Party conference in March 2011 party members voted in support of an amendment to make it clear that they opposed measures to make the NHS increasingly market-based, and called upon Liberal Democratic politicians to work to amend the Bill in Parliament. Waller and Yong (2012, 183-4) observe that plans to increase the role of markets in the NHS, "did not feature in the initial Coalition Agreement...So, it was understandable that Liberal Democrats who disagreed with the reforms could say that they had not been properly consulted." In the end, only three Conservative and three Liberal Democrat MPs voted for Labour MP Emily Thornberry's clause amendment 1165 dealing with the issue of private health care. This serves to underscore the point that divisions do not always adequately capture the full extent of intra-government dissent over legislation.

Overall, the average government unity score on motions pertaining to the Health Bill with GCA commitment was 86 percent, while that on motions without GCA commitment was 78 percent, a large disparity consistent with Proposition 2. This is largely driven by the intra-government split over a clause amendment advanced by Conservative Party backbencher Nadine Dorries concerning abortion services, an issue not included in either of the parties' manifestos nor in the GCA. Excluding the division on Dorries' Amendment, the government unity score is still higher on motions included in the GCA (over 86 percent) than that on divisions without GCA commitment (about 85 percent).

#### **4.4 Conclusion**

The Parliamentary Voting and Constituencies Service Bill, The Fixed-Term Parliaments Bill, The European Union Bill, and The Health and Social Care Bill—provide qualitative information about the importance of GCAs on coalition cohesion in the advancement of legislation. In each of these four cases, not only do the Commons divisions data suggest that motions with a GCA tended to have a higher level of voting cohesion, these bill case studies also demonstrate that there are other forums outside of the Commons where intra-governmental dissent can be expressed—party conferences, select committee, as well as in the House of Lords. Despite the 'weak' results of the quantitative estimates, when viewed in combination with the qualitative assessments provided, including statements from the MPs and peers themselves about the bindings

effects of GCA pledges, one is left feeling more convinced as to the importance of GCAs, even in majoritarian Westminster settings.

## CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

### 5.1 Summary of the Analysis

A summary of the main empirical results is provided in Table 5.1 below.

Developments in New Zealand indicate that PR has a positive causal effect on parliamentary consensus. Also relevant to Proposition 1, I find that bills assigned to a select committees chaired by an opposition MP are significantly more likely to be passed consensually in the final vote, underscoring the importance of New Zealand's power-sharing legislative rules, whose implementation coincided with the transition to MMP.

However, evidence from New Zealand on the effect of coalition policy commitments is mixed. Policy commitments made by governing parties appear to have little effect on actual vote outcomes. When it comes to using the government programme as a guide for subsequent legislative activity, policy pledges do not appear to be as important in New Zealand as they have been during coalition government in Britain, at least based on the legislative vote data utilized in this study. Many of the policy pledges made were never implemented, at least not with principal government legislation. New Zealand thus provides some evidence in support of the argument that coalition agreement pledges do not really serve as a policy guide when a parliamentary term is in full swing.

Where legislation did appear to fulfill a pledge, such commitments are not found to have had a significant effect on consensus in Britain or New Zealand. However, confidence and supply agreements forged between governing and legislative support parties in New Zealand are found to increase consensus between those parties, consistent

with the premise of Proposition 2 that policy commitments will tend to bind those parties to a commitment together when voting on the corresponding legislation. Also, the presence of confidence and supply agreements are found to increase the probability of a bipartisan vote outcome in New Zealand.

Table 5.1: Summary of empirical analysis

Country	Proposition 1: Effect of PR on consensus	Proposition 2: Effect of gov. commitment on consensus
	Expected effect: Positive	Expected effect: Negative
New Zealand	Strongly positive	Mixed <sup>a</sup>
Belgium	Negative	Strongly negative
Britain	—	Weakly negative
Support for theory	Mixed	Fairly strong

<sup>a</sup> Although government policy commitments are not found to have any effect on voting, confidence and supply agreements are found to increase unity between those parties to the agreements.

In contrast to developments in New Zealand, Belgium's pre-World War II transition to PR coincided with a decline in consensus on budgetary legislation, and a null effect on consensus over all issue areas. While Proposition 1 is therefore not supported by early developments in Belgium, this case does draw our attention to the importance of democratization.

After World War I, we find that the policy programme of the Theunis government, and the legislative commitments established therein, had a significant impact on the behavior of the opposition Socialist Party. Indeed, the strongest evidence for Proposition

2 is found in Belgium, where bills dealing with issues not identified as a government priority in the speech to parliament were significantly more likely to produce a bipartisan vote outcome.

House of Commons vote data from the first two sessions of coalition government in Britain provide limited support for the assertion that GCA commitments reduce government rebellions or that opposition MPs will be more supportive of government bills in the absence of such commitments. However, the qualitative assessment of individual bills reveals that dissent within the coalition often manifests in arenas away from the floor of the Commons, such as in the House of Lords (Fixed-term Parliaments Bill, and European Union Bill), in the select committee or at party conferences (Health and Social Care Bill). The qualitative examination of bills also revealed that both party manifesto and GCA commitment have important effects on such expressions of dissent, as is indicated by statements from members of the British parliament reported in the studies of Hazell and Yong (2012).

