# Government formation and policy formulation

## Patterns in Belgium and the Netherlands

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## Introduction.

The extensive literature on coalition formation, and in particular the formation of government coalitions, has tended to focus first on the number of parties in the coalition (size) and second on the ideological orientation of the parties in the coalition (composition) (1). This focus has made it possible to develop a number of well known propositions at a high level of abstraction which have been subjected to a substantial amount of empirical testing. The emphasis on size and composition coupled with the decision to operate at a high level of abstraction, however, cause much of coalition theory to be of limited use as a guide to understanding ongoing government formation processes. For example, assumptions drawn from game theory which are commonly used in coalition theory are, by their very nature, not designed to provide insight into the conditions that cause some government formations to require months of negotiations. Further, coalition theory is not generally oriented

toward an examination of the inter-relationship between government formation and the development of policy. Those studies which do suggest that the examination of this relationship could be profitable are for the most part limited to a study of general ideological orientations rather than more specific policy proposals.

The purpose of this paper is to explore two possibilities : 1° that an explanation of government formations as a form of coalition formation requires increased attention to bargaining among various types of actors over a variety of policy issues and 2° that, at least in certain polities, policy is in some fairly specific way, the result of government formation processes. We will outline a schema to examine and articulate the mechanisms which link government formation and policy formulation. This study is limited to recent government formations in two countries, Belgium and the Netherlands, and disaggregates the government formation process into three relatively distinct stages in which specific functions are performed. These stages involve, first, the (self) selection of participants in the bargaining process, second, the negotiation of the governmental agreement, and, third, the allocation of portfolios. This paper is divided into four parts : 1° a further discussion of basic theoretical problems, 2° a general overview of the governmental formation process, 3° a more detailed presentation of the government formation process which includes a schema for its analysis and which is illustrated with examples from three government formations and 4° a few concluding comments.

## Theoretical problems.

In part, the theoretical problems addressed in this paper arise from an attempt to understand specific phenomena in the political life of Belgium and the Netherlands. Both countries have experienced highly protracted government formations, and in both countries the negotiations and agreements associated with government formations have dealt with highly specific legislative issues. Of the cases studied here, the Martens government in Belgium took almost six months to be formed, and the Van Agt government in the Netherlands took seven months. In both of these two cases, the bulk of the time was given over to the preparation and discussion of proposals for action on specific issues. The two government formations in Belgium studied here produced highly detailed agreements with regard to the process of regionalization. And the Van Agt government negotiations in the Netherlands focussed, inter alia, on the specific details of profit sharing legislation. To study these

phenomena it is necessary to expand on existing coalition theory and to modify commonly used assumptions. These phenomena suggest that the process of government formation can usefully be examined as an arena — in the sense of a patterned, structured form of interaction not limited to the framework of a formal institution — for dealing with certain issues, that government formation does have an effect on policy and that policy negotiations do have an effect on coalition formation (2).

As was indicated above, there are suggestions in the literature on coalition formation that links between coalition formation and policy formation exist. For example, Browne argues that if the key determinant of decisions on the size and composition of coalitions is the desire to maximize payoffs, then one is faced with a major problem of evaluating what the nature of payoffs for the various actors is. After noting the difficulties of such an evaluation he concludes « that in most political coalition games there is no payoff waiting to be divided. Instead, payoffs are those proposals (or resources allocations to proposals) which are agreed upon by coalition members once a coalition has formed » (3). A similar position is presented by Budge and Herman when they argue the need « to incorporate the substantive considerations that politicians do consciously use when they form governments » (4). Clearly, both of these studies, as well as others, point in the direction of examining links between coalition formation and policy. To understand the problems of following up on these suggestions it is necessary to go a little more deeply into some of the basic elements of coalition theory and to see where a different set of basic assumptions would lead.

Two key assumptions of most coalition studies need to be called into question. First, coalition theory is generally stated in terms of abstract actors who are assumed to be directly translatable into political parties acting as single units. This is the problem of the monolithic actor. Second, coalition decisions are assumed to be made on the basis of a relatively clear and stable set of payoffs which for most scholars appear to exist prior to and apart from any negotiations. This is the problem

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(2) It should be noted that semi-formal bargaining outside governmental institutions has been used to deal with a variety of major issues in Belgium. See J. MEYNAUD, J. LADRIERE and F. PERIN, La décision politique en Belgique (Paris : Armand Colin, 1965), Part II, Chapter 2 ; and T. LUYKX, Politieke Geschiedenis van België (Amsterdam/Brussels : Elsevier, 1968), pp. 435-441.

(3) E. BROWNE, « Coalition Theories : A Logical and Empirical Critique », Sage Professional Papers in Comparative Politics, Vol. 4, N° 3, 1973, page 73.

(4) I. BUDGE and V. HERMAN, « Coalitions and Government Formation : An Empirically Relevant Theory », British Journal of Political Science, Vol. 8, 1978, p. 459.

of value maximization. Both of these assumptions add elegance to coalition theory, but, we will argue, they are an impediment to a study of the interrelationship between government formation and policy formulation.

In its abstract form coalition theory refers simply to actors, with the clear assumption that they are unitary. This assumption is an intentional simplification, the utility of which is subject to serious question even if one is talking about individuals and especially if one is talking about aggregates — parties or other organizations. At one level it might appear the most basic of common sense to consider individuals as unitary actors. Yet, concepts such as roles and cross pressures are also basic to politics (5). The individual has his own self concept and ambitions to provide a basis for action, plus roles as party leader, faction leader, interest group representative, regional representative, elected official, etc. These roles create a web of relationships and a complex structure of motivation. A party leader trying to form a government must balance his desire to become prime minister, to hold his party factions together, to satisfy various sets of voters and to attain certain policy goals. To ignore this diversity of orientations and the ambiguity associated with the individual actor is to deny the effect of these roles. When one is talking about an actor composed of an aggregate of individuals and units, the assumption of a monolithic actor becomes even more questionable. Obviously parties are composed of individuals and sub-groupings ; they have various internal decision making structures which influence positions presented in the name of the aggregate. It has nonetheless been assumed that parties can be treated as single actors in government formations. For example, Budge and Herman argue that because « factions are all usually committed to serve broad objectives » and « most parties... maintain a high degree of parliamentary cohesion... treating them as single actors represented by their spokesmen does not unduly distort reality » (6). Perhaps this argument applies when one is talking about actions within parliament [although even then this position is subject to objections (7)], but when one is looking at the process of forming a coalition and *negotiating the agreement upon which the coalition is based* this assumption creates crucially important distortions. Briefly, it emphasizes what Leiserson refers to as the « static » nature

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(5) Cf. A. GEORGE, *Presidential Decision-making in Foreign Policy* (Boulder : Westview, 1980), p. 3.

(6) BUDGE and HERMAN, *op. cit.*, p. 460.

(7) Cf. K. WALTZ, *Theory of International Politics* (Reading : Addison-Wesley, 1979), pp. 84-84.

of coalition theory (8) by drawing attention away from the evolution of party positions on specific issues in a dynamic, changing situation and from the interaction between intra and inter party negotiations. It minimizes the diversity of pressures on party leaders and their problems in managing the party. In this sense, it fails to emphasize the need of party leaders to mobilize support within the party and the possibility that outcomes will be reevaluated in terms of their effect on mobilization. And it deemphasizes the degree of overlap among parties and the fact that distances among them can vary with issues.

The assumption of monolithic actors is also a necessary condition for the second assumption to be explored here : value maximization or optimization. In one form or another coalition theory tends to assume that the unitary actors can, with reasonable accuracy, discern outcomes, rank them in order of preference and make their decision on participating in a coalition on the basis of their chances of optimizing the payoff (9). For example, Leiserson says, « as long as human action is understood in terms of purpose, then any outcome which actors consciously bring about must be able to be ranked in their scales of preference » (10). This proposition has a certain tautological force. If you assume that action is purposive, then the action selected must have been preferred over those possibilities not selected. However, the development of an agreement to govern involves a series of issues, each of which has many dimensions and all of which have to be put together in a complex package. In such a case, value maximization seems to require either that all possible combinations of elements be discerned and ranked beforehand, which is simply impossible, or that there be a single value dimension running through all relevant issues. There is an absolutely massive literature from psychology, public administration, foreign policy studies, etc. on the limited ability of people to optimize values. Studies by Simon, Verba, Allison, Halperin, and Braybrooke and Lindblom, among others, come immediately to mind. For a survey of this literature the reader can turn to Janis and Mann's impressive study of decision making (11). A simple way to suggest the nature of the problem is to consider the concept of « value complexity » which George defines as « the presence of multiple, competing values and interests that are imbedded

(8) S. GROENNINGS, E. KELLEY and M. LEISERSON, eds., The Study of Coalition Behavior (New York : Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1970), p. 271.

