

Coalition Politics in Western Europe: Case of Germany, Italy and France

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Abstract

The Stability of West German political system has been based on the ability and willingness of all relevant social groups and political parties to cooperate within the accepted constitutional, legal, and institutional framework. France represents a variant of coalition-building in which the President has important powers in coalition formation. In such a semi-presidential system coalition formation seems to be the most important presidential prerogative. Most Presidents have extensively used their power to select candidates for the position of prime ministers, given them instructions for party negotiations. The second aspect is the existence of an electoral system wherein the parties use the second ballot for the building of coalitions. The instability and stalemate in Italian politics has been the result of fragmented and factionalized parties, in which political conflict or ‘crisis’ were created frequently. One aspect which distinguished Italy from other West European democracies is the perennial lack of political alteration” which reflects “a political culture characterized by a chronic lack of trust in parties and movements that are not in government.

Keywords: *Coalition, Electoral, Government, Parties, Politics.*

Introduction

The erosion of the classical British two-party system (where two or only two cohesive parties existed) and reform of electoral systems in the direction of proportional representation has transformed, parliamentary democracies in the twentieth century into multiparty systems. In such a multiparty system where three or more parties seek to win parliamentary seats, there is always the possibility that none of them is in a position to attain a parliamentary majority alone. Such “minority situations” enable coalition formation of one or another form. They can be parliamentary alliances where one minority government from day-to-day and from issue-to-issue seeks support in parliament.¹ In reality, this possibility has become the norm in majority of the parliamentary governmental system of the world.² Postwar Western Europe political culture has,

¹ Wolfgang C. Mueller and Kaare Strom, “Koalitionsregierungen in Westeuropaeine Einleitung,” in Wolfgang C. Mueller and Kaare Strom, eds., *Koalitionsregierungen in Westeuropa : Bildung, Arbeitsweise and Beendigung* (Vienna, 1997), pp.9.

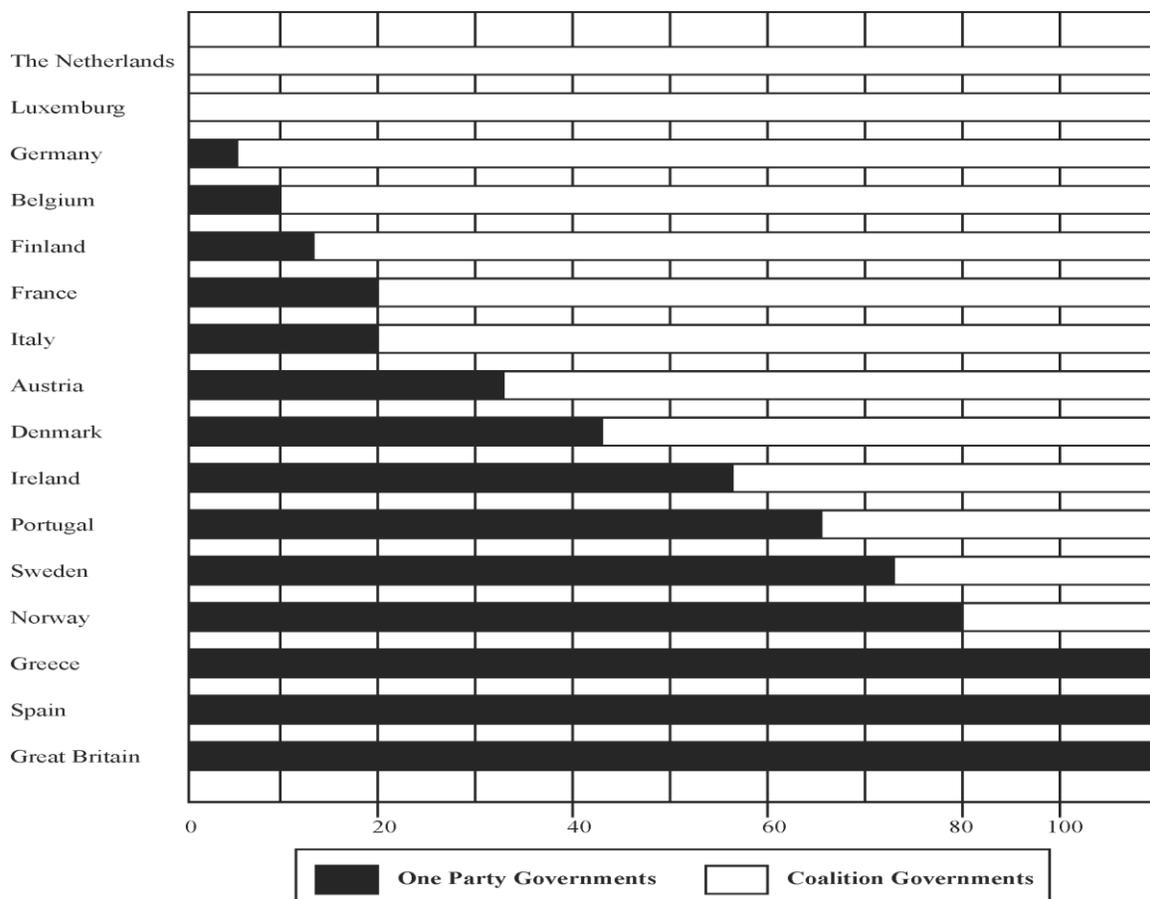
² Ibid.

in fact, led to coalition governments with great stability and continuity (with the possible exception of Italy).³ With very few exceptions, minority cabinets have tended to form in more than three party system, such as Denmark, Italy, Norway and Sweden; minority cabinets have very rarely formed in three-party, two-dimensional systems such as Austria and Germany.⁴

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Table-1

Coalition and One-party Governments in West Europe, 1945-99



³ See, for example, Ian Budge and Hans Keman, *Parties and Democracy: Coalition Formation and Government Functioning in Twenty States* (Oxford, 1990); Vernon Bogdanor, *Coalition Government in Western Europe* (London, 1983); Eric C Browne and John Dreijmanis, eds., *Government Coalitions in Western Democracies* (New York 1983); Michael Laver and Ian Budge, eds., *Party Politics and Coalition Government* (London, 1992); Michael Laver and Normal Schofield, *Multiparty Governments: The Politics of Coalition in Europe* (Oxford, 1990); Micheal Laver and Kenneth Shepsle, *Making and Breaking Governments Cabinets and Legislatures in Parliamentary Democracies* (Cambridge, 1996).

⁴ Carol A. Mershon, "Expectations and Informal Rules in Coalition Formation," *Comparative Political Studies*, Vol. 27, no. 1, April 1994, p.45.

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Notes:

1. Cabinets without a party basis have not been taken into account.
2. For Greece, Portugal and Spain, only the period since the transition to democracy in the 1970s has been included and for Italy the period up to 22 December 1994.

Source: Wolfgang C. Mueller and Kaare Strom, “Koalitionsregierungen in Westeuropa - cine Einleitung,” in Wolfgang C: Mueller and Kaare Strom eds., *Koalitionsregierungen in Westeuropa : Bildung, Arbeitswe and Beendigung* (Vienna, 1977), p.10.

Table 1 represents coalition governments and one party governments in sixteen West European countries. Of these, three (Britain, Spain and Greece) represent countries where a one party government dominates or is the only prevalent form of government in the post-World War II era. Thirteen countries are either those where all postwar governments have been coalitions of where coalitions have been disastrous or at least a hopeful form of government. Even in the so-called one party governments there were times when minority situations (e.g. partly in Spain and from 1976-1979 in Britain) existed which led to the formation of parliamentary coalitions.⁵

The paper, firstly discusses major facets of coalition governance in Western Europe. It then goes on to discuss the experience with coalition governments in three Continental polities - the Federal Republic of Germany, France and Italy.