## **5.2 Refinements to the Model**

The model presented in the Introduction provides a fairly parsimonious theory of legislative consensus in national parliaments. Thus it is not surprising that application of the theoretical propositions to the three country cases draws our attention to at least three additional variables which ought to be taken into account: (i) the type of government (minority, minimal winning, or oversized), (ii) level of democratization, and (iii) the varieties of democracy.

### **5.2.1 The type of government**

In Belgium, the Catholic Party government had a large majority of the seats in the Chamber of Representatives in the 1890s and early 1900s. Indeed, there was not much room for an increase in the size of the voting majorities during this time, particularly so given the high number of unanimous vote outcomes on government bills. After the post-World War I reforms the Catholic Party had lost its majority status and had formed a minimal winning coalition with the Liberal Party, who together had a comfortable share of about 61 percent of the seats in the Chamber of Representatives. Given their majority status, as well as the high level of government unity, the Catholic-led Belgian governments did not, strictly speaking, need to appeal to the opposition in order to pass their legislation in the lower chamber.

Similarly, the current Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition in Britain has had a comfortable majority of the seats in the House of Commons and so, barring splits within the coalition or large backbench revolts, will not need to appeal to the Labour Party or any of the other minor opposition parties to pass legislation. Some studies have found that as the seat share of a government increases, there will be an increased likelihood of intra-government dissent (Patty 2008; Stecker 2014). However, the comfortable majority size of the current British coalition government has not led to many defeats of government bills (Cowley and Stuart 2014).

By contrast, in New Zealand, with the important exception of the National-New Zealand First minimal winning coalition, all governments have been minorities. Under



minority government, in the absence of intra-government unity and/or pre-established support from legislative parties, the government will need to acquire support for bills from non-government parties. Thus, for a minority government coalition unity is not enough to win a vote. Confidence and supply and other types of support agreements are crucial in that they bind the government together with a pivotal support party in the legislature. Such support agreements are not needed under majority government, particularly when those governments possess a large majority of the seats and enjoy high levels of party unity.

Thus, the effect of governing coalition agreements (GCAs) on *governing* parties, as presented in the model, would apply most readily to minimal winning coalitions where the absence of a GCA commitment makes it possible that the coalition will not have sufficient support to pass legislation. In the case of a minority government, the sources of commitment should include confidence and supply and/or other types of legislative party support agreements, particularly when such agreements establish commitment between the governing coalition and a pivotal legislative party.

In the case of oversized governing coalitions (that is, coalitions with a 'surplus party'), or minimal winning coalitions with a large majority of the parliamentary seats, the partisan effect of GCA commitment would seem to apply more readily to opposition parties than to the governing coalition. Because the coalition can maintain their majority even without the support of a surplus party, absent a large government backbench revolt there should not be a high level of uncertainty about the ability of the coalition to sustain

a majority in support of a particular bill. On the other hand, opposition parties may still be more inclined to strategically oppose the government on its major policy objectives, as seems to have been the case in Belgium during the post-World War I Theunis governments which had a comfortable 60 percent of the seats in addition to high levels of government unity.

### **5.2.2 Democratization**

Belgium's consociational style of governance can be traced back to the country's founding.<sup>77</sup> However, between 1831 and 1894, Belgium was what Dahl (1971) referred to as a 'competitive oligarchy'—a polity with contestation but low inclusivity. With the expansion of suffrage in 1893 the legislature became much more inclusive. This change marked the beginning of Belgium's transition to its contemporary system of democratic contestation. Evidence of this increase in contestation is found in the realignment of the Liberal Party as well as the increased polarization between government and opposition during the institutional transformation. Belgium's pre-World War II institutional transformation simply suggests that the model of consensus presented in the Introduction applies most readily to well-established democracies.

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<sup>77</sup> As Lijphart (1980, 11) observes, "Consociationalism in Belgium is as old as the Belgian state. 'Unionism'—that is, Catholic and Liberal power-sharing—began during the struggle for independence. It became infrequent when the country's existence appeared to be secure but was resumed during World War I, and was soon followed by the important step of admitting the Socialists to the cabinet. From that time on, Belgium has been a consociational democracy with regards to its religious and ideological 'spiritual families', represented by the Catholic, Socialist, and Liberal Parties."

### **5.2.3 Varieties of democracy**

The model presented in the Introduction did not include macro-level institutional veto players such as upper legislative chambers, presidents, constitutional courts, or regional governments in a federal system. Britain and especially New Zealand prior to reform fit this centralist model well. New Zealand transitioned from an archetype of Westminster-majoritarianism to an exemplar of centripetal democracy in the mid-1990s. After this reform, governing coalition and legislative support agreements have allowed the coalitions to govern in a flexible manner making alliances with different parliamentary parties, for instance with the use of confidence and supply agreements (Boston and Bullock 2012).