(9) For a clear statement of this position in terms of the game theory that commonly underlies coalition theory see A. RAPOPORT, Two-Person Game Theory (Ann Arbor : University of Michigan Press, 1969), p. 17.

(10) GROENNINGS et al., op. cit., p. 271.

(11) I. JANIS and L. MANN, Decision Making (New York : The Free Press, 1977).

in a single issue ». He goes on to say, « When this is the case, it is difficult, if not impossible, for the decision maker to formulate a single yardstick that encompasses and aggregates all the competing values and interests. Lacking a single criterion of utility, the decision maker may experience great difficulty judging which course of action is « best » on an overall basis » (12). Now, when talking about the development of an agreement to form a government, at least in the cases at hand, we are not talking about the value complexity of a single issue, but about a package composed of positions on a variety of issues. This package is put together in a dynamic negotiating process in which positions and perceptions evolve. Thus rather than an assumption of value maximization based on an ability to rank outcomes a priori (a posteriori rankings would seem to make nonsense of value maximization), we assume that issues, rewards and costs are multidimensional, and the process of producing a coalition requires interaction among and within parties and other groups as an issue specific consensus is mapped, discovered, and created. This assumption implies multi-lateral bargaining that takes place in a variety of inter-related arenas and is conducted by actors who are affected by past experience and who must take into account the implications of their present actions for future coalitions and policy.

Both the assumption of the monolithic actor and the assumption of value maximization are retained in the various attempts that have been made to give greater emphasis to the effects of policy preferences on coalition formation by focussing on some concept of policy distance. In Browne's words, « if policy distance between partners is minimized, *whatever allocation is made* is more likely to satisfy the preferences of any given partner, and thereby maximize his payoff, than would be true if policy distance were not minimized » (13). Similarly, De Swaan, in terms of what he refers to as closed minimum range theory, attempts to determine the acceptability of coalition partners by ranking parties along a single socio-economic scale which requires that parties be treated as monolithic (14). Two difficulties in regard to such an approach are immediately evident when one looks at specific parties. First, in Belgium the range of orientations within parties such as the two Christian social parties and the two socialist parties, on the one hand, is so great that variation within them is at least equal to variation among them ; and on the other hand, parties like the Front Démocratique des

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(12) GEORGE, *op. cit.,* p. 26.

(13) BROWNE, *op. cit.,* pp. 76-77.

(14) A. DE SWAAN, *Coalition Theories and Cabinet Formation* (San Francisco : Jossey Bass, 1973), chapters 5 and 6.

Francophones and the Rassemblement Wallon have core interests which are not readily expressed on a socio-economic scale. Second, even if one assumes that the party as a whole can be placed at a single point on a continuum, the bargaining that leads to an agreement to govern is about a series of more or less specific issues which, as we have argued, do not fall along a single dimension.

One last aspect of coalition theory needs to be touched upon here. In commenting on some of the policy distance literature mentioned above, Laver discusses the relative impact of « ideological aspects » of coalition formation (policy distance) compared to size considerations (simple value maximization) (15). In this context he states, « If politicians have long time-horizons, however, coalition policy may well be the most important factor that they take into consideration » (16). He further adds that under such circumstances « the formation of a coalition's policies marks the start of the following election campaign... » (17). Laver's point about time horizons suggests that, in addition to modifying the standard assumptions about monolithic actors and value maximization, we need to add an assumption. Stated simply it is that the process of government formation is interactive. One of the points that we will be expanding on below is that government formation is the transfer of the treatment of an issue from administrative and legislative decision making arenas to an interparty and intergroup arena. Issues which have proved insoluable within the government, within the parliament and/or through interaction between them lead to the collapse of the incumbent coalition and are the subject of bargaining in the formation of a new coalition. Once the new coalition is formed on the basis of these (and other) issues, they are returned to administrative and parliamentary arenas for further action, and the process continues. With this kind of interaction between — or merging of — policy formulation and government formation, the conditions that Laver refers to appear to exist, although not in terms of the purely electoral considerations that he suggests. Thus policy is the basis for coalition, and coalition is the basis for policy.

The assumptions of monolithic actors and value maximization require a high level of abstraction. We have tried to indicate the problems associated with these assumptions. If our arguments about these assumptions

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(15) M. LAVER, *The Politics of Private Desires* (Harmondsworth : Penguin, 1981), pp. 151-152. Note that in this context Laver appears to use the terms policy and ideology interchangeably.

(16) *Ibid.*

(17) *Ibid.*

hold, then one is pushed to the conclusion that the relationships between policy formulation and government formation must be examined at a lower level of abstraction — that categories must be used which are closer to specific, concrete circumstances. We need categories that will allow us to operate at the lowest level of abstraction that will still permit a degree of comparison. In sum what we need is a schema which will make it possible to compare case studies as an essential step toward developing theory.

### Overview of the government formation process.

Where does all this leave us ? We have been trying to introduce the reader to our study by suggesting the theoretical concerns that have served as points of departure. The general outline of our assumptions and the phenomena we wish to study is as follows. We are looking at events that occurred in Belgium and the Netherlands during a certain time period. The question of the generality of the phenomena is left totally open. These states are multi-party, European parliamentary democracies in which no party has a consistant majority and in which it has been possible to form postelection coalition governments not totally determined by the electoral outcome. Whether similar phenomena can be found in other countries of this kind or, mutatis mutandis, in other kinds of polities is left open. While recognizing that masses and elites influence each other, we are assuming that to an important degree political conflict in these countries originates, exists and is dealt with at the elite level. Part of the process for articulating this conflict and dealing with it is to be found in the government formation process which may be referred to as an arena. This arena is a policy arena which is affected by problems of government maintenance and the conditions associated with the fall of the preceeding government and which affects policy making within the new government, the maintenance of that government and the passage of legislation during its existence. Note that in the cases studied the government does not fall because of a loss of legislative confidence as such, but as the result, at least in part, of the collapse of a minimal level of consensus among or within the government parties. This collapse of consensus may focus on a specific issue or it may involve a much broader deterioration of agreement for which a specific issue may be the symbol or the excuse. And it may be associated with various changes within political parties.

The government formation process and its policy results involve complex linkages among the government as a whole, individual members of

the government, party institutions, the party base, parliament as a whole, individual members of parliament, etc. When an individual negotiates in this process he may be acting in his own right and as the leader of a party faction and as a leader of the whole party. His actions may influence and be influenced by other direct and indirect participants in the negotiations. It is this web of relationships that coalition theories have tended to ignore and that makes a study of the elaboration or mapping of a consensus through government formation so difficult. The consensus is expressed in the formation of a government and in the agreement to govern, but it involves various degrees of agreement across a broad range of actors with differing goals and resources. The consensus may be very abstract and symbolic or very specific. It may be understood in a variety of ways or, to put it more clearly, there may be agreement on a basic document, but each of those agreeing may have his own interpretations and mental reservations.

The policy effects of a government formation may vary to include setting the terms of future debate through the creation of a reference document, setting an agenda — either positive (items to be dealt with) or negative (items to be avoided) —, establishing deadlines, establishing the general limits of alternatives to be considered or actually drafting legislation. To the degree that such a process is involved in the development of policy, it is of questionable value to ask whether legislation originates in the government or the parliament. Such a question implies that these institutions have clear boundaries. We are more interested in a pattern of interaction that includes formal and informal party conferences and negotiations.