1. Facets of Coalition Governance in Western Europe

In a parliamentary system, parties choose strategies with attention to both elections and to the subsequent bargaining over government formation and their choices of platforms may be viewed as a balancing electoral incentives and government formation incentives.⁶ The two most important factors for the bargaining power of a party, in general, are (a) its share of parliamentary seats and (b) its spatial position against the other parties.⁷

1. a. Legislative-Executive Relations

Many analyses of coalition behaviour in Western Europe have tended to make no distinction between legislative and executive branches, and the two are clearly not the mirror images of each. Moreover, the prevalence of “minority coalitions” in governments across Western Europe, while hardly the norm, further demonstrates that a majority in one branch does not imply or require the same in another.⁸ In fact, the most serious conflicts do not seem to lie between the two institutional arenas of government and parliament, but between parties and party factions that are represented both in the government and the parliament.⁹ Furthermore, government coalitions may survive, despite

⁵ *Ibid.*, p.11.

⁶ David P. Bason, “Government Formation and Endogenous Parties,” *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 87, no. 1 March, 1993, pp.43-44.

⁷ Mershon, *Op. cit.*, p.17.

⁸ Mary L. Volcansek, “Coalition Composition and Legislature Outcomes in Italy,” *West European politics*, Vol. 22, no. 1, January 1999, p.110.

⁹ Michael Laver and Kenneth A. Shepsle, *Making and Breaking Governments: Cabinets and Legislature in Parliamentary Democracies* (Cambridge, 1996), p. 12. Cited in Volcansek, *op. cit.*, p. 110.

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the absence of legislative successes, because of the absence of credible alternatives.¹⁰ In addition, the complexity of the bargaining environment in which a government is formed and within which the government must survive has a major impact upon its durability. Countries (like Italy) with complex party systems and hence complex bargaining environments have witnessed very short-lived governments. Cabinets in such systems seem to be susceptible to random shocks.¹¹

1. b. Policy Making

The game of governing in parliamentary democracies characterized by coalition governments can be broken into four stages: pre-election in which parties try to position themselves, actual elections, coalition bargaining, and finally legislating when the government coalition attempts to implement policy.¹² Policy-making and policy implementation are crucial elements in coalition formation and behaviour. Parties are instruments of their supporters' interests, and their policy positions are assumed to be the same. However, the outcome of government formation bargaining is a policy different from the policy of a party must make concession to its government partner.¹³ However, the general trend in Western Europe is executive dominance of policy-making, since most legislative initiatives come from the government departments as they hold "agenda power". Policy-making, in fact, becomes a joint endeavour of government and parliament. However, that does not mean that legislative coalitions necessarily equal governing coalitions. Experience in Western Europe demonstrates that there is "nothing magical about a majority when it comes to forming a government" nor does a legislative majority reflected by the parties in the government ensure that a policy programme will pass successfully.¹⁴

Party policy clearly influences the formation of coalitions since some parties in all West European countries, as Budge and Laver point out, do get "policy rewards" from being in government. Additional factors influencing coalition outcomes seem to be the relative size of parties and their general ideological positioning evident in long-term structures and cleavages within different party systems.

Thus, where historical developments, crystallized in electoral cleavages, have produced two fairly equal, competing blocs, one or the other will control government according to the results of a particular election. On the other hand, where historical and electoral developments produce more amorphous coalition governments, the links between government policy and party membership become noticeably weaker. Even membership of the coalition may become subject to chance factors as payoffs become less clear.¹⁵

¹⁰ Michael Laver Kenneth A. Shepsle, "Coalitions and Cabinet Government," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 84, no.2, September 1990, p.885.

¹¹ Gary King James E. Alt, Nancy Elizabeth Burns and Michael Laver, "A Unified Model of Cabinet Dissolution in Parliamentary Democracies," *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 34, no.3, August 1990, p.869.

¹² Itai Sen, "A Model of Coalition Formation : Theory and Evidence," *Journal of politics*, Vol. no. 2, May 1966 pp. 354-356.

¹³ Baron, *Op. cit.*, pp. 43-44.

¹⁴ Michael Gallagher, Michael Laver and Peter Mair, *Representative Government in Modern Europe* (New York, 1992), pp.320, cited in Volcancek, no.8, p.97.

¹⁵ Ian Budge and Michael Laver, "The Policy Basis of Government Coalitions: A Comparative Investigation," *British Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 23, 1993, 499-519, especially 518-519.

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1. c. Changing Nature of Electoral Behaviour

Changes in party systems and voting behaviour in Western Europe are having uncertain effects on coalition formation. Electorates in many Western European countries in the 1990s are increasingly characterised by a permanent state of change in which politics is paramount in determining electoral outcomes. They are determined less and less by the old traditions, ideologies, religion, social origin or party loyalties and more and more by “the capacities of the parties to achieve goals and solve problems in chief political fields and by the competence of their leaderships.”¹⁶ Voting has become uninhibitedly pragmatic, more issue oriented in many West European countries. Voter choice is specifically influenced by perceptions of personal economic circumstances, the general state of the economy, and party competence at economic management. This process has been accelerated by the continued decline of old environments, traditional party loyalties, political frustration and disillusionment with mainstream/national parties. The declining popularity and decline in the share of the vote of major parties is enabling many smaller parties to pick up the votes and gain access to parliament. The political arena has become much more open and accessible to new social movements and citizens’ initiatives since the 1980s, and political parties of a new type have been challenging old institutional patterns.

A direct consequence of this trend has been a decline in voter turnout, protests, anti-positions and apathy in many member states of the European Union. Volatility has tended to become a kind of “permanent condition” of European electorates since the late 1980s. This has led to a consistent, substantial growth in the floating vote and the number of non-voters (e.g. in Germany they constituted nearly one third in the 1998 federal elections).

1. d. No-confidence Motions

In Western Europe removal of governments by parliaments through no confidence votes has become so “exceptional that it can no longer be called a parliamentary means of controlling the government.”¹⁷

1. e. Electoral Rules

The prevalence of a system of proportional representation in many West European countries (Germany, Austria, the Netherlands, Switzerland, and Denmark) has accelerated the decline of the party system’s concentration.¹⁸ This system prevents one party to have a majority in parliament. This, in turn, makes coalition cabinets necessary. As a result, coalition building tends to become more and more complex, indirect proportion to the complexity of the decomposing party system.

Another result of this is that it diminishes the power of the head- of government—the main beneficiary of clear one party majorities in parliament. The more dependent he is on “complex configurations in parliament and on the

¹⁶ Hans Joachim Veen, “Illusions of Civil Society: The People’s Parties in the Crisis of Integration,” in Josef Thesing and Wilhelm Hofmeister, eds., *Political Parties in Democracy : Role and Functions of Political Parties in the Political System of the Federal Republic of Germany* (Sankt Augustin, 1995), p.452.

¹⁷ Yves Meny, *Government and Politics in Western Europe* (Oxford, 1990), p.184; John D. Huber “The Vote of Confidence in Parliament Democracies,” *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 90, no.2, June 1996, p.270.

¹⁸ See Arend Ljphart, *Electoral Systems and Party Systems: A Study of Twenty Seven Democracies, 1945-1990* (Oxford, 1994).