In the Westminster case, incentives for strategic opposition are much stronger, and norms of government-versus-opposition voting well established, so that opposition MPs will tend to vote against government bills irrespective of the centrality of that legislation to the government's policy programme. Partisan division has remained the modal expression of preference in the British House of Commons, even during the period of coalition government.

While Britain (and New Zealand prior to reform) is home to the Westminster-majoritarian model of democratic governance, Belgium has been recognized as an archetypal consociational democracy (Lijphart 1980). In Belgium, the non-government party's default position was not to oppose but to vote with the government, a pattern perhaps attributable to Belgium's consociational style of governance, found also in the

high levels of unanimous final vote outcomes. Over the entire transitional period focused on in this study, about 54 percent of the final votes on government bills generated unanimous support. Subsequent developments in Belgium such as the elite consensus (Dewachter and Clijsters 1982) and post-war Federalist reforms are also consistent with the consociational style of democracy.

### **5.3 Institutional Implications**

#### **5.3.1 Electoral system implications**

Evidence from New Zealand, as well as the cross-national evidence presented in the Introduction, suggests that countries contemplating electoral system reform ought to consider adopting a more proportional system of representation if they wish to maximize consensus. New Zealand is a geographically small centripetal democracy. Thus it is not obvious that the adoption of MMP in a decentralist country like the United States would yield an increase in bipartisanship. As Dahl (2002, 175) explains, "an electoral system that works well in one country may be less satisfactory in another." Still, developments in New Zealand indicate that the adoption of a proportional system of representation, along with power-sharing legislative rules has an independent positive effect on consensus. Thus, established democracies beset by high levels of political polarization ought to consider the impact of the institutional reforms in New Zealand.

Meanwhile, for currently democratizing countries, developments in Belgium suggest that the adoption of a more proportional electoral system may set the stage for the development of consensual norms in parliament, though politicization of formerly

uncontested issues may subdue and even reduce consensus in the near-term.

Democratization fosters contestation and the politicization of issues previously agreed to among a more narrow set of elites. However, after democratization, the structural institutions in place will have important effects on whether that country will be able to eventually build consensus on divisive issues, or whether a majoritarian government-versus-opposition equilibrium will develop.

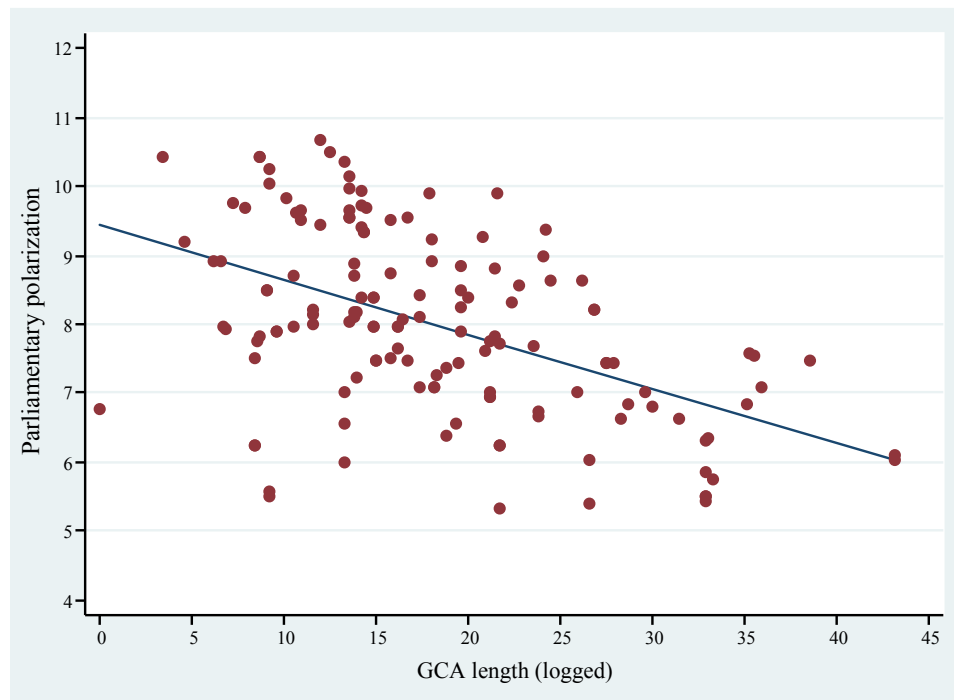
### **5.3.2 Governing coalition agreement implications**

Taken together, the empirical tests conducted in this study provide fairly strong support for Proposition 2. If a governing party leaders seeks to maximize unity within their coalition, GCAs can help to achieve this. Conversely, if governing party leaders wish to foster higher levels of non-partisanship on some issues, here too the GCA seems relevant.