On the basis of our case studies we perceive the government formation process to consist of three stages preceded by a pre-formation stage and followed by a post-formation stage. The term stages is used with some hesitation because it suggests a more orderly sequence than may be the case. The boundaries between the stages are not always clear ; a deadlock in the second or third stage may cause a shift back to an earlier stage ; and some elements of all stages may occur simultaneously. But because there is a sequential character to the process, we prefer « stages » to any alternative term. In brief, the first stage involves the selection of the actors who will participate directly in the formation of a government. This includes both the parties and individuals who will take part in the negotiations and corresponds roughly to the period when the *informateur* in Belgium and the Netherlands is making his

assessment of the situation (18). Note that the participants largely select themselves and each other through their decisions about the potential benefits of participation in the government and about acceptable potential partners in the government. During this stage there may be public discussions of the general orientation of the future government.

In the second stage there is a shift from determining who is to participate to negotiations about the substance of policy. It is in this period that the agreement to govern is hammered out as negotiators discuss key policies to be pursued by the new government. In this stage issues may be dealt with sequentially or simultaneously ; technical and general political aspects of policies may be dealt with separately or at the same time ; and different sets of negotiators may deal with different aspects of issues. Discussions take place not only among parties, but within parties and between parties and other types of organizations. These discussions may also take into account decisions to be made during the third stage which consists of the distribution of governmental seats among the governing parties and the assignment of individuals to these seats.

A pre- and post-formation stage precede and follow these three stages. The pre-formation stage consists of the circumstances immediately leading to the fall of the government. This provides the general context for the actual government formation. The post-formation stage covers the consequences of the government formation and any implementation or failure of implementation of agreements reached during stage two. In this sense the post-formation stage of one government begins to merge with the pre-formation stage of another government as the iterative process continues.

The theoretical importance of these stages and of the functions performed in them should be emphasized. The formation of a coalition is not a simple and discrete act, but rather a series of decisions. The decisions in each stage may involve different actors. The payoffs and perceptions of payoffs can change with each stage. Further, each stage of the coalition formation has different implications for policy formulation as agendas are established, term of reference are articulated, alternatives are outlined and general responsibilities for further legislative and administrative action are assigned.

The cases on which our analysis is based are the formation of the Van Agt government in the Netherlands between March and December

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(18) See G. WEIL, *The Benelux Nations* (New York : Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1970), pp. 129 and 159 ; and R. ANDEWEG, T. van der TAK and K. DITTRICH, « Government Formation in the Netherlands », in R. GRIFFITHS, *The Economy and Politics of the Netherlands since 1945* (The Hague : Nijhoff, 1980).

1977 and the formations of the Tindemans and Martens governments in Belgium between May and June 1977 and between October 1978 and April 1979 (19). A few general comments about the cases can be made at this point.

The Dutch case was highly protracted. It dealt with issues that, relative to the Belgian cases, were narrowly defined and involved highly specific negotiations. One can argue that the discussions concerned what to do about issues that were already defined rather than how issues should be defined. The two Belgian cases present a contrast. The first was relatively brief and appeared to resolve very broad issues through the creation of a highly detailed agreement among the parties to the negotiations. During the short life of the Tindemans government, which this formation created, legal and political questions arose about the implications of this agreement and doubts were expressed about the good faith of the prime minister. This led to the formation of the Martens government resulting from a new round of negotiations on the same issues. The second formation took much more time and was less orderly than the first. To a certain degree it involved problems of general orientation and was complicated by mistrust that developed in the Tindemans government.

**The government formation process.**

Our general goal is to find a way to describe the government formation process so as to facilitate comparison and the examination of effects of the process on policy. To this end we need to develop categories for the components of the process. The procedure followed here is to outline the categories in terms of the three stages of the process. Examples from the cases studied will be used to illustrate the categories and suggest possible variation within them. We shall discuss the pre- and post-formation stages without an elaboration of the categories.

Broadly speaking the categories fall into three sets. First there are contextual components. We are thinking of such things as procedures and practices, time considerations and environmental pressures. The

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(19) Information on the cases studied here comes from a variety of public sources. Sources for the Dutch case include : ANDEWEG, van der TAK and DITTRICH, *op. cit. ;* R. ANDEWEG, K. DITTRICH and T. van der TAK *Kabinetsformatie 1977* (Leiden : Vakgroep Politieke Wetenschappen, 1978); and various articles from *Elseviers Magazine, NRC Handelsblad, The Economist* and *The London Times.* The two Belgian cases are based largely on J. BRASSINE and X. MABILLE, « La crise politique d'octobre 1978 », *Courrier Hebdomadaire du CRISP,* Nᵒ 817 and 819, 1978 ; J. BRASSINE, « Les 99 jours de crise communautaire », *Courrier Hebdomadaire du CRISP,* Nᵒ 847-850, 1979 ; and various articles in *Le Soir* and *La Libre Belgique.*

second set of components may be roughly labeled relational. These include the actors, their characteristics as groups or individuals, the nature of their involvement in the process, their resources and their perceptions of issues and each other. Finally there are outcome components. These relate both to the outcome of the bargaining process — the kind of agreement that is produced —, and to the outcome of the agreement — the apparent effects of the agreement. Here we need to be concerned with substantive outcomes in terms of specific issues and with the general nature of the product produced in terms of its specificity and procedural effects.

### The pre-formation stage.

The government formation process begins with the fall of the government. The circumstances leading up to the fall affect the process. Two questions arise at this point : what causes a government to fall and how do the conditions of the government collapse affect the formation process ? In the cases studied here the collapse of the government results from what are perceived to be irreconcilable differences on some issues or set of issues among the members of the government. The result of this is that either the members of the government as a group decide that they can no longer work together or individual members whose participation is essential withdraw from the government. A full explanation of why such a situation develops requires an analysis of the causes of party and individual policy preferences and of the degree of overlap or convergence of these preferences. For our analysis it is sufficient to look at more proximate causes. In the Dutch case there had been an accumulation of differences on several issues which was brought to a head by the approaching elections. In the first Belgian case governmental members of the smallest party were faced with responsibility costs as pressure on them from party leaders outside the government increased. They were caught between the coalition and their own party and by withdrawing forced the fall of the government. The second Belgian case is the most complex. The actual collapse came with the resignation of Prime Minister Leo Tindemans. This occurred in the context of conflict both within and among the government parties. Tindemans said that he was responding to criticism from other parties in the coalition who were disturbed by Tindemans' responses to the Council of State's interpretation of proposed regional legislation, legislation which had grown out of the party conferences that produced the Egmont and Stuyvenberg agreements. That there was conflict within the parties is suggested by the leadership changes in Tindemans' party (CVP) that occurred after the fall of the government and by the

changes in the socialist party. Before the government fell the French and
Flemish socialist parties had been loosely tied together in a common
structure. They subsequently split into two separate entities.

The second question, concerning the effects of the collapse on the
government formation process, brings us closer to the process itself. It
is in this sense that the pre-formation stage provides part of the context
of subsequent steps. It is important to recall here that we are thinking
of government formation as part of a continuous, iterative process with
cumulative policy effects. With the fall of the government, issues
are transferred from one arena of policy making to another. Thus the
pre-formation stage, in activating this new arena, has three kinds of
effects.

1. It sets the agenda for the government formation process. The issues
central to the fall of the government become issues to be dealt with
through government formation. In the two Belgian cases they were
regional and socio-economic issues, and in the Netherlands, land reform,
excess profits, abortion, etc. Although this constitutes an agenda for what
follows, it does not determine the outcome nor the degree to which
a specific issue is pursued. For example, land reform, the issue on
which the Dutch government fell, was not pursued as actively as the
others in the coalition process. This stresses the cumulative nature
of the process. Agenda setting does not determine the decision, but it
does determine the topics on which decisions will be made (20).

2. The pre-formation stage mobilizes actors. This includes actors of
all kinds : government, non-government, individual-organizational, parties
as actors and parties as arenas, etc.

3. Its orients actors toward issues and each other. This is particularly
noticeable in the second Belgian case where the circumstances of the fall
of the government created an atmosphere of mistrust and uncertainty that
had to be dealt with as the bargaining process proceeded.