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goodwill of other parties, the less power he has to make decisions on policy.”¹⁹ Thus, proportional representation coupled with the decomposition of party systems make more Continental polities less like that of the British prime minister and more similar to that of the Italian, Danish, Belgian and Dutch prime ministers, who are dependent on the confidence of small political parties. The break-up of the two-and-a-half party systems and the deconcentration of party systems of smaller European democracies with proportional representation enabled the smaller parties to play a role in coalition formation since it was no longer possible to declare indisputable winners and losers.²⁰

1. f. Extreme Right-wing Parties

The growing popularity and electoral success of extreme right wing parties like the National Front in France or the Freedom Party in Austria has led to a radicalizing of mainstream agendas. In reality, they are “true agents of populist anti-party sentiment - criticism aimed at the policies and/or behaviour of other parties.”²¹ The success of extreme-right parties is indicative of “a long-term shift in the advanced industrial societies of Western Europe from class-based to ‘value-based’, or ‘issue-based’, politics.”²² Western European electorates in some countries have not been inclined to give them enough support so that they cross parliamentary entry threshold limits. Moreover, owing to their populist, anti-establishment, anti-immigration,²³ xenophobic attitude they tend to become isolated and it becomes impossible or nearly impossible for them to find coalition partners.²⁴

1. g. Regional Parties

¹⁹ Anton Pelinka, *Austria: Out of the Shadows of the Past* (Boulder, Col., 1998), p.212.

²⁰ The absence of a result in politics has been called the Rashomon syndrome by La Palombara. This is a total contradiction of the Anglo-American understanding of democracy, of the two party system in which there is always a clear distribution of roles: winner and loser, government and opposition. The Rashomon syndrome is based on the experience that all competing parties have reasons to argue to have won or lost, depending on the criteria used. The ultimate consequence of the Rashomon syndrome is that it suspends the zero-sum game nature of Competitive democracy. See Joseph La Palombara, *Democracy, Italian Style* (New Haven, 1987), pp. 129, 131; Pelinka, *Op. cit.*, p.218-219.

²¹ Piero Ignazi, “The Crisis of Parties and the Rise of New Political Parties,” *Party Politics* (London), Vol. 2, no. 4, October 1996, p. 560; Cas Mudde, “The Paradox of the Anti-Party Party : Insights from the Extreme Rights”, *Party Politics* (London), Vol. 2, no. 2, April 1996, pp. 272-273.

²² James G. Shields, “The Politics of Disaffection France in the 1980s,” in John Gaffney and Eva Kolinsky, eds., *Political Culture in France and Germany* (London, 1991), p.80.

²³ Rajendra K. Jain, “Fortifying the ‘Fortress’: Immigration and Politics in the European Union,” *International Studies* (New Delhi), Vol. 34, no. 2, April-June 1997, pp.163-192; Rajendra K. Jain, “East-West Migration in the Nineties,” *Journal of Peace Research* (New Delhi), Vol. 3, nos. 16-17, May- August 1996, pp. 44-61; Rajendra K. Jain, “Migration in Germany’ Issues and Responses,” *India International Centre Quarterly* (New Delhi), Vol. 20, no. 4, Winter 1993, pp. 19-38.

²⁴ In France, “the extreme right and extreme left are isolated, or used to discredit adversaries : he who allies with them takes a serious risk of losing credibility in the constituencies.” See Francesco Sidoti, “The significance of Italian Elections,” *Government and Opposition*, Vol.29, no. 3, p. 344. In Austria the pursuit of a populist, anti-establishment, anti-elitist style by the Freedom Party of Austria (FPO) yielded dividends with the electorate, but lost it because of its confrontational methods had alienated all the other parties. The FPO became isolated and is finding it impossible or nearly impossible to find coalition partners because its right-wing, populist, xenophobic attitude makes it undesirable as a coalition partner. The lack of alternatives has led to a consolidation of a “grand coalition” in the 1990s in Austria between the Socialist Party of Austria (SPO) and the Austrian People’s Party (OVP), see Pelinka, *op. cit.*, pp. 77-78 and 219.

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There is a growth in regional cleavages in some West European countries as a result of the channelization of anti-centrist emotions through party line. Moreover with the decline of party concentration, the party system's capacity to integrate regional divergence's also declined and regional antagonism came into the open. In fact, as "traditional loyalties break down, the absence of their integrating effects is being felt. The rise of regional controversies is one of the foreseeable results."²⁵ The process of emancipating regions from central governments is a much more common phenomenon in countries such as Italy or Belgium.²⁶

2. Coalition Governance in Germany

The decline in the number of parties,²⁷ the "deideologization of West German politics, and the disappearance of strong party ties with narrow class interests have interacted with various legal and political arrangements to produce a workable stable parliamentary majority in the Federal Republic which has enabled political parties to play a pivotal role in the political system."²⁸ The development of general public support for the democratic institutions affected the party system in Germany in two important ways. First, parties opposed to the regime found it impossible to obtain even the minimum number of votes they needed to gain parliamentary representation. Thus, the number of parties and the range of party alternatives were reduced. Second, positive attitudes enabled the parties to establish themselves securely in German public life with public financial and legal privileges. They could not be "easily challenged by mass movements or other forms of unconventional political participation."²⁹

Four long-established rules have characterized postwar German politics. Germany can be governed only from the political centre; Germany can be governed only by a coalition; electoral results are bi-polar; and federal government's re-elected.³⁰

²⁵ Pelinka, op. cit., p.228.

²⁶ The Belgian Vlaams Blok (Flemish Block) initially followed the path of Flemish nationalism (more autonomy for the Flanders) but subsequently it advocated not only freedom from the francophone Belgians but also from all foreign presence. The transformation of Belgium into a true federal state has been the result of a long sequence of political transformations from a centralized state. Flanders, the Dutch-speaking part of Belgium, is one of the states. See, for example, William M. Downs, "Federalism Achieved : The Belgian Elections of May 1995," *West European Politics*, Vol. 19, No. 1, January 1996, pp. 168-175.

²⁷ After the first Bundestag election of 1949 when ten parties secured representation, the number of parties shrank rapidly. What developed was a bipolar bloc system. Since 1982, the parties have reversed the trend to consolidation and concentration in the party system and taken an increased share of the poll.

²⁸ Stephen L. Fisher, *The Minor Parties of the Federal Republic of Germany: Toward a Comparative Theory of Minor Parties* (The Hague, 1974), p. 59.

²⁹ Gerhard Locwenberg, "The Development of the German Party System," Karl H. Cerny, ed., *Germany at the Polls: The Bundestag Election of 1976* (Washington, D.C., 1978), p. 25.

³⁰ Peter Pulazer, "The West German Federal Election of 25 January 1987," *Electoral Studies* (Oxford), August 1987.

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Table 2

Coalition Governments in Germany, 1949-2018

Term of Government	Chancellor	Coalition	Changes during term of office
1 st Legislature 1949-53	Adenauer	CDU/CSU-FDP-DP	GB/BHE quits coalition 1955; FDP splits, ministers form FVP and stay in government; the part leaves coalition 1956
2 nd Legislature 1957-61	Adenauer	CDU/CSU-FDP-DP-GB/BHE	Most of the MPs of DP join the CDU in 1960
3 rd Legislature 1961-63	Adenauer	CDU/CSU-FDP	Adenauer resigns in October 1963
4 th Legislature 1963-65	Erhard	CDU/CSU-FDP	None
5 th Legislature 1965-66	Erhard	CDU/CSU-FDP	FDP leaves govt. in Oct 1966; minority government until Dec 1966
6 th Legislature 1966-69	Kiesinger	CDU/CSU-SPD	'Grand Coalition'
6 th Legislature 1969-72	Brandt	SPD/FDP	After deflection from coalition and a failed 'constructive vote of no confidence' early elections in 1972
7 th Legislature 1972-74	Brandt	SPD/FDP	Brandt resigns in May 1974
8 th Legislature 1974-76	Schmidt	SPD/FDP	None
8 th Legislature 1976-80	Schmidt	SPD-FDP	None
9 th Legislature 1980-82	Schmidt	SPD-FDP	After FDP defects, Schmidt coalition is deposed by a vote of no confidence
9 th Legislature 1982-83	Kohl	CDU/CSU-FDP	Voted into office by a new coalition
10 th Legislature 1983-87	Kohl	CDU/CSU-FDP	Early federal elections