I will underscore two distinctive ways GCAs can enhance non-partisanship: (i) by producing *shorter* coalition agreements with less policy pledges, or (ii) by drafting a more *flexible* coalition agreement which includes a comprehensive set of commitments, many of which allow coalition partners to agree-to-disagree. Notice the difference between the two approaches. Shorter coalition agreements are expected to increase non-partisan behavior by lowering the level of information provided about who will be supporting what policy and, absent other governmental institutions to ensure cabinet and backbench unity, increase the need for ministers to craft legislation so as to appeal to non-government MPs ensuring majority support.

Using the Comparative Parliamentary Data Archive provided by Strøm et al. (2008), a negative relationship is found between the level of polarization in a parliament and the length of a coalition agreement which that cabinet creates. This relationship is shown in Figure 5.1 below. A linear regression model reveals a statistically significant negative association between the level of polarization in the lower legislative chamber and the logged length of the GCA.<sup>78</sup>

Figure 5.1: Parliamentary polarization and GCA length by cabinet in Western Europe, post-war era



*Note:* Linear prediction based on OLS regression of the level of parliamentary polarization on the logged length of the cabinet's GCA length in words. Data is from Strøm et al. (2008). Each observation is a particular cabinet.

<sup>78</sup> The t-statistic for the effect of polarization on GCA length, controlling for country fixed-effects, is -3.32 ( $p=.001$ ,  $R^2=.6055$ ). Polarization is calculated as the square root of the sum of the weight of each party (with weight determined by bargaining strength) multiplied by the squared distances from the mean of all party ideological positions (with ideological positions based on election manifestos statements) (Strøm et al. 2008).

What does this suggest about the relationship between GCA length and consensus?

At first glance, Figure 5.1 would seem to suggest that GCA pledges actually increase consensus (if consensus is viewed as the opposite of polarization). One plausible explanation of this correlation is that if parties engaged in coalition bargaining are polarized, leaders of those parties will establish longer GCAs in order to prevent ministerial drift (Indridason and Kristinsson 2013).

While a more polarized bargaining environment appears to lead to lengthier GCAs, GCA pledges on specific legislative motions may still have a negative effect on consensus (as the analysis in this dissertation, taken together, suggests). That is, more government polarization indicates the need for a longer GCA, but should also produce a greater tendency for non-partisan voting where the GCA *does not* bind the parties. Thus, the crafting of shorter GCAs (with fewer policy pledges) ought to still be considered by party leaders as a means by which they can set the stage for more inter-coalitional bargaining and/or alliance building.

In contrast to an *absence* of policy pledges, a more attractive option might be to draft a more *flexible* coalition agreement which explicitly allow parties to disagree over some set of issues. That is, in the case of a irresolvable disagreement between coalition parties, rather than omit a pledge on that issue, party leaders might consider including an agree-to-disagree provision. This approach should provide both government and opposition backbenchers with more information about who will be supporting a particular

policy than would the omission of a policy pledge, and still have the effect of fostering non- or bipartisan alliance building. Flexible agreements thus institutionalize non-partisanship on individual motions, providing more information about legislative alliances than the aforementioned pledge-omission approach.

One example of GCA flexibility is found in the Conservative-Liberal Democratic pledge on university costs. In 2009, the Labour Government asked Lord Browne to chair an independent review to look at higher education funding and student finance and to make recommendations for government policy. In the 2010 GCA an agree-to-disagree provision was established on the issue stating, "If the response of the Government to Lord Browne's report is one that Liberal Democrats cannot accept, then arrangements will be made to enable Liberal Democrat MPs to abstain in any vote" (Waller and Yong 2012, 174).

After the Browne report was published in October 2010, the Government subsequently released its statutory plan suggesting among other things that fees could be raised. When the vote took place on December 9, 2010, the Liberal Democrats split down the middle on the issue, with 28 voting for, 21 against and 8 abstaining or absent. Commenting on the voting behavior, Waller and Yong (2012, 176) observe, "What was unusual was that in Parliament the Liberal Democrats showed a complete lack of discipline, splitting three ways". This behavior is perhaps not surprising, given that the issue was identified as one upon which the coalition partners could agree-to-disagree.



## 5.4 Proportional Representation and Parliamentary Consensus

### 5.4.1 Inclusivity as a safeguard against unnatural consensus

In the introductory chapter, I highlighted some reasons why consensus could be seen as socially desirable. In particular, legitimacy, autonomy, and conflict resolution, are social values associated with consensus. Yet agonist democratic theorists, for instance, have argued against this view contending that consensus will tend to be hegemonic. The agonist argument is that genuine consensus cannot be fully acquired and that there is a "ineliminable partiality of every actual outcome" (Rummens 2012).<sup>79</sup> Therefore, consensus will only render invisible an underlying political contestation which ought to always be on the surface and fully integrated into the democratic process, lest socially undesirable developments such as the rise of extremist or anti-system parties take root (Mouffe 2000; Rummens 2009).