Stage I : *the selection of participants.*

Definitionally Stage I begins with the fall of the government and
continues until there is agreement on who is to participate in the nego-
tiations on the agreement to govern. During this period the various
parties both opt in and opt out of the process and indicate their will-
ingness to govern with specific other parties. It is also during this

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(20) On the general topic of agenda setting see for example J. ANDERSON, *Public Policy Making* (New York : Praeger, 1975), chapter 3.

stage that parliamentary elections take place. The effects of the elections are twofold.

1. The parties use the election campaign to indicate their general policy orientations and their preferences for governmental partners. This was particularly evident in the Dutch case where unsuccessful attempts were made to develop coalitions prior to the elections.

2. The elections have a substantial but not determining effect on the eventual government by distributing a major resource — parliamentary seats. Obviously this establishes what combinations of parties can constitute a majority.

In practice the termination point of Stage I is not always clear because of the possibility that negotiations may break down in the later two stages necessitating a return to Stage I. Thus in the Dutch case, PvdA-CDA negotiations collapsed in Stage III producing a return to Stage I and the beginning of CDA-VVD negotiations, and in the second Belgian case there was a continuing overlap between the first two stages.

*Contextual components.*

1. *Procedures and practices.* These include both formal, legally required procedures and generally accepted political practices. The basic pattern of formal procedures at this stage consists of royal consultations with party and parliamentary leaders, the designation of an informateur to examine coalition possibilities, further consultations between the informateur and party leaders, the designation of a formateur and final consultations leading to negotiations on the governmental agreement and the composition of the government. This can vary with the designation of a new informateur after the first declares failure, the designation of a new informateur after a formateur fails, or the designation of mediators. In the second Belgian case, for example, two informateurs, four formateurs and two mediators were designated before the process was completed. The activities of the informateurs and formateurs are accompanied by a variety of informal consultations between parties and within parties. The process provides a preliminary assessment of the compatibility of positions without in depth multi-lateral explorations. And it gives the parties an opportunity to sort out differences among individuals and factions as these differences relate to the possibility of governmental participation.

One other formal procedure appears in the cases studied here. The issues in Belgium implied constitutional revision. This requires a 2/3 majority of parliament, and thus created the need for a larger coalition than might otherwise have been necessary.

2. *Time considerations.* These relate both to the effects of deadlines and time elapsed in the process. None of the three cases involved deadlines in the first stage. It is only in the second Belgian case that time pressures were evident in Stage I. Here the delays in beginning actual negotiations became increasingly important as the various informateurs and formateurs failed.

3. *Environmental pressures.* It is always difficult to separate the environment in which the actors operate from the interactions of the actors themselves. For example, one could argue whether spontaneous expressions of public opinion through demonstrations constitute part of the environment or introduce the « public » as an ill-defined actor in the process. Keeping this cautionary note in mind, we are concerned with expressions of public concern which are not organized by any party or group, evidence of social disturbance (strikes or riots), the general state of the economy, any natural disturbance or shortages and external pressures coming from other governments.

In the Dutch case and the first Belgian case these pressures were relatively limited. There was general public concern in the Netherlands with the state of the economy. In Belgium after the fall of the first Tindemans government there was also a general concern with the economy and continuing low level activity relative to the community problem, but in neither case is there cause to argue that an intense level of environmental pressure was associated with Stage I. The second Belgian case is somewhat different due to demonstrations concerning the perennial problem of the languages to be used in certain linguistically mixed communities (the Fourons) and public puzzlement relating to the legal questions of constitutional revision. These conditions combined with time pressures to produce a growing sense of urgency and to raise public doubts about the effectiveness of political leaders and the seriousness of their intent. In none of the cases studied here is there any evidence of pressures from outside the country.

*Relational components.*

1. *Actors.* At this point we must recall our earlier comments about monolithic actors. There is the need for continuing sensitivity to the fact that a given physical person may be acting in his own right or as the manifestation of some institutional unit or both (21). The most

(21) For a largely hostile discussion of this with regard to one of the actors in the second Belgian case see P. DEBONGNIE, *Les amis de Paul Vanden Boeynants et leurs affaires* (Brussels : Editions Vie Ouvrière, 1974). See also H. DE BONDT, *De Kumulatie van Functies door de Belgische Parlementsleden* (Louvain : Centrum voor Politieke Studies, 1971).

obvious category of actor is the party as a whole represented by an individual or the proceedings of a party decision making body. But in addition to parties viewed in this way there are individuals, parliamentary party groups, labeled party factions, ad hoc groups within parties, instances of party decision making, party study groups and staffs, economic-social-cultural groups or organizations, governmental institutions and media organs — all of which may overlap in membership.

Because the major result of Stage I is an agreement among parties to engage in further negotiations, there is a particularly strong emphasis on parties as actors. However, there is the continuing problem of distinguishing between party positions and individual or faction positions. As is indicated above this makes role relationships rather complex, and the role of individuals becomes particularly important.

In addition to individuals and the parties, the other main actors in our cases appear to be the King and Queen, party leaders, leaders in the caretaker governments, parliamentary party groups, informateurs and mediators, parliamentary officials and the media. Their role ambiguity and overlap can be illustrated with a few examples. The King and Queen respectively operate in institutional roles. In this they are assisted by their staffs in a manner invisible to the public. The question arises as to whether they are simply a channel of communication among other actors or whether they have a more active third party role. One obtains the impression that through the appointment of mediators or by urging a particular formateur to keep trying they have a role of some substance, but this is not entirely clear. For example, Queen Juliana played a relatively active role in the Dutch government formation. In late August, after the second breakdown in negotiations, she named Gerhard Veringa mediator. The Queen gave Veringa a broader mandate than she had given Joop Den Uyl. She was highly visible in efforts to keep the process going and to form a viable government as soon as possible.

The Dutch case also provides an example of relations between parties and party leaders in an exchange between Andreas Van Agt and Den Uyl. Van Agt wrote : « You want to involve the D-66 from the very beginning in the government formation. That is apparently the wish of the parliamentary party in the House whose president you are. Our parliamentary party does not express that wish » (22). In this case, Van Agt presented himself as speaking for the party but also implied a party

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(22) F. de LUGT, « PvdA and CDA : D'66 Rather Lost Than Won », *Elseviers Magazine*, June 18, 1977.

imposed constraint. Den Uyl responded that he had not received such a request from the parliamentary party, because « it would have been superfluous ». He implied that there was such unity in the party that consultation was unnecessary. Both of these individuals were particularly strong figures in their parties, and both had important career stakes in the process. In addition, Den Uyl was serving as head of a caretaker government at the time, and one of Van Agt's personal characteristics, his reputed stubbornness, was cited at several points as a particular problem — such as when he refused to accept the position of formateur upon the Queen's request.

Similar ambiguity attaches to the role of the royally appointed Belgian mediators, Willy Claes and Charles-Ferdinand Nothomb. Both were party leaders and potential ministers but were serving in relatively neutral third party roles which depended in part on their personal reputations and skills. And as one last example, the formal split between the two parts of the Belgian socialist party in the second Belgian case changed what had been two well structured factions of the party into separate parties.

2. *Actors' perceptions.* Actors are assumed to respond to the general situation and, more specifically, to the issues and the other actors. In doing this they are attempting to assess the costs and benefits for themselves and other actors of any course of action. They are also evaluating both the way their own resources can be used to attain ends and the way other actors may use their resources. These assessments and evaluations may vary with the salience actors accord to a specific issue or aspect of the situation. The two key elements here are the notions of cost and benefit and of resources.

The notions of cost and benefit include the full range of politically relevant values (23). More specifically they include concerns with such things as the general ideological-policy orientation of the government, specific policy outcomes including economic and symbolic gains as well as procedural and structural changes, gains in potential for future influence in the national arena including electoral considerations, gains in influence and status within the party or other unit and personal gains, such as prestige, personal satisfaction or the exercise of skills (24). And

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(23) See H. LASSWELL and A. KAPLAN, *Power and Society* (New Haven : Yale University Press, 1950), chapter 4.

(24) For a discussion of similar considerations in a different context see M. HALPERIN, *Bureaucratic Politics and Foreign Policy* (Washington : Brookings, 1974), Part One.

each of the gains referred to in the previous sentence implies the possibility of a loss along the same dimension. In evaluating the desirability of participation in a potential government the actor must take into account the fact that such participation may also produce association with courses of action which would be costly in terms of any of these dimensions — i.e. responsibility costs.