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Term of Government	Chancellor	Coalition	Changes during term of office
11 th Legislature 1987-90	Kohl	CDU/CSU-FDP	None
12 th Legislature 1990-94	Kohl	CDU/CSU-FDP	First all German elections
13 th Legislature 1994-98	Kohl	CDU/CSU-FDP	None
14 th Legislature 1998	Schroeder	SPD-Greens/ Buendnis go	None
15 th Legislature 2002	Schroeder	SPD-Greens/ Buendnis go	Grand Coalition
16 th Legislature 2005	Angela Merkel	CDU/CSU-SPD	Grand Coalition
17 th Legislature 2009	Angela Merkel	CDU/CSU-FDP	Grand Coalition
18 th Legislature 2013	Angela Merkel	CDU/CSU-SPD	Grand Coalition
19 th Legislature 2017	Angela Merkel	CDU/CSU-SPD	Grand Coalition

Source: Adapted from Gert-Joachim Glaessner, "Government and Political Order", in : Gordon Smith, William E. Paterson and Stephen Padgett, eds., *Developments in German Politics 1* (Basingstoke. 1997), p.32. and Eric Linhart, "Coalition Building on the Federal and on the Lander Level in Germany," in A. Albala, J.M. Renu (eds) *Coalition Politics and Federalism*, Springer International Publishing, 2018.

2. a. Remarkable Stability of Coalitions

Germany is marked by a remarkable stability of government coalitions. As Table 2 indicates there have been only four changes in government in seventy years: from the Christian Democratic Union to the Social Democratic Party in 1949 to 1969; and back again in 1982, and back again in 1998; back once again 2002 to 2017 and From 1949 to 1966, a right-of-centre coalition of the conservative parties (Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and the Conservative Social Union (CSU) was in power, usually with the support of the Free Democratic party (FDP). From 1969 to 1982, the Social Democratic Party (SDP) was in power when the FDP changed its coalition partner and brought the conservatives in power. The SPD and the Greens formed a coalition government in 1998 to 2002; and from 2002-05 and 2009-17 the CDU/CSU-SPS was formed coalition government in Germany.

Only two changes in German postwar history were brought about by election: the socialist-liberal coalition in 1969 and the socialist-Greens 1998. The others took place through the break-up of a coalition by action taken by the FDP, or in the case of Helmut Kohl in 1982 by a constructive vote of no-confidence in which a partner in the earlier

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coalition participated.³¹ This Situation results from the constitutional features of the government, the strong institutional position of the Chancellor and the *de facto* as well as *de jure* strength of the parties.³²

2. b. Continuity of Political Leaders

There has been continuity of political leaders, especially of Chancellors in the postwar era: Konrad Adenauer (1949-1963), Helmut Schmidt (1974-1982), and Helmut Kohl (1982-1998). and Angela Merkel (2005-2018)Out of seventy years, four Chancellors have been at the helm of affairs for fourteen, eight, sixteen and fifteen years respectively, i.e. a total of fifty years.

2. c. Party Organisation Make Coalitions

In the Federal Republic, it is the party organisations/committees rather than parliamentary parties, that have “a decisive influence on the political constellations that lead to particular government coalitions.” Once governments have been voted in members of parliament are generally held to owe them their loyalty. Changes of coalition have been a far from routine event, instead they are turned into “decisions about a new political direction.”³³

2. d. Constitutional Provisions

In the Federal Republic there is a threshold of 5 per cent of the vote for inclusion in the Bundestag. This has served to prevent a mushrooming of small parties (like the Communist Party of Germany, the German National Democratic Party (NDP)³⁴ or the Republican Party at the national level or a culture of independent candidates. In the case of Germany, with the sole exception of the Communists, only four parties were Licensed to operate legally in the first election at the federal level (viz. the CDU, CSU, SPD and FDP). As a result we witness a gradual decline in the percentage of votes polled by the minor parties.³⁵ With the fragmentation of the parties, though clearly below the 5 per cent hurdle, the ideological spectrum has broadened, marked on the right by the Republican Party and the German People’s Union, on the left by the Party for Democratic socialism (PDS), in each case with regional parties.

Since the dominant concern of the German electorate has traditionally been a quest for security, it has not been

³¹ Unlike the Westminster model of government, the constructive vote of no-confidence which severely restricts the opportunity to remove a serving chancellor through a ‘constructive’ vote of no confidence enables the majority to vote for an alternative leader.

³² Gert-Joachim Glaessner, “Government and Political Order,” in Gordon Smith, William E. Paterson and Stephen Padgett, eds., *Developments in German Politics* (Basingstoke, 1997), p. 33.

³³ *Ibid.*, p.3.

³⁴ In the 1960s, the NPD passed the threshold of 5 per cent in almost all the Land elections and seemed on the edge of entering into the Bundestag. However, in the 1969 federal elections, the NPD arrived at 4.3 per cent, failing parliamentary representation, and shortly thereafter, it collapsed organizationally.

³⁵ For instance, in the election to the first Bundestag, the minor Parties, including the Communists, won 28 per cent of the vote. These results were “not unimpressive given, the advantage of maneuvering and jockeying for position enjoyed by the three main parties as a result of their early pre-election legalization”. By 1961 and the election to the fourth Bundestag, however, the combined proportion of votes cast in favour of the “splinter parties” dropped below six per cent. In the 1972 and 1976 federal elections, their share totalled Less than one per cent, though this figure rose to slightly over two per cent in 1980. Vincent E. McHale and Sharon Skowronski, eds., *Political Parties of Europe* (Connecticut, 1983), p. 993.

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willing to approve of a party whose very existence is constantly threatened. This has been a dilemma which has constantly threatened the FDP. With only slightly more than 5 per cent of the vote necessary for inclusion in the Bundestag, the FDP radiates insecurity. Such “a party is not attractive to voters whose political orientation is based on a striving for security”.³⁶

2. e. Coalition Formation and Coalition Agreements

Coalition bargaining and coalition formation in the Federal Republic has four broad features. First, access to coalition bargaining typically has been restricted to a few select patterns. The Social Democratic Party was left out of any serious bargaining from 1949 until 1966, during which it acted as the opposition party, just as if a single majority party, and not a coalition of parties, occupied the government bench. In 1969, the CDU/CSU inherited that lot.

Second, those parties which at the outset decide to bargain with one another have always concluded the bargaining successfully.³⁷ This process has led to the conclusion of a coalition agreement amongst coalition partners. Over the years, these agreements have become more detailed and exhaustive.³⁸

Third, in order to produce a winning coalition not more than two parties had to come to an agreement. A grand coalition between the CDU/CSU and the SPD would have always been assured of majority support, a small coalition between the CDU/CSU and only one minor party from 1953, and a small coalition between the SPD and FDP from 1961.

Fourth, the selection of coalition partners has always preceded the thorough examination of policy issues. This sequence presupposes an understanding among the coalition partners that their policy positions were compatible or at least reconcilable. Whatever differences arose during the bargaining failed to wreck the planned coalition.³⁹

After the election of 1961, Konrad Adenauer had lost his overall majority and within 65 days the 85-year old Chancellor won and wooed the Free Democratic Party into his coalition. The terms which the liberals demanded were designed to prevent their party from being absorbed by Adenauer’s own forms of coordination. Top on the list of demands that the FDP made was a demand that Adenauer agree in writing to resign before the next election. The formation of future coalitions in Germany was to be much affected by the “*treaty-making*” style in 1961.⁴⁰ As part of coalition formation negotiations, the Green Party after the federal elections in 1998 was able to obtain the concessions from the SPD, viz. giving up nuclear power as a source of energy in the interest of ecology and the introduction of an ecology tax.