I will here argue that proportional electoral systems can set the stage for consensus building while avoiding the consensual tendency towards hegemony emphasized in agonist theory. To this end, it is important to distinguish between 'natural' and 'unnatural' consensus. 'Natural consensus' is realized where a polity is very inclusive, so that no dissenting voices are being ignored or suppressed. By contrast, 'unnatural consensus' is found where a polity is not fully inclusive such that dissenting voices *are*

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<sup>79</sup> Similarly, Przeworski (1998, 142) emphasizes that deliberation usually ends in aggregation of preferences, and that in such cases the minority is forced to "submit to an opinion that is different from theirs or to a decision that is contrary to their interests."

ignored or suppressed. The agonist fear of consensus is thus essentially that consensus will always be 'unnatural'.

A highly unnatural expression of social consensus is the authoritarian single-party system (Dahl 1971, 31). Among democracies, a two-party system suggests a high level of consensus, in that there appears to be only two major aggregated social policy preferences. One might be tempted to argue that a two-party system is closer to the achievement of consensus than a multiparty system, in that two parties are numerically closer to one unified polity. However, the two-party system can also be seen as reflecting an 'unnatural' level of social consensus if a more proportional electoral system would result in the creation of more parties.

In a polity with diverse preferences, a very proportional electoral system is likely to foster a proliferation of political parties, in that PR systems are more 'permissive' (that is, inclusive) of smaller political parties. Proportionality is essential to parliamentary inclusivity in a society with diverse political preferences. This point was most famously articulated by Duverger (1954), is what is now known as Duverger's Law, which states that given some demand for new parties, increasing the proportionality of the electoral system will yield an increase in the effective number of electoral and legislative parties. Electoral system changes in Belgium around 1899 and New Zealand in the mid-1990s provide further evidence in support of Duverger's Law as the transition to PR coincided with an increase in the effective number of political parties.

If parliamentary consensus is achieved and sustained over time in a society under a very inclusive (that is, proportional) electoral system, such that only two or even one party was acquiring seats in the legislature, this could be viewed as a 'natural' two- or one-party system and also indicative of a more natural consensus in a society.

The advantage of taking a proportional route to consensus is that it is more voluntary, in that individuals are freer to dissent and even to leave a party to form or join another one. Thus, proportional electoral systems provide a more adequate foundation for building consensus while taking seriously the agonist fear that consensus will suppress dissenting voices and conceal existing social divisions. In other words, proportional systems make it harder to suppress dissenting voices as minorities have an easier time establishing their own party and gaining access to the national parliament.

#### **5.4.2 How consensual *are* consensus democracies?**

Of course, we are still left with the question of whether inclusivity, while setting the stage for the building of a 'natural' consensus, is in fact more conducive to consensus building. This is an intriguing question because, while consensual democratic institutions such as PR can set the stage for power sharing between conflicted groups, it is not immediately obvious why these institutions should generate more consensual vote outcomes than

majoritarian democracies. If anything, the assertion that PR increases consensus is counterintuitive in that a proliferation of parties suggests *less* unity.<sup>80</sup>

However, developments in New Zealand suggest that adopting a more proportional electoral system will increase parliamentary consensus. Meanwhile, early developments in Belgium draw our attention to an important qualification to this argument: PR is unlikely to have a consensus inducing effect in the near-term if its adoption coincides with the onset of democratization. That is, while there was previously consensus among a narrow set of elites with privileged access to the parliament, democratic inclusivity of formerly unrepresented groups will politicize issue dimensions formerly agreed upon by that narrow set of elites.<sup>81</sup>

Thus, democratization, especially if the electoral system chosen is more proportional, will set the stage for the building of a more 'natural' consensus over time, reflective of the preferences of the society at large. Proportional representation not only provides greater assurance that consensual outcomes will be 'natural' (that is, not concealing of minority voices), but also that there are mechanisms associated with

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<sup>80</sup> Discussing this view, Hanna Pitkin (1967, 64) observed that, "The critics [of PR] charge that a proportional system atomizes opinion, multiplies political groupings, increases the violence of faction, prevents the formation of a stable majority, and hence prevents the legislature from governing." A similar view is expressed by F. A. Hermens (1972, 83) who argues that, "Under PR...[candidates and parties] know that it would be futile to ask for a majority; hence they confine themselves to their particular party, to its interests and its views. This implies a denial that there is anything common to all groups in the country".

<sup>81</sup> Although the transition to PR within a stable democracy (e.g., New Zealand) increases inclusivity and thus also may be expected to increase contestation in the near term, the increase in inclusivity associated with the transition from authoritarianism to democracy is far more substantial than that which results from electoral system reform within an established democracy, in that a much larger segment of the population previously excluded from the national parliament in the later case is not fully integrated.

proportional representation and power-sharing legislative rules which are likely to cause an increase in consensus.

### **5.4.3 Deliberation and consensus in national parliaments**

We then arrive at the challenge of maximizing consensus within proportional, power-sharing systems. The model described in the Introduction holds that, within a non-majoritarian setting, the government should appeal more to the opposition where a coalition agreement is lacking (or where a coalition agreement allows governing party leaders to 'agree-to-disagree'). Meanwhile, the opposition is more likely to support the government when the government needs the opposition's support and/or where bills are not a central part of the governments policy platform.