These considerations do not permit a simple power calculus. The total configuration of elements may include varying and incommensurable costs and benefits for different types of actors. And a single person may produce a different balance depending upon the role from which he views the situation. The complexity of the problem is emphasized when we consider the perceptions which actors have of other actors. Each actor is making his own assessment of the situation as it affects him and is making at least a rough estimate of the perceptions and calculations of other actors. As the actor asks what the other is trying to do and why, he is developing and is guided by a sense of the trustworthiness and reliability of the other actor. In this sense, trust becomes a kind of summary dimension of perceptions of other actors.

The actor must also determine what are attainable goals and how goals may be attained. This depends on the preceived level of his own resources relative to the resources of other actors, his willingness to use resources (another cost-benefit consideration) and his skill in deploying these resources. Resources are roughly of three kinds : 1° intra-group resources, 2° issue related resources, and 3° what for the moment we must call miscellaneous resources. Intra-group resources include elements relating to the base support of actors — such things as organizational backing, access to the decision making structures of the group, organizational cohesiveness and electoral strength or capacity to mobilize social sectors. Issue related resources include veto power and power to make concessions. The first of these depends upon the degree to which the actor's cooperation is needed to produce a decision and thus upon his ability to influence other actors by refusing to cooperate. The most obvious form of this power would appear to be either the number of parliamentary seats controlled or the fact of controlling a few key seats necessary to produce a majority government. The power to make concessions is related to veto power in that it refers to the capacity to induce cooperation by presenting adjustments in issue positions in exchange for reciprocal adjustments or side payments. The ability to do this may depend upon group cohesiveness. Miscellaneous resources refer to such elements as personal reputation, technical or arbitrational skills or information.

These perceptions and decisions on the use of resources underlie and are manifested in bargaining among the actors as they present proposals ostensibly directed toward reaching an agreement. In Stage I the agreement is on engaging in negotiations. In the other two stages it is on policy statements and the composition of the government. These proposals may be procedural or substantive and may be explicit or tacit (25). Actors may also engage in a form of posturing through public statements designed to create impressions in the minds of other actors. The possibility of agreement, its form and effectiveness depends on the degree of convergence in actors' positions which can be discovered or created. It is in this sense that we refer to government formation as a process of consensus building and consensus mapping.

By simply reviewing examples focussing on the parties as actors one quickly sees the complexity of the pattern of perceptions. Without denying that power considerations may have underlain other disputes, the only clear indication of basic power calculations can be found in the Dutch case where the skirmishes over D'66 participation had clear implications for the number of governmental seats to be allocated to the CDA and PvdA if a tripartite government were to be formed. The Dutch case also presents the clearest concern with ideological orientations. The early discussions there touched on the desirability of a « progressive » administration and the meaning of this term. However, these power and ideological considerations were combined with such elements as procedural disputes over the agenda for Stage II negotiations and Den Uyl's stated desire to re-establish a « basis of trust » among the parties.

Some concern with the general orientation of a potential government is also found in the two Belgian cases. In the first case the socialists were opposed to liberal participation on ideological grounds. And in the second case the debate over VU and FDF participation was a matter of balancing regional interests in the government. But the two Belgian cases were more strongly characterized by a concern with more specific policy orientations in Stage I. In the first, Tindemans, as formateur, insisted on a commitment from the parties to negotiate a community agreement as part of the government formation. As the second case developed, acceptance of the general lines of the Egmont and Stuyvenberg agreements was a condition for further negotiations. Also in this case, the unwillingness of the VU to participate in the govern-

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(25) See IKLE, *How Nations Negotiate* (New York : Harper and Row, 1964), chapters 1-3 ; and T. SCHELLING, *The Strategy of Conflict* (New York : Oxford University Press, 1963).

ment formation because of reservations about these two agreements can be seen as a concern with responsibility costs. The losses of the VU in the parliamentary elections and disputes within the party were perceived to be related to VU participation in the previous government. Finally, the question of trust was manifested in the second Belgian case in responses to Tindemans' unilateral resignation, in expressions of fear of excessive CVP power referred to in the press as « l'Etat CVP », and in the intensification of the split between the Dutch and French speaking communities.

When we move beyond examples based on the parties as actors we enter into the interplay of personal ambitions and other interests of the various formateurs, party leaders and party factions. This includes such elements as the alleged differences between Wilfried Martens and Tindemans in Belgium or the pressures exercised by the left wing of the CDA in the Netherlands. Our point here is that even in Stage I, before detailed negotiations on specific issues have begun, a very broad range of concerns must be accommodated through largely informal and loosely structured consultations. The preliminary and provisional nature of this accommodation is indicated by the occurrence of deadlocks in Stage II negotiations which necessitate a return to this first stage.

### Outcome components.

The basic contention of this study is that certain kinds of policy are at least partially made in the government formation process which constitutes a para-governmental policy arena. For this reason we are exploring links between the government formation process and policy, but we insist that government formation is part of a continuous, iterative process which cannot be viewed in simple input-output or correlational terms. Here, outcomes are best viewed in cumulative terms. What this means is that we must look at categories of outcomes for each stage in the process as well as for the total process. Outcomes are both substantive, relating to specific policy positions, and functional, relating to such things as issue definition or agenda setting.

The basic outcome in Stage I is an agreement to engage in negotiations about specific policy questions and about the distribution of seats in the government. This has a number of effects. It further specifies the substantive agenda which was partially established in the pre-formation stage. It limits the range of policy alternatives to be considered in Stage II. The fact that one set of parties with their particular orientations rather than another set of parties participates in the formation indirectly limits alternatives ; and the commitment to approach specific issues in a given way, as is illustrated by the requirement that

parties accept the general lines of the Egmont and Stuyvenberg agree-
ments in Belgium, directly limits alternatives. Finally, the outcome may
establish procedures for the negotiations to take place in Stage II.
This occurred in all three cases. Thus we see the cumulative aspect of
the government formation process as agendas are specified, alternatives
are narrowed and the terms of the negotiations are elaborated.

Stage II : *the governmental agreement.*

This is the stage during which direct attention is given to substantive
issues as the potential governing parties negotiate an agreement to govern.
Formally, Stage II begins when there is an agreement among parties
to negotiate a governmental agreement and ends when the agreement
is completed and accepted by the parties. The exact point at which it
begins may not be clear in a given case. Some bargaining on substantive
issues may take place during the consultations about participation
in negotiations. There may be substantial overlap between Stages I
and II, as occurred in the second Belgian case where the question of
who the governmental parties would be was partially unresolved even
after substantive discussions had begun. And the negotiations may break
down during this stage necessitating a return to Stage I considerations.

*Contextual components.*

1. *Procedures and practices.* Practices during Stage II are less clearly
defined than is the case in Stage I, and in specific cases result from
ad hoc understandings among the participants. The heart of the process
consists of multilateral, face to face bargaining among party delegations.
This may occur at two levels among two sets of delegations : upper level
policy negotiations dealing with the political implications of policy
and « technical » negotiations among various categories of experts
dealing with problems of wording, implementation and specific causal
implications. The negotiations among party delegations take place in a
context of formal and informal contacts among and within parties and
between parties and other social organizations.

In the Dutch case issues were largely dealt with serially. When agree-
ment was reached on one issue the negotiations moved on to the next.
This procedure was different from the first Belgian case which consisted
of a series of marathon negotiations among a mix of « political » and
« technical » negotiators dealing with broadly defined packages of com-
munity and socio-economic issues. The second Belgian case was much
less structured. There were several series of abortive negotiations ;
there was heavy use of a procedure in which the formateur developed
proposals to which the parties responded individually and less

use of multilateral, face to face negotiations ; and an additional party (the FDF) entered into discussions which were already going on. It is in this last case that the distinction between Stage I and Stage II is most difficult to make. The final procedural element is the ratification of the agreement by instances of party decision making. This may occur at the end of Stage II or after the completion of Stage III.

2. *Time considerations.* The passage of time created a general pressure to make progress in the Dutch case and the second Belgian case. This added to the general tension. Specific effects of this pressure are difficult to demonstrate, but it can be argued that in the second Belgian case time pressure together with doubts about the possibility of further compromise caused Paul Vanden Boeynants, the formateur who put together the final package, to limit his demands.