³⁶ Kaack, *Op. cit.*, p. 81.

³⁷ Helmut Norpoth, “The German Federal Republic : Coalition Government at the Brink of Majority Rule,” in Eric C. Browne and John Dreijmanis, ed., *Government Coalitions in Western Democracies* (New York, 1922), p. 19.

³⁸ For instance, the recent coalition agreement between the SPD and Alliance 90/Greens of 21 October 1998 is extremely detailed and encompasses social, economic, political, foreign policy and other dimensions, and even specifies the allocation of ministers.

³⁹ Norpoth, *Op. cit.*, pp. 19-20

⁴⁰ Tony Burkett, *Parties and Elections in West Germany: The Search for Stability* (London, 1975), p. 101.

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2. f. Ideology as a Factor in Coalition Formation

After 1961, coalition formation in Germany was predominantly a bargaining process among the three major parties in the Bundestag. A major problem in this regard has been “to keep the ideological distance over time”. The main explanation in the German case for the move of the FDP into coalition with the Social Democrats was hardly a greater share of power, but rather “a wearisome shift of ideological preference within the Liberal Party”. The FDP moved from “the position of an ‘anti-socialist bourgeois block’ to a social-liberal position, but not without fierce internal conflicts and the loss of certain elements which were once predominant in the party.”⁴¹

This factor also explains why it has been difficult for the Social Democrats until recently to pursue a coalition policy with the Greens. This had remained a highly controversial issue in the intra-party decision-making process of the SPD. Essentially, two schools of thought emerged. The minority, which favoured cooperation with the Greens, put greater emphasis on post material, than material, values. The older SPD generation was more attuned to the achievement-oriented principles of a pragmatically organized economy and thus was inclined to oppose cooperation with the Greens.⁴² However, the transformation of the Greens from a protest party to a pragmatic party, which had elected representatives in most land assemblies lent support to the marriage of convenience between the SPD and the Greens in the late 1990s. In order to keep all coalition options open, Gerhard Schroeder was deliberately vague in his programmatic vision: he promised all things to all people and maintained a business-friendly face.

2. g. Regional Parties in Germany

Regional parties have also acquired some role in coalition politics in the 1990s. The East German party system is more volatile, polarized and segmented. In Germany, the PDS has been extremely successful in exploiting and mobilizing this protest potential and is widely perceived as the only real advocate of East German interests. The PDS, despite declining membership, continued to consolidate itself as an East German “resentment” party.⁴³ In practice, the PDS remains a regional, Eastern party with virtually no support or an organisational basis in Western Germany, where it has managed to get only 1 per cent of the vote (mainly in the city states of Bremen and Hamburg). It needs over 20 per cent of the vote in the new states to achieve 5 percent nationally. Since it apprehends that it may not get more than 4 per cent of the votes, its electoral strategy has been to win three directly elected federal seats, which, under Germany’s complex election laws, will enable it to be rewarded with additional seats on a proportional basis, i.e. up to thirty seats in the parliament. It has certainly created difficulties for the CDU/CSU and the FDP in attaining an absolute majority.

⁴¹ Klaus von Beyme, “Coalition Government in Western Germany,” in Vernon Bodganor, ed., *Coalition Government in Western Europe* (London, 1990), p.107.

⁴² Ferdinand Mueller-Rommel, “The Social Democratic Party: The Campaigns and Election Outcomes of 1980 and 1983,” in Karl H. Cerny, ed., *Germany at the Polls The Bundestag Elections of the 1980s* (Durham, 1990), p. 107.

⁴³ See Gert-Joachim Glaessner, “Parties and Problems of Governance — The Impact of East German Transition in the German Party System,” in Attila Agh, ed., *The Emergence of East Central European Parliaments: The First Steps* (Budapest, 1994), pp. 149-162; Jens Bastian, “The Infant Terrible of German Politics: The PDS between GDR Nostalgia and Democratic Socialism,” *German Politics*, Vol. 4, no. 2, August 1995, pp. 97-98; Hans-George Betz and Helga A. Welsh, “The -PDS in the New German Party System,” *German Politics*, Vol. 4, no.3, December 1995, pp. 92-97.

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Conclusion

The stability of West German political system has been based on the ability and willingness of all relevant social groups and political parties to cooperate within the accepted constitutional, legal, and institutional framework. Since the 1980s, the West German system has been transformed into a highly differentiated competitive political system. Unlike the past, when there were mainly four parties to run the political system and assumed an importance and status unprecedented in West German society, Germany became a democratic society able to withstand temptation from the far right and left.⁴⁴ In fact, the political system and the political parties managed to integrate fundamental opposition groups into the political mainstream.

3. Coalition Governance in France

The Third (1875-1940) and the Fourth (1946-1958) republics were parliamentary systems plagued by weak, unstable, short-lived coalition governments⁴⁵ and divided, indecisive assemblies. During the Fourth republic, there were so many parties, which were poorly disciplined and ideologically based, that it was difficult to form stable coalitions.⁴⁶ The unstable coalitions of the Fourth Republic had paved the way for much more stable ones during the Fifth Republic largely because of the transformation of the French party system, from a shifting multi-party system to a more structured, disciplined and bipolarized party system. It also led to the reduction of the number of parties in the National Assembly from seven in 1958 to four in 1993. Without this, presidential supremacy would never have been established. A change in the nature of political and socio-economic divisions, changes in the electoral system at parliamentary level coupled with the introduction of the direct election to the presidency in 1962 placed a premium on coalition-building isolated parties no longer had any chance of success.

The period since 1958 witnessed the growth of two big coalitions with one dominant party, each of which comprised several parties. The right-wing coalition, which initially comprised of the Gaullist Party (UNR, later UDR) - the party established by General de Gaulle - and the Independent Republicans (RI); was in “a dominant position in the party system in the French Parliament. This was expanded in the presidential elections of 1969 and 1974 and the legislative election of 1972 to embrace other right-wing and centre-right groups. By 1986 the right-wing coalition was composed of the Gaullist Party (since 1976 known as *Rassemblement pour la République* – RPR), and the Union for French Democracy (*Union pour la Démocratie Française*- UDF), itself a coalition of the Independent Republicans, Centrists, Radicals and a motley collection of right-wing groups.”⁴⁷ The dominating position of the Right coalition was reflected in both the percentage of votes in parliamentary elections (around 35-40 per cent) and

⁴⁴ Glaessner, *Ibid.*, p. 162.

⁴⁵ There were no fewer than twenty-five governments and fifteen prime ministers in the twelve years of the republic; only two prime ministers lasted for more than a year. Associated with ministerial instability were ministerial crises. In the year before the collapse of the Fourth Republic, France was ruled by a caretaker government for one day in every four. Vincent Wright, the *Government and Politics of France* (London, 1978), p. 14.

⁴⁶ The lack of any stable coalitions in the Fourth Republic was because (a) the same party was divided on a given issue; (b) that the party alignments for and against constantly shifted depending upon the issue; and (c) that finally the alignment for or against consisted of a convergence of groups and votes that did not repeat itself—it lacked coherence and credibility. Roy C. Macridis, “Oppositions in France. An Interpretation,” *Government and Opposition*, Vol.7, no. 2, Spring 1972, p. 174.

⁴⁷ Vincent Wright, “France : Recent History and Politics,” p. 189.