But then, in a non-majoritarian setting, how can the government be persuaded to appeal to the opposition even when they don't really need to? How can the opposition be brought to support the government, even when the government is advancing its major policy priorities? An attractive means of fostering consensus in such situations is found in deliberative democracy, a topic which has garnered a great deal of scholarly attention, too vast to comprehensively review here. Recent studies have shown that 'consensual institutions' (in the Lijphartian sense of the term) can have a positive impact on deliberation in national parliaments (Steiner et al. 2004; Bächtiger et al. 2008; Gerring and Thacker 2008, 56), and that deliberation can foster more consensual parliamentary vote outcomes (Steiner et al. 2004).

In New Zealand, two institutional features may be seen as conducive to bipartisan deliberation. First, flexible governing coalition agreements have allowed the government to form alliances with different non-government parties without bringing down the government (Boston and Bullock 2012). Also, I find that power-sharing legislative rules, in particular opposition committee chairs, make a consensual legislative vote outcome more likely. Recall that select committee chairs were deprived of casting votes in New Zealand as part of the legislative rule reforms (McLeay 2000, 131; Barker et al. 2001, 312). Thus, the consensus realized on bills assigned to select committees chaired by opposition MPs does not appear to be due to veto power per se, but rather due to the enhanced deliberation in such situations.<sup>82</sup>

In the Introduction, I suggested that consensus could be *induced* by institutional veto players, but that such a consensus would be less voluntary than that achieved in the absence of institutional veto players. The Madisonian and the agonist views both hold that political conflict is inherent to politics and thus unavoidable. However, consensus induced via separated powers may not be conducive to a lasting consensus based on deliberative democratic principles, for a couple reasons.

First, if people are persistently on guard against faction, this would seem to undermine social trust, and as Bell (1999, 73) puts it, "There is not much point discussing

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<sup>82</sup> Consistent with this interpretation, Malone (2008, 226) describes New Zealand's post-reform House of Representatives as having a "less hurried and more deliberative legislative process" due to, among other reasons, bills spending more time in select committees often chaired by opposition party MPs.

things if people don't trust each other." Second, the idea of faction is inconsistent with the deliberative democratic idea that citizens participating in a deliberative process seek to advance the common good—factions, by definition, seek to advance some narrow private interest. In contrast, centralism is premised on the idea that governments can be trusted and should thus be empowered to govern (Mansbridge 2012).<sup>83</sup>

### 5.5 Continuing Research on Parliamentary Consensus

While much work in comparative politics has focused on the determinants of intra-party and intra-coalition unity, far less work has explicitly focused on inter-coalitional consensus.<sup>84</sup> There are a few possible reasons for this lack of focus on consensus in the comparative literature. It may be attributable in part to the popularity of the 'responsible party government' doctrine, which does not emphasize the importance of consensual voting *between* parties. Indeed, Carey (2009, 2) notes that political scientists have widely accepted some of the core tenets of the responsible party government thesis—in particular the desirability of party unity as opposed to legislative individualism.

Another possible reason for the lack of attention on legislative consensus in the comparative literature is that it may be viewed as too hard to explain because there are

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<sup>83</sup> Corresponding to this view that veto players should be minimized, Dahl (2002, 148) contends that, "The ideal solution, it seems to me, would be a political system that provides strong incentives for political leaders to search for the broadest feasible agreements before adopting a law or policy and yet allows the decision to be made, if need be, by majority vote."

<sup>84</sup> A partial list of somewhat atomized scholarly work which has focused on legislative consensus includes Sartori (1987, Ch. 8), Andeweg (2000), Damgaard and Mattson (2004), Prata (2006), and Miller and Stecker (2008). The universalist theory posited by Weingast (1979) resembles the idea of consensus, albeit focusing on distributive policy through a game theoretic lens. Also relevant is the debate over ethnic conflict resolution via consociational democratic institutions (Lijphart 1969). The topic of legislative polarization (which might be conceived as the reciprocal of consensus), has also received a great deal of attention, particularly focusing on the U.S. Congress.

too many moving parts to control for. Put another way, one might reasonably assert that it is hard enough to understand intra-party unity, let alone unity within the parliament as a whole. Still, there are some important reasons to focus on consensus as an outcome variable, and this study demonstrates that fairly parsimonious models of consensus can be established and tested empirically.

To my knowledge, this dissertation and the study by Christensen and Pedersen (2012) are the only ones to have coded votes based on whether or not such legislative motions were committed to in a coalition agreement. Because this is unexplored terrain, there is much room for further theory building and empirical research in the area. One empirical challenge within this niche is objectively measuring the link between coalition agreement pledges and legislative motions. As this study has shown, coding motions for pledge fulfillment is usually not a clear-cut endeavor. I view this not only as a challenge but also as an inroad for further developments in coalition theory.