Another type of time effect can be seen in the first Belgian case. There, the use of marathon negotiations and an implied deadline may well have contributed to the outcome. The final late night sessions appear to have reduced the willingness of some parties to resist further. It could be argued that this produced a false consensus leading to second thoughts when the negotiators were out of the high pressure atmosphere of the Egmont Palace and thus to the subsequent problems with the agreement. In this case the effect of the deadline interacted with the isolation of the negotiators from other actors.

3. *Environmental pressures.* Beyond the general environmental pressures discussed in relation to Stage I, there are two more specific examples that come from Stage II. In the second Belgian case violent demonstrations concerning official language use increased pressure for a settlement of some kind on the regional issues. These occurred while the last formateur was expressing doubt about the possibility of reaching an agreement and was asking to be relieved of his mission. Although the demonstrations were one factor among others, Vanden Boeynants did develop new proposals to present at that time and did continue negotiations.

Events without a direct bearing on the issues under negotiation occurred in the Dutch case. The crisis involving Moluccan terrorists took place and was handled more or less successfully by the interim government. This was relevant to the negotiations in two ways. First it demanded the time and attention of the head of the interim government and thus may have slowed the process further. Second, it appeared to add to Den Uyl's prestige and resources — even though this did not bring him success in the end.

*Relational components.*

1. *Actors.* The set of actors involved in this stage is essentially the same as that involved in the previous stage, and the comments made there largely apply here. However, in this stage party factions and interest groups take on a more visible role. Such a role is particularly noticeable in the Dutch case where there was substantial consultation with the unions on excess profits and public sector spending. The unions made strong demands, actively pressured the PvdA and subsequently expressed dissatisfaction with the agreement produced. For example, « the Trade Unions made it clear that they would limit wage demands as part of the effort to curb unemployment and inflation only if, in return, the excess profits legislation would benefit the workers » (26). Party factions, particularly the left wing of the PvdA, were also of considerable importance in the development of the Dutch negotiations. The activities of the party factions particularly emphasize the weakness of treating parties as monoliths.

In the second Belgian case the loosely structured procedures brought the inter-party negotiations into closer contact with party decision making processes. At several points the formateurs presented to the parties proposals which were then evaluated in party meetings. Added to this is the earlier mentioned conflict and eventual shifting of leadership positions within the CVP. On another level, in addition to interest groups and party factions, in the second Belgian case there was a loosely organized front of French speaking parties which at certain points can be considered as an additional type of actor. In contrast, the first Belgian case, at least in appearance, deviates most from the set of actors we have described. Here, the use of marathon negotiations facilitates an examination of negotiations in party terms, but this did not eliminate the fact of differences within the parties and the eventual effects of these differences.

Mediators and the royal houses also played important roles during Stage II in the Dutch and second Belgian cases. At several points the Queen and King, respectively, intervened to keep negotiations going.

2. *Actors' perceptions.* In Stage II the configuration of perceptions becomes even more complex. In Stage I the actors' perceptions resolve into a single question — whether to participate in negotiations to form a government. Obviously this question can have a multitude of implications for each actor, but it provides a focal point. In Stage II the

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(26) *London Times*, July 16, 1977, p. 5a.

acceptance of the final agreement provides a theoretical focus of sorts, but this is really the result of many decisions on specific issues and points which are dependent upon a convergence of positions. The key word is convergence. An agreement does not require identical interests or the absence of mental reservations or private interpretations. The formal, final agreement to govern exists in a context of various decisions and expectations about support for the agreement and party leadership. As the agreement is negotiated the participants are faced on each issue with the continual threefold choice of accepting terms, discontinuing negotiations or trying to improve terms through further bargaining ; and those actors who are not direct participants in the negotiations are faced with continuous tactical choices concerning their relationship with the direct participants (27).

Within the limits of this discussion we can do no more than suggest some of the complexity of this configuration of perceptions through examples. The Dutch negotiations on the excess profits sharing scheme are particularly enlightening in this regard. The complexity of the problem itself and of the interactions of those potentially affected by it is such that anyone who feels that he understands it has clearly missed the point. And this was only one of the issues discussed in the Dutch government formation. The basic idea of the proposal was to transfer to the workers a portion of corporate profits remaining after the deduction of existing profit sharing sums, corporate taxes and compensation for private capital (28). This general goal was accepted by all the participants in the negotiations. The conflict was over the way this was to be done and the implications of different arrangements. The transfer of excess profits to the workers was not to take the form of direct cash payments but rather certificates of shares in a fund to be managed by the unions. This, among other things, would give the unions an increased voice in the control of the economy and thus accounts in part for union pressures on the PvdA to produce such an agreement. It also provided a basis for business hesitancy and doubts on the part of civil servants and the self-employed, who would not benefit from the plan. Further complications related to the level of taxation and thus the amount of money generated by the project. The bulk of the funds would come from the Netherlands Petroleum, owned by Shell and Esso, which through complex arrangements with public and semi-public companies is a major supplier of natural gas, with rates partially determined

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(27) IKLE, *op. cit.*, chapter 5.
(28) This discussion of the profit sharing scheme is based on F. de LUGT, « VAD : The Big Deception », *Elseviers Magazine*, 6 August, 1977.

by the Ministry of Economic Affairs. Therefore a substantial portion of the fund would come from the consumers of natural gas, including the general public, part of whom would be beneficiaries of the excess profits scheme. This blurring of interests raised questions of legality and even the threat of a future lawsuit against the government for interfering in its own profit sharing scheme through eventual contract manipulation and price setting. Further complications included the charging of administrative costs for the fund (approximately 100 civil servants) against the fund, methods of calculating the value of fixed capital and arrangements to protect share holders.

Additional details of the plan are not necessary to see the complexity of the interest relationships involved. One could argue that the effort to create consensus by counter balancing interests produced an arrangement that was so confused that no one could calculate its effects. In this context Den Uyl was pushing hard for wording which would benefit the PvdA and the unions in an attempt to cash in on the party's election gains. Because of the mistrust between the two major parties, all proposals were given the closest scrutiny. The result was a compromise, negotiated by a mediator, which was not totally satisfactory to anyone but with sufficient convergence of interests to produce an agreement.

Similar, although perhaps less arcane, examples could be taken from the Belgian cases. The point, however, should be made by now. The negotiations for the agreement on which the government would be based brought together widely divergent, subtly different and overlapping interests. The problem was to negotiate an agreement which mapped areas of consensus and concealed or postponed differences. The actors impinged upon each other in a variety of ways as they developed and pursued their strategies. The example suggests only part of this maneuvering, but it does emphasize the need for the sort of analysis of the coalition process that we are outlining here.

*Outcome components.*

The basic outcome of Stage II is the agreement to govern, which establishes an area of consensus among the members of the government coalition. This consensus may be more or less clear and more or less firm. The agreement to govern is an agreement among political parties, but it implies some degree of agreement among actors other than the signers and ratifiers of the agreement. Party heads, parliamentary parties, party factions, party bureaucracies, parliamentary officials, interest groups, etc. have in varying forms been parties to the

development of the agreement, and their acceptance of the agreement is also more or less firm.

As we indicated before, this agreement has both substantive and functional aspects and is part of a cumulative process of policy formulation. In the cases described here specific understandings were arrived at for the issues under discussion. To understand policy relating to these issues one must look at the specific, substantive understandings. A broader interest in the effects of government formation leads one to outline possible functional aspects of the agreement, the non-substantive components. First and most generally, the agreement constitutes a reference document for future action on issues. It sets the terms of further debate and action. In this sense it is *not* to be compared with a party platform which may be forgotten after the elections. Whatever action is eventually taken uses this agreement as a point of departure. The agreement to govern is part of the definition of issues as they are dealt with in subsequent steps.

Going beyond its general status as a reference document, the agreement can have various implications for policy. As we have stated before it sets part of the agenda for future governmental and legislative action. At the very least it is an agreement to do something about a specific problem, and this sense it partially defines goals. For some issues, such as the agreement in the second Belgian case to do something about unemployment, the agreement may do little more than that. In addition, the agreement may 1° indicate a range of alternative courses of action to be considered or specify a preferred alternative, 2° specify a framework to be filled in by the government at a later date, 3° indicate other procedures for reaching further agreement, 4° develop specific legislative proposals to be presented to the parliament or 5° present some combination of the above.