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a substantial number of seats in the National Assembly (a relative majority in the years 1962, 1967 and 1973 and absolute majority in 1968). As the governing party, it had the loyal support of a part of the Conservative Party. This support was necessary for the formation of a majority coalition. France is a clear example for “a one-dimensional party system in which the, Left-Right position of parties delivery a purposeful representation of policy.”⁴⁸

The consolidation of a relatively cohesive right-wing electoral coalition pressurized the left into building its own coalition. But this was considerably difficult since not only was each party of the left aiming for superiority within the alliance, but also the communists and the socialists were divided over many fundamental social, political and major economic and foreign policy issues. “Relations within the alliance oscillated between active harmony (1972-74 and 1981-82), suspicion (1969-72 and 1974-77), and acrimony (1977-81 and 1982-86). Much of the tension was due to the changing strengths of the two parties.”⁴⁹ Although relations between the two parties reached a new low point after 1984, they were forced into electoral alliance at the second ballot of the 1986 elections and of most local by-elections. The “bipolarizing pressures of the Fifth Republic neither dictate the shape of coalition nor do they prevent discord and rivalry within each, but they do ensure that even the most reluctant partners remained united for electoral purposes”.⁵⁰

3. a. All Governments have been coalitions

All the governments in France Since 1958 have been coalitions. During the first legislature (1958-1962) the coalition included all major parties except the Socialists and Communists. Subsequently, the governments of the Fifth Republic have been able to count on a majority in the National Assembly although these majorities and these governments have typically been coalitions. During the first legislature (1958-62) the coalition included all major parties except the Socialists and Communists; from 1961 to 1981 the Gaullists, Giscardians and a faction of the Centrists; from 1981 to 1984 the Socialists, Communists and Left Radicals; and from 1984 to 1993 the Socialists and Left Radicals; and from 1993-2010 Gaullists and Right; and from 2010-17 Socialists and Left Radicals; and from 2017 to till date Gaullists and Right.

3. b. Nature of Coalitions has changed

Although all governments between 1958 and 1984 were coalitions, the nature of these coalitions differed. Some, as Thiebault points out, have been ‘unequal’ (as from 1962 to 1968 or from 1973 to 1978 when the right governed on the basis of an alliance between Gaullists and moderate conservatives). During the second legislature (between 1962 to 1967) the Gaullists party had an almost absolute majority.(233 seats out of 482) and it governed the support of a small number of conservatives (35 seats).

The situation changed during the third legislature (1967-1968) when the Gaullist Party had only 200 seats and needed the support of an expanded, small group of conservatives (42 seats) in order to govern. During the fifth legislature (1973-1978), the parliamentary strength of the Gaullist party was further reduced to 183 seats. More

⁴⁸ Jean-Louis Theibault, “Frankreich : Die Bildung und Aufrechterhaltung von Regierungskoalitionen in der Fuenften Republik,” in Wolfgang C. Mueller and Kaare Strom, eds., *Koalitionsregierungen in Westeuropa . ‘ Bildung, Arbeitsweise und Beendigung* (Vienna, 1997), p. 632.

⁴⁹ Wright, *Op. cit.*, pp. 189-190.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

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balanced coalitions appeared during the sixth legislature (1978-1981) and the eighth legislature (1986-88)⁵¹

For the first time in the history of the Fifth Republic, in June 2012 the Socialist grouping held all three elected arms of government: the Presidency, the National Assembly and the Senate. But this did not last long: in the Senate elections of September 2014, the Left lost control of the upper house. Now La REM holds the Presidency and the National Assembly.

The last Assembly elections were held on 11 and 18 June 2017. La République En Marche (La REM) - a party which did not exist a year and a half before - won a stunning victory, taking 308 seats and, once one adds the 42 seats secured by the allied Democratic Movement (MoDem), there is an overall majority in the Assembly. The main opposition group, Les Républicains, won only 112 seats. Although with allies that number rises to 137. The Socialist Party ended up with just 29 seats and the hard left La France Insoumise (France Unbowed) has 17 seats. The hard right National Front has 8 seats.

In France, unlike most other democracies, the majority of national politicians are former civil servants (often high-ranking). Most Presidents, many Cabinet members and a very large number of parliament members graduated from the same prestigious school, the Ecole Nationale d'Administration.

The French take their politics seriously and voter participation can be very high (it was 79.48% in the 2012 Presidential election). However, voter participation varies significantly across elections. Abstention was at a 56% high in the 2014 European elections and about 50% in the first round of both local elections of 2015. In the Assembly election of 2017, turnout was only 43%⁵²

3. c. Considerable Difference in Strength of Coalition Partners

Throughout these periods there was, as Thiebault argues, “a considerable difference” in the relative strength of the coalition partners. One can thus speak of the “majority of the majority” (usually the ‘party of the President’), and the ‘minority of the majority’ (constituted by a number of small groupings needed to ensure a sufficient level of parliamentary support). The ‘party of the President’ was typically characterised by its predominant role in supporting the institutions and by the cohesion and discipline of its parliamentarians. The ‘minority of the majority’, on the other hand, sometimes displayed opposition tendencies towards the party of the President, but its criticism always stopped short of provoking a break-up of the coalition of majority parties.⁵³

3. d. Constitutional Provisions

A number of provisions of the French Constitution have a direct impact on the structure and processes of government. These relate to the dualism of executive power, to prime ministerial supremacy and to the subordination of ministers to the prime ministerial or presidential will.⁵⁴ The impact of presidential politics has had two important effects on the French party system. Firstly, it created the need for personalised electoral machines and assembly majorities that extend beyond the bounds of a single party. Secondly, it has weakened the role of parties in

51

Ibid.

52

file:///C:/Users/AS%20COMPUTER/Desktop/French%20political%20system.html

53

Ibid.

54

Jean-Louis Thiebault, “France : Cabinet Decision-Making under the Fifth Republic,” Jean Blondel and Ferdinand Mueller-Rommel, eds., *Cabinets in Western Europe* (London, 1988), p. 86.

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the policy-making process with a new breed of presidential advisors weakening the role of traditional party elites.⁵⁵

The French electoral system in parliamentary elections in two ballots encourages the formation of political alliances between politically and ideologically proximate parties, at least in the second ballot. In the Fifth Republic, the single-member-district, two-ballot rules used for all but one (1986) of the Republic's legislative elections. It is usually said in France that "On the first ballot one votes, and on the second, one eliminates". Electoral realism necessitates that "a political party, in order to maximize its chances, thinks in terms of combining forces with another party by means of pre-electoral deals and second-ballot withdrawal, or mutual support, agreements".⁵⁶ The French electoral system in parliamentary elections in two ballots encourages the formation of political alliances between politically and ideologically proximate parties, at least in the second ballot. The survival of coalitions is not only the result of a tradition joint governance, but is the outcome of the necessity to build electoral alliances."⁵⁷ The electoral system with its second ballot run-off rule has led to a reduction in the number of parties and made it difficult for smaller parties to survive. It has also encouraged the development of two broad coalitions : one on the Left and the other on the Right.

3. e. Coalition Formation⁵⁸

There are three important levels for coalition building in France : (1) the construction of a parliamentary majority which is protected by a combination of parties; (2) negotiations over the content of governmental policy; and (3) the allocation of portfolios under cabinet ministers.⁵⁹

3.e.1. Process of Coalition Formation: The initiative for the formation of a coalition lies with the French President who first establishes contact with the leaders of parliamentary parties. He assumes an active role in the selection and appointment of prime ministers. He decides who has the best prospects for the building of a government. However, the room for action for presidential action is constrained by results of the parliamentary election. Negotiations for coalition formation in France have not generally required much time. There were only two instances between 1959 and 1996, when coalition negotiation lasted more than one week (viz. 1962 and 1973). All other coalitions were formed between one and three days. In France, the building of a coalition is neither a complicated nor a time consuming process.⁶⁰

The process of government formation in France is rather quick for a number of reasons. There is no discussion about the composition of a coalition because the participating parties which belong to a presidential and/or parliamentary majority are bound together by an electoral alliance. Coalition politics and negotiations for coalition formation in the Fifth Republic have been dominated by one political schism, viz. the Left-Right dimensions. All governments have

⁵⁵ Vincent E. Wright, "France," in Gerald A. Dorfman and Peter J Duigman, eds., *Politics in Western Europe* (Stanford, 1988), p. 65.