A second empirical challenge is that legislative vote data remains fairly limited. For this study, I gathered new legislative vote data from Belgium and New Zealand, and, presumably there is more legislative vote data out there waiting to be gathered. A useful variable to acquire corresponding to legislative votes would indicate which MP requested a recorded vote which would shed additional light on the selection of recorded votes.

Another attractive avenue for further research focuses on the connection between comparative institutions, deliberative democracy, and consensus. For instance, Steiner et



al. (2004) examine how institutional contexts affect aspects of deliberative democracy and find that the quality of parliamentary discourse has a statistically significant positive effect of the level of agreement achieved.<sup>85</sup> Meanwhile, Bächtiger et al. (2008) have found that institutional components of consensus democracies, such as grand coalitions and institutional veto players, are conducive to democratic deliberation in the national parliaments of Germany and Switzerland.

Consensus building can be studied at various stages and within different arenas across the 'democratic life cycle' (Müller, Bergman and Strøm 2008). For example, voters can build consensus in favor of a particular political party during a general election, or on direct democratic referenda.<sup>86</sup> Consensus can also be achieved among party leaders when forming a coalition and its programme, and the government itself can be approved in a consensual fashion by parliament at the investiture vote stage. Finally, consensus can be maximized on legislative motions during the parliamentary term in committee or on the floor of the lower or upper parliamentary chambers. In this study I have focused on levels of parliamentary consensus attained in the midst of a cabinet's term of office, an important element among these various democratic arenas.

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<sup>85</sup> This finding contrasts with an argument made by Shapiro (1999) that deliberation could, under some circumstances, exacerbate division by exposing previously unrecognized differences. Also see Esterling (2011) for an assessment of how the severity of disagreement over a social issue impacts peoples' willingness to draw upon 'falsifiable' (that is, deliberative) argumentation in a committee setting.

<sup>86</sup> Underscoring the importance of direct democracy, Gargarella (1998, 273) suggests that extra-parliamentary politics may be just as important as parliamentary politics.

In democratic societies, it is understood that there is an overarching consensus on the democratic 'rules of the game'. However, beneath an overarching consensus on democracy, divisions on day-to-day legislative business are a normal occurrence in democratic societies.<sup>87</sup> The study of political institutions is central to comparative political science. The importance of political institutions has been underscored in this study, which finds that choices over democratic institutions can reinforce contrasting views regarding whether political divisions are a fact of life to be embraced and encouraged, or a social phenomenon which might be minimized and eventually overcome.

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<sup>87</sup> This 'consensus on the system' has also been observed in the American context at the mass level. For instance, Kernell et al. (2014, 461) note that, "Opinion polls find that almost every American supports the institutional underpinnings of modern democracy... When it comes to the practical application of these abstract values, however, consensus breaks down."

## **APPENDICES**

### **Appendix A: Term Clarifications**

#### **Government and opposition**

"Government" is a reference to the set of legislators from the party/ies represented in the governing coalition. Thus, government legislators include party leaders, ministers as well as the government "back-benchers" (i.e., a rank-and-file members of the governing party/ies). The "opposition" on the other hand includes all non-government parties and the legislators who are members of these parties. I thus treat the terms "opposition party" and "non-government party" interchangeably, though I may use the later term to deemphasize oppositional behavior.

#### **Confidence and supply parties**

These are parties which agree to cooperate with the government on a particular set of policy proposals. However, confidence and supply parties are not committed to cooperate with the government beyond those specific policy agreements. In other words, confidence and supply parties are not bound by the idea of "collective responsibility"—a general commitment among government party leaders to work together on government bills. Therefore, confidence and supply parties fall into a gray area between the government and opposition camps. Because the percentage of total motions which confidence and supply parties formally agree to tends to be limited, it is arguably more accurate to refer to place these parties in the category of opposition or non-governing party. Confidence

and supply parties are sometimes referred to simply as 'legislative parties' or 'support parties'.

### **Coalitions**

The term "coalition" refers to the set of members of parliament (MPs) in either the government or in the opposition in a legislature. Thus, I will often refer to the "governing coalition" or occasionally to the "opposition coalition", which is a reference to all MPs, whether party leaders or "backbenchers" (that is, rank and file MPs) who are a member of a government or a non-government/opposition party, respectively. "Coalition" will at times also refer to a group of MPs united for or against *a particular legislative motion*, though coalitions which form on specific motions will more commonly be referred to as legislative alliances in order to clarify the distinction between a governing coalition and a group which coalesces in support of a particular legislative motion.

### **Structural majoritarianism**

Although structural institutions encompass a broader set of "macro" or "constitutional" institutional choices (including various separations of power), there are two main structural institutions focused on in this study: the electoral system and the set of legislative rules. Majoritarian electoral systems plus legislative rules which disempower the opposition are treated as core components of structural majoritarianism, while proportional electoral systems plus power-sharing legislative rules are treated as attributes of a *non-majoritarian* institutional structure.