The second Belgian case, for example, produced an agreement to reduce the working week and specified 36 hours as the preferred level. The Egmont agreement in the first Belgian case produced highly detailed proposals for regionalization but left the specification of implementation procedures to be dealt with later — as it turned out, to be developed by an inter-party conference. The Dutch agreement on reduced public sector spending set goals and provided a framework to be filled in by the government. On the particularly vexed issue of abortion, this same agreement partially deferred the issue and set out procedures for settling it by giving the government a specific period of time to produce legislation and permitting a free parliamentary vote if the government did not meet the deadline. As a final example, the agreement on regionalization in the second Belgian case presented a complex com-

bination of actions by providing for the immediate establishment of independent administrations for regional executives, a framework for the development of a second stage of steps toward regionalization to be elaborated by the government and subsequent parliamentary action on the ultimate final package. These examples show that the effects of the agreement to govern can range from the development of specific policies to be directly implemented to the provision of various components in a cumulative policy process. We shall return to this point in our brief discussion of the post-formation stage.

Stage III : *the allocation of portfolios.*

This stage completes the government formation through the allocation of portfolios in the government. Its end is clearly marked by the installation of the government. Its beginning is less clear, as has been previously indicated.

*Contextual components.*

1. *Procedures and practices.* This is procedurally the least structured and least visible of the three stages. Belgian practice calls for a balance of ministers between the two language groups. The Dutch have examined various proposals for reform of the whole process of government formation (29), but, other than the expectation that the number of seats a party receives in the government will roughly reflect parliamentary seats, there are no clearly established practices in this stage.

2. *Time considerations.* The cases show no evidence of effects of time pressures or deadlines during this stage other than possible cumulative effects of the process as a whole. Even with the Stage III breakdown in the Dutch case, Stage III was in all cases the briefest and most expeditiously handled. Significant decisions were made in this stage, but the dimensions of the problems were clear enough to allow relatively rapid action.

3. *Environmental pressures.* Here again there is nothing to distinguish Stage III from Stage II. The same general environmental considerations applied. Thus the general context of Stage III can be seen as a brief continuation of Stage II.

*Relational Components.*

1. *Actors.* Three conditions appear to characterize Stage III : it is relatively short ; procedures are relatively closed ; and it involves deci-

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(29) See ANDEWEG, van der TAK and DITTRICH, *op. cit.*

sions among parties about individuals who will occupy ministerial seats. Because of this, particular emphasis falls on parties, party factions and individual party leaders as actors. Other kinds of actors may be involved, but there is a very clear focus on these three types. The individual takes on particular importance at this point. He is both a symbol of a policy or ideological orientation and the representative of a particular party segment. Further, the decisions taken affect him personally, so that his own preferences and career ambitions come clearly into play. Thus we see, for example, the symbolic importance of the conservative CDA member Frans Andriessen in the Dutch case and the various career compensations for those, such as Charles Nothomb of the PSC, who did not receive ministerial posts in the second Belgian case.

2. *Actors' perceptions.* The two key questions at this stage are how many seats will be distributed to each of the parties and party factions, and who will occupy these seats. The final package tends to be a delicate balancing of responses to actor demands. The delicacy of this balance arises because the package is not simply a distribution of voting power among parties, but a much more subtle distribution of benefits The concern is not only with the number of seats but also with the prestige of a particular portfolio and the access it gives to a particular sector or to particular levers of power. For example, in the Dutch case before negotiations between the PvdA, the CDA and D'66 collapsed, consideration was being given to an 8-7-1, a 7-7-1 and a 7-7-2 distribution. The key issues in these discussions were the implications of specific seats and the total balance. The CDA parliamentary party insisted that its leader, Van Agt, receives the ministry of justice and reacted strongly when Van Agt offered to withdraw from consideration for this position. The PvdA tried to balance giving the ministry of justice to Van Agt by making it conditional on an 8-7-1 seat distribution. This was followed by a series of compromise adjustments responding, inter alia, to the CDA desire for greater representation in socio-economic ministries as opposed to more technical ministries. The total package which was agreed upon in the direct negotiations among the parties was not acceptable to one faction of the PvdA, and their attempt to exercise veto power resulted, as we have noted before, in new talks with new participants and a CDA-VVD government. The first Belgian case presents an example of another effort by party elements to influence the government package. Here, dissatisfaction with the number of PSC seats in certain areas led the party committee to instruct their ministers not to attend the swearing-in ceremony. This problem was quickly resolved and produced no changes in the distribution of seats. And we have already alluded to the use of party and parliamentary offices in the second Belgian case as a means

of compensating both individuals and parties by extending the balancing process beyond the distribution of governmental portfolios.

To repeat the point we have been trying to make here, in Stage III the actors' assessments of costs and benefits include not only a power calculus expressed in numbers of seats but also specific policy, ideological and career considerations. These are expressed in a distribution of portfolios, but both portfolios and the individuals who hold them have more than one meaning and more than one value to those attempting to arrive at agreement on the distribution.

*Outcome components.*

The obvious outcome of this particular stage is that the process is completed, a government is installed, and policy issues are transferred back into governmental and parliamentary arenas. The government then consists of a set of individuals who at least nominally share the consensus expressed in the agreement to govern and who are at least nominally supported by instances of party decision making and other political actors. With this final element the cumulative consensus mapping and policy formulation process inherent in government formation is complete. And in this sense policy can be said to have been either made or shaped to the degree and in the manner described in the agreement to govern as we have indicated in our discussion of Stage II. The implementation of this policy, the further shaping of policy are to be found in other arenas.

*The post-formation stage.*

To pursue the development of policy into the post-formation stage is to examine the actions taken in those other arenas and to move on to the next iteration of the process as the post-formation stage of one government formation blurs into the pre-formation stage of the next government formation. To do this is to remove the limits we have placed on our study and let it expand out into an examination of the whole political process in the polities under consideration. Although we cannot do this, it is important that we remind ourselves once again that the process we have been looking at is embedded in a larger set of processes and is only one policy making arena among a number of interrelated and loosely defined arenas. And it is still legitimate within the limits of what we are trying to do to ask for some information about what happens to the governmental agreement after the government takes office and to wonder what the conditions are that have a potential influence on this outcome. All of the components we have dis-

cussed are relevant here, but we will not attempt to look at them in the manner that we have for the previous stages.

The main possible outcomes of the governmental agreement appear to be the following. First, actual legislation drafted in the context of the governmental agreement can be ratified by the parliament and put into effect. This is essentially what happened with the arrangements for the first stage of regionalization developed in the second Belgian case. These were approved immediately. Second, there may be the elaboration of legislation or other forms of policy within the limits and following the procedures prescribed by the agreement. There is the possibility for substantial variation here depending upon the clarity of the limits and procedures. This is largely what has happened in the Dutch case with regard to abortion and public sector spending. There may be some redefinition of elements of the agreement in this process, but the agreement becomes the point of departure for such redefinition. Third, there may be a delay or postponement of action as other issues receive priority. This was the case, at least in the early phases of the Van Agt government, with the land speculation proposals which, ironically, were the trigger for the fall of the previous government. Fourth, there may be the discovery of differences in perceptions of the agreement which create obstacles to further cooperation in the coalition. This seems to be at least one of the confused set of elements that led to the fall of the Tindemans government and the failure by that government to implement the Egmont and Stuyvenberg agreements. In this example the iterative character of the process is emphasized, because the next government formation, our second Belgian case, re-established a consensus around a partially redefined form of these agreements and led to a degree of implementation.

It is important to note that in this regard making policy through government formation is not greatly different from making policy in other arenas. It can be argued that all of these developments, mutatis mutandis, are possible results of policy development in other arenas. Parliamentary or governmental action may be directly implemented or may be redefined in a variety of ways or may not be implemented at all. Here again we would note the general similarity of this process to some of the considerations outlined in the bureaucratic politics literature.