⁵⁶ William Safran, "France," in M. Donald Hancock, David P. Conradt, et al., *Politics in Western Europe* (London, 1993) p. 134.

⁵⁷ Thiebaut, "Frankreich", *Op. cit.* p. 630.

⁵⁸ This section essentially draws on Thiebault, "Frankreich", *Op. cit.*, pp. 639-659.

⁵⁹ Thiebault, *ibid.*, p. 634.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p.633.

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been formed out of this dimension. There is no instance of a “not allied” coalition.⁶¹

3.e.2. Coalition Agreements: At the beginning of the Fifth Republic, the rules of the game were neither public nor expressly laid down in detail in a coalition agreement. The first coalition agreement was of July 1966, which provided for the principle of “contract de legislature” together with a principle to dissolve the parliament in case of a government crisis. There have also been instances, e.g. before the parliamentary election of 1978 when the Right which was in a majority coalition could not unite on a coalition programme. Coalition agreements stipulate a joint electoral programme of participating parties and provide a basis for government declarations. Since 1981, coalition programme have been more extensively worked at than before and constitute documents which guide governmental policy. They incorporate a list of political, economic, cultural and social aims and objectives and are generally approved by overwhelming majority in special conventions of coalition partners.⁶²

3. e.3. Conflict Resolution : Coalition agreements in France have not contained any “rules of the game” or conflict resolution mechanisms for resolving inter-party(or inner-party) conflicts among coalition partners.⁶³ They did not have any stipulations for ensuring coalition discipline. There are no rules relating to voting over bills or over other parliamentary conduct, However, party discipline in the French parliament is rather high and it is quite common that votes of various factions when important questions are considered, constitutes a solid block. Coalition agreements also do not contain any formal conflict resolution mechanisms in the form of contacts between the leaders of the coalition parties outside the government. However, the prime minister does ‘regularly assemble the leaders of the majority parties in an informal, weekly lunch in Hotel Matignon. The various inter-ministerial meetings of the Council of Ministers at any rate constitute arenas for conflict resolution. Governmental solidarity is very strong. When a cabinet decision is taken the ministers must abide by the decision of the Prime Ministers.⁶⁴

3. e.4. Allocation of Portfolios: The 1958 Constitution stipulates that the President appoints ministers “-upon the proposal of the prime minister”. In practice, the composition of government is subject to a bargaining Procedure between the two: the key posts are nevertheless usually presidentially inspired.⁶⁵ Cabinet stability was much greater under the Fifth Republic - with only twenty two prime ministers in a sixty year period (1958-2018). But there have been forty- three important changes during that time.⁶⁶

The allocation of portfolios in the Fifth Republic involved brief negotiations amongst the coalition parties. Decisions such as the number of ministers, the hierarchical structure of the government, the size of the government and the methods of coordination are not decided in coalition negotiations, but by the Prime Minister after consultations with parties and politicians. The nomination of persons to a specific ministerial office is not done through parties, but usually through the prime minister. The parties are not in a position to “colonies” specific ministerial berths in their areas of interest. No coalition programme has detailed the question of the division of positions in the administration and the public sector. As soon as the ministerial portfolios are decided, the government moves into office. There is

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 639.

⁶² *Ibid.*, pp. 640-644.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, pp. 643-647.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.* pp. 647-648.

⁶⁵ Cole. *Op. cit.*, p.91.

⁶⁶ William Safran, “The Context of French Politics,” in M. Donald Hancock, David P. Conradt, et.al, *Politics in Western Europe* (London, 1993), p. 113.

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no official investiture ceremony through the National Assembly.⁶⁷

3. f. Variance in Prime Ministerial Authority

Prime ministerial authority has varied in the Fifth Republic. Despite the fact that some Prime Ministers have had many means to establish their influence, there have been marked differences among them in the extent to which they have been able to exercise this influence. The Prime Ministers who had most authority were Michel Debre, Georges Pompidou and Raymond Barre; Maurice Couve de Murville and Pierre Mauroy, on the other hand, were those who had least influence over their colleagues.⁶⁸ Between 1958 and 2018, twenty men and one woman served as prime minister. Fourteen of them had resigned because they lacked the confidence of either the president who had appointed them or the succeeding president. Prime ministers had also submitted their resignations of their governments eighteen times and been reappointed immediately, usually with major reshuffling. Prime ministers had been reappointed with new governments eleven times. Premiers have averaged thirty months in office, governments forty-three and sixty years.⁶⁹

3. g. No No-confidence motion

In France, the traditional rules of cabinet responsibility vis-a-vis the parliament (confidence motions and no-confidence motions) play no real parliamentary role. This is primarily because of party discipline in governmental unity and the stability of electoral alliances. The existence of a stable, coherent and disciplined majority has prevented the fall of governments. The National Assembly of the Fifth Republic has never expressed a lack of confidence in a newly appointed government or prime minister. The only example was in October 1962, when the Assembly passed a motion of censure initiated by the opposition against the government of Georges Pompidou because of its intention to carry out de Gaulle's plan to revise the constitution by popular referendum. This led to the overthrow of the government. In response, President de Gaulle dissolved the rebellious Assembly and his supporters won, a larger majority in the new Assembly. Since then, majorities in the National Assembly have held firm. There have been "grumbles, groans, and occasional splits, but the MPs have not endangered the government or themselves".⁷⁰

3. h. Extreme Right-wing Parties

Despite the significant gains of the National Front at local, national and European elections, it is unlikely to gain a majority in the French Parliament because of the combined strength of the Socialist and UDF parties. Le Pen's success has contributed to a disquieting element of opportunism within the major parties and a radicalizing of the agendas of mainstream parties.⁷¹ The National Front is largely isolated on the political extreme. The main

⁶⁷ Thiebault, "Frankreich" *Op. cit.*, pp. 648-649.

⁶⁸ Thiebault, "Frankreich", *Op. cit.*, pp. 99.

⁶⁹ William G. Andrews, "France," in George E. Delury, ed., *World Encyclopedia of Political Systems and Parties, Volume 1, 2nd ed.*, (New York, 1987). p. 351.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ See James G. Shields, "The politics of Disaffection : France in the 1980s," in John Gaffney and Eva Kolinsky, eds., *Political Culture in France and Germany* (London, 1991), pp.69-90. The political rationale of the Front National is based upon the perceived decadence and moral decline of France, attributable to political mismanagement by what Le Pen called the "gang of four"—four French parties—harps on the

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conservative parties have refused to have any dealings with it at the national level despite their narrow parliamentary majority at that time. The two-ballot majority system is a serious disadvantage for a party like the National Front. Without any allies, it can hope to win an absolute majority in only a few districts. The voters know that and are reluctant to support such fringe parties.⁷²

Conclusions

France represents a variant of coalition-building in which the President has important powers in coalition formation. In such a semi-presidential system coalition formation seems to be the most important presidential prerogative. Most Presidents have extensively used their power to select candidates for the position of prime ministers, given them instructions for party negotiations. The second aspect is the existence of an electoral system wherein the parties use the second ballot for the building of coalitions. Negotiations over the content of governmental policy find only before the parliamentary elections. The coalition programmes are more thoroughly worked on than before. "The government today is a stronger coalition government and less a presidential government."⁷³