### **Governing coalition agreements**

In this study, I refer to governing coalition agreements (GCA), often drafted whenever a new governing coalition is formed. GCAs often contain a set of more or less specific policy pledges, so that GCA commitments on particular policies vary across government bills within a particular parliamentary term—some bills are pledged in the GCA, while others are not. Notice that, while structural institutions tend to be constant over the duration of multiple parliamentary terms, governmental institutions such as GCAs usually change at least with each new cabinet while specific pledges vary over the set of legislative motions advanced during the same cabinet's term of office, thus providing us with more variation over time within a particular parliament elected via an unchanging electoral system.

### **Partisan pressure**

This term will generally refer to pressures imposed on MPs to vote with their party and/or coalition, whether government or opposition. Because parties are nested within coalitions, the term "partisan pressure" will generally refer simultaneously to "collective responsibility"—cabinet discipline applied between party leaders at the executive level—and to discipline applied by the party whips onto their own backbenchers.

### **Latent and actual fragmentation**

*Actual* fragmentation occurs within a coalition where intra-coalition cohesion/unity is lacking. I must make explicit the distinction between *latent* and *actual* coalition fragmentation, because, while coalitions may have a high degree of *latent* fragmentation

in a multiparty, non-majoritarian structural environment, that multiparty coalition may still be held together by governmental institutions such as commitments in a GCA. Thus, the degree of *latent* fragmentation is determined by structural institutions—especially, in this study, the electoral and legislative system—yet the extent to which that latent fragmentation becomes *actual* fragmentation will depend in large part on governmental institutions.

### **Strategic and sincere voting**

I use the term 'strategic voting' in reference to situations in which all members/parties of the opposition vote cohesively (that is, in a unified way) in opposition to government proposals, particularly if some members of the opposition favor the government proposal to the status quo. Strategic voting can result from partisan pressure and/or more particular payoffs the strategic voter anticipates in the near future.

Sincere voting takes place when an MP's vote is consistent with his "sincere" preference for either the legislative proposal or the status quo. The sincere preference of the MP is based primarily on the MP's own notion of "good public policy", but may also be reinforced or affected by constituency preferences.

### **Consensus**

I define consensus as the level of agreement achieved between government and opposition MPs in a legislature. Thus when a government MP votes with the opposition or vice versa, I consider this individual vote as a 'consensual' vote, though the aggregated outcome may not reach a very high level of agreement. Thus, the consensual vote of an

individual MP is equivalent to a rebellious vote—where an MP votes against the majority of his own party—unless government and opposition are mostly in agreement in which case a consensual vote would be *with* one's coalition. By this definition, perfect consensus would be where all government and all opposition vote the same (i.e., unanimous rejection *or* acceptance of a proposal), and the absence of consensus is found where government and opposition divide perfectly against each other.

### **Non-partisan and bipartisan vote outcomes**

I treat bipartisan and non-partisan voting behavior as distinct types of consensual voting. A non-partisan vote outcome is found where one or more members of the opposition vote with the government, or vice versa. By this definition, an outcome in which one member of the opposition voted with the government could be identified as a non-partisan outcome, or perhaps more accurately *an imperfectly partisan outcome*. As more non-partisan votes accumulate on a particular vote, that vote outcome becomes increasingly non-partisan.

A perfectly non-partisan vote outcome would be where half of the government MPs vote with half of the opposition MPs. By contrast, a perfectly *bipartisan* vote outcome would be a unanimous vote where all government and opposition MPs are in agreement. Thus, while non-partisan implies a division which cuts across partisan lines, in bipartisan vote outcomes unity within coalitions is sustained while those coalitions agree with each other.

## Appendix B: Legislative Vote Data from Parliamentary Democracies

Country	Years of data	Data source	Votes	Governments
Australia	1996-1998	Carey (2012)	457	1
Belgium	1995-1998	Noury (2012)	2073	1
Canada	1994-1997	Carey (2012)	333	2
Czech Republic	1993-1998	Carey (2012)	9809	3
Denmark	1971-2002	Prata (2006)	6535	41
EU Parliament	1979-2004	Hix et al (2006)	15203	5
Finland	1991-2005	Pajala and Jakulin (2006)	7848	4
France	1946-1958	Rosenthal and Voeten (2004)	889	3
Germany	1980-2002	Prata (2006)	259	7
Iceland	2004-2005	Althingi (2014)	1351	1
Israel	1999-2000	Carey (2012)	598	2
Italy	1988-2000	Prata (2006)	2087	3
Japan	1947-2002	Kabashima (2012)	310	19
Malta	1998-2002	Prata (2006)	358	1
New Zealand	1990-1994	Carey (2012)	777	2
New Zealand	1997-2007	Williams (2012)	259	4
Sweden	2004-2005	Prata (2006)	878	1
UK	2001-2005	Prata (2006)	1246	1

*Note:* The 'votes' column indicates the number of legislative vote observations included in each data set. The 'governments' column indicates the number of different cabinets included in the data sets. See the first section of the bibliography for the full citation of the works which use and/or provide the data.



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