If, as we argue, the formation creates or maps a policy specific area of consensus, what kinds of conditions contribute to the breakdown of the consensus and the fall of the government ? This question closes the circle and brings us back to the pre-formation stage. Briefly the possibilities appear to include, but are not limited to, the following. Theoretically at least, the substantial accomplishment of the elements of

the agreement to govern could exhaust the consensus and thus require a new government formation process. Second, and this is an expansion of a point made above, the discovery that differences in the preceptions of the agreement are so great that no joint action is possible could also lead to government collapse. This could be due to lack of clarity in the agreement, the use of the agreement to put off or conceal basic differences or simple bad faith by parties to the agreement. Third, the set of actors involved in the process could change. This could take the form of new parties, the resignation or death of party leaders or the mobilization of previously inactive groups. Fourth, some characteristics of the actors could change. This might involve changes in resources of parties, party factions or individuals. Fifth, new issues outside the consensus may emerge as the result of various environmental conditions. And finally, various legal requirements such as scheduled elections or procedures for constitutional amendment can force a new government formation process. Obviously these elements may be interrelated, and each of them raises questions about its own causes. For example, the « emergence » of new issues might be the result of conscious decisions by one of the actors who sees the costs of continued participation in the government as being too high. Thus, one last time, we again see the need to remember the links between the process we have described and the functioning of the whole political system.

**Final comments.**

Having modified the simplifying assumptions frequently used in coalition theory has made it possible to look in more detail at the links between the development of policy and the development of government coalitions. In effect, for a period of time the two processes merge. Negotiations on policy are coalition negotiations and vice versa. What we have seen can be described as a series of approximations and developing commitments which take place at several levels or, to put it differently, in sets of nested iterative processes.

The problem in looking at such complex processes is to avoid getting lost in detail. Our approach to this problem has been to disaggregate the process, first, by dividing it into three stages and, second, by specifying categories of process components in the stages. What sorts of final considerations does this disaggregation present and what sorts of questions does it raise ? We will look briefly at three sets of considerations : 1° those concerning relationships between the stages, 2° those concerning the relative importance of the various components of the government formation process within each of the stages, and 3° those

concerning the effects of the type of political system as a whole on the government formation process as described here.

We have referred to a series of approximations and developing commitments. It should be added with regard to the relationship between stages that these are interdependent and contingent commitments. If the process works smoothly, the actors move from a commitment to explore specific possibilities with specific other actors, to a commitment to a policy package of varying specificity and on to a commitment to a distribution of seats in the government which includes a distribution of specific portfolios and an assignment of these portfolios to specific individuals. These commitments are contingent in the sense that they depend upon the whole process being completed, but the process is also one of development, as each stage makes possible the next and as the implications of the nascent coalition are specified. One is tempted to ask which of these stages and commitments is the most important to the process, but this question would seem to be misleading given the necessity of them all. The more useful questions would appear to relate to the nature of the difficulties presented by each stage and the dimensions or characteristics of each stage that have an impact on the next stage. There has been a tendency in coalition studies to give greatest attention to what we have described as the third stage (30). In fact, for some scholars the coalition process would appear to consist of the third stage alone. However, in the cases presented here the second stage was generally the most time consuming and associated with the greatest apparent difficulties. Having said this, we should note the difference between the Dutch case and the two Belgian cases. In the latter two cases the third stage appeared to have presented no major difficulties and to have been rapidly negotiated once the second stage commitments were made. In the Dutch case, by contrast, it was in the third stage that the process of commitment broke down necessitating a return to the beginning of the process. Is this breakdown to be seen uniquely in terms of particular problems within the third stage or can its origins be traced to problems of commitment in the previous stages ?

The relationships between stages must be explored in terms of patterns within stages. The three sets of components (contextual, relational and outcome) we have used to disaggregate the individual stages have allowed us to show a general configuration of interaction. The question here concerns what further refinement of these components is desirable. If the relationships between the stages depend in part on the pattern of developing commitments, it follows that the outcome components

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(30) Cf. GROENNINGS *et al.*, *op. cit.*, chapter 3.

within each stage take on a particular analytic importance. What we have tried to do is articulate different types of outcome and thus different types of commitment. Is it possible to turn these types into more specific dimensions or degrees, keeping in mind that the combination of outcomes in each stage, particularly the second, includes elements which could have different values on a given dimension and which presumably have a different political meaning in combination they might have singly ? The particular problem that arises is that we are lacking in conceptual tools for dealing with dynamic processes characterized by complex, multi-lateral negotiations and interactions. Scholars like Allison, Steinbruner and Halperin have been effective in drawing attention to such processes within bureaucratic structures and have provided the means to look at their general contours, but we have a long way to go before we have effective tools to examine the effects of what we have called relational components or outcome components (31).

The last set of considerations to be noted here relates to the effect of the political system as a whole on the government formation process. We have been looking at government formation in two countries. To what degree, then, have we been looking at processes unique to these countries and to what degree are we looking at a particular manifestation of a general process ? Our argument from the beginning has been that coalition formation necessarily involves policy considerations as part of the process of mapping areas of agreement and creating a payoff structure through policy agreements. The countries we have been looking at are particularly useful as illustrations of the process because of the high degree to which they use government formation processes to develop policy. The question relating to these countries then is that of why government formation is emphasized so much as an instrument of policy formulation to the detriment of more traditional institutional arenas. Two related lines of exploration suggest themselves. The first relates to the structure of the issues to be dealt with. Is there something about the pattern of issues and their relationship to political-social structures that predisposes to such extra-institutional bargaining ? The literature on consociational democracy appears to be relevant here (32).

(31) G. ALLISON, *Essence of Decision* (Boston : Little, Brown, 1971). HALPERIN, *op. cit. ;* J. STEINBRUNER, *The Cybernetic Theory of Decision* (Princeton : Princeton University Press, 1974).

(32) See A. LIJPHART, *The Politics of Accommodation* (Berkeley : University of California Press, 1968); *Democracy in Plural Societies* (New Haven : Yale University Press, 1977) ; « Consociational Democracy », *World Politics,* Vol. XXI, N° 2, 1969. See also V. LORWIN. «Belgium : Religion, Class and Language in National Politics» in R. DAHL, ed., *Political Oppositions in Western Democracies* (New Haven : Yale University Press, 1966).

The second line of exploration focusses more directly on institutional and organizational structures. Our emphasis on the non-monolithic nature of actors suggests that perhaps particular aspects of the internal structure of parties and other organizations may be relevant. For, example, are there particular characteristics of party leadership or party cohesiveness which emphasize the processes we have seen? Does the fact that party research capabilities are located in party study bureaus rather than in parliament make a difference? Or do the links between parties and various cultural and economic organizations give the extra-parliamentary party structures an importance as a point of access to decision making that leads to extra-institutional bargaining?

In the end, the situation we have been describing is one where there is a number of parties and organizations, none of which is in a position to control the formal decision making institutions. Further, the process of decision making through the formal institutions could work more to the benefit of some groups than others. For the institutions to function, i.e. for policy to be made in parliament and the administration rather than in the government formation arena, there is the need for agreement not only about the nature of the institutions but also about the policies they will be allowed to produce. If, because of divisions within the elite or because of the nature of the issues salient in a country, such agreement does not generally exist, it must be specified. That is what the government formation arena makes possible. It places the parties and organizations in an arena where their relationships and ability to exercise influence are more directly related to their resources and are not modified by the more restricting conventions of institutional structures. The government formation arena allows the relevant actors to specify, for a time, the terms under which the institutions will operate. This pattern is characteristic of Belgium and the Netherlands, but the functions involved and the conditions that produce them do not appear to be unique.

## Summary : Government formation and policy formulation : patterns in Belgium and the Netherlands.

*Based on a study of three Belgian and Dutch government formations, this article examines the relationship between the formation of government coalitions and the formulation of public policy. The government formation process is disaggregated into three stages : the selection of participants in the bargaining process, the negotiation of the governmental agreement and the allocation of portfolios. These stages are then discussed in the context of a schema which focusses on the effects of contextual, relational and outcome components. By modifying assumptions made in traditional coalition studies, the government formation process is seen as involving the transfer of issues from institutional arenas to a non-institutional arena in which bargaining processes are used to map and develop issue specific areas of consensus.*