4. Coalition Governance in Italy

Though many models have been devised to explain how government coalitions are made and broken, Italy is an unusual case which defies the models' predictive capabilities. In the postwar years, it had "the lowest cabinet turnover rate, but the most short-lived governments of any country in Western Europe and presents a pattern of both stability and instability."⁷⁴ From June 1945 till today Italy has had 54 governments with an average government life of eleven months. The classic case of the shortest time is the Christian Democrat politician Giulio Andreotti who lasted for nine days and the longest till date has been Socialist prime minister Bettino Craxi with 1,058 days (4 August 1983 to 27 June 1986). There were 54 governments, but only 24 heads of government. For instance, Alcide De Gasperi was prime minister eight times, G. Andreotti seven times and A. Fanfani six times.⁷⁵ Political system of Italy various type of coalition government were formed in the period of 1945-2018. The example of coalition based on the theoretical aspect of coalition politics. Types of coalition government were as follow minimum winning coalition in Italy was 3.5 percent from 1946-93 and 72.7 percent in 1994-2013, oversized coalition was 60.6 percent from 1946-93 and 14.1 percent in 1994-2013; single party minority cabinet was 19.3 percent from 1946-93 and no single party minority cabinet after 1993-2018; minority coalition from 1946-93 was 16.6 percent and no minority coalition after 1993-2018; technocratic cabinet from 1993-2013 was 13.2 percent and no technocratic cabinet was

complicity between the mainstream parties of the left and the right. The Gaullists and the Giscardians are implicated like the Socialists and the Communists in the decline of moral standards, the growth of state powers and the inflow of immigrants, and retreat from traditional values. Michalina Vaughan, "The Wrong Right in France" in Eva Kolinsky, ed., *Opposition in Western Europe* (London, 1987), pp. 289-317; Paul Hainsworth, "The Extreme Right in Post-War France: The Emergence and Success of the Front National," in Paul Hairisworth, ed., *The Extreme Right in Europe and the USA* (London, 1992), pp.30-31.

⁷² Frank L. Wilson, *European Politics Today: The Democratic Experience* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1990), pp. 161-162.

⁷³ Thiebault, "Frankreich...", *Op. cit.*, p. 660.

⁷⁴ Mary L. Volcanseic "Coalition Composition and Legislative Outcomes in Italy," *West European Politics*, Vol. 22, no. 1, January 1999, PP. 96; Carol Mershon, "The Costs of Coalition : Coalition Theories and Italian Governments", *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 90, no.3, September 1996. p. 534.

⁷⁵ Guenther Pallavet, "Nelmezzo del cammin : Das Politische Sytern Italiens in Wandel," in Peter Gerlich, ed., *Oesterreichs Nachbarstaaten: Innen-und Aussenpolitische Perspektiven* (Vienna, 1997), pp. 232-233.

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made since 1946-1993.⁷⁶

4. a. Polarized Multiparty System

Since the end of the Second World War; coalition formation in Italy has been considerably influenced by the polarized multiparty system. From 1945 to 1992, Italian politics were dominated by the Christian Democrats (DC) who were able to remain in power continuously as a consequence of an unspoken agreement between the DC and its governing allies to permanently exclude from office the second-largest party, the Italian Communist Party (PCI). Though it enjoyed an absolute majority only once (from 1948-1953), the Christian Democrats were the largest party and the mainstay of every possible coalition. It was able to sustain itself in office permanently on the basis of coalitions with four much smaller parties - the Socialists (PSI), the Social Democrats (PSDI), the Republicans (PRI), and the Liberals (PLI).⁷⁷ The unspoken agreement to exclude the communists had three consequences: “First, governments were highly unstable (since parties which knew that they would remain in office in definitely could afford to quarrel). Second, governments were ineffective (because the effective absence of electoral constraints removed the need for parties to compete on policies). Third, governing-party rivalry gave rise to politicisation of the state apparatus as the governing parties engaged in a ‘sharing out’ of ministerial and administrative posts according to the bargaining power of each. This allowed the parties to maintain and develop clientelistic ties with their electoral constituencies, a practice which frequently degenerated into out-and-out corruption.”⁷⁸

From 1948 to 1992, the party configuration was relatively stable. During this long period, seven parties (PCI, PSI, PSDI, PRI, DC, PLI, MSI) enjoyed a relatively stable protection. A number of additional parties rose and faded away largely as a result of party splits and mergers. The existence of a relatively large number of small, centrist parties was a typical characteristic of the Italian party system during this long political cycle.⁷⁹

Thus, the Italian political spectrum, which had previously been dominated by parties of the centre, became polarized between parties of the right and left. The political centre was left to be divided by various short-lived multiparty alliances—for example, at the turn of the 21st century, the centre-right House of Freedoms and the centre-left Olive Tree. In 2007 a new centre-left party, known simply as the Democratic Party, emerged when the DS merged with the centrist Daisy (Margherita) party. Soon afterward the FI Forza Italia (FI; loosely translatable as “Go Italy”) joined with the the National Alliance (Alleanza Nazionale; AN) to create the new centre-right People of Freedom (Popolo della Libertà; PdL) party. AN leader Gianfranco Fini withdrew from the alliance in 2010 to form the rival centre-right Future and Freedom for Italian party. The major characteristics of Italian Party system are as following dealignment and Realignment; neither polarized nor fragmented, but destructured.

4. b. Coalition Formation

From 1948 to 1992, an extremely complicated game of coalition formation in a series of short political cycles which

⁷⁶ Marco Valbruzzi “Not a Normal Country Italy and its Party Systems,” *Romanian Political Science Review*, Vol. XIII, No.4, 2013.

⁷⁷ James L. Newelt and Martin Bull, “Party Organisations and Alliances in Italy in the 1990s A Revolution of Sorts,” *West European Politics*, Vol. 20, no. 1, January 1997, P. 82.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 82.

⁷⁹ Luca Verzichelli and Maurizio Cotta, “Italian Von ‘beschraenkten’ Koalitionen zu alternierenden Reigierungen?” in Wolfgang C. Mueller and Kaare Strom, eds., *Koalitionsregierungen In Westeuropa: Bildung, Arbeitsweise and Beedingung* (Vienna, 1997), pp. 558-559.

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are characterised by various coalition formulae (1) Centrist; (2) Centre-left coalition; (3) The parliamentary coalition of National Solidarity; and (4) The five party coalition.⁸⁰ Thus, the period 1948-1963 was the era of centrism with the DC allied with the Social Democrats (PSD1), Republicans (PR1) and Liberals (PLI); from 1963-1976 the DC were in coalition with PSDI, PRI and the Socialists (PSI); from 1976-1979 was the period of Christian Democrat minority governments, supported by a broad coalition including the Communists. During 1979-1992, governments consisted of a five party coalition consisting of the Christian Democrats joined by the PSI, PRI, PLI and PSDI. Those period of stable coalition formulae were at the same time ones of cabinet instability.

The 1994 elections brought a right-wing coalition to power in Italy for the first time since the end of the Second World War. The media magnate Silvio Berlusconi who became the prime minister was the leader of his new party - Forza Italy (Go Italy) — the neo-fascist National Alliance and the Northern League.⁸¹ Berlusconi's government had suffered since its beginning from "a chronic instability created by internal ideological contradictions, conflicts of interest within the coalition and personal animosity between leaders".⁸² Berlusconi's government lasted for seven months (till December 1995) when the Northern League pulled out of the government coalition and Lamberto Dini headed a non-political government, formed by technocrats, which was supported by the Left-wing parties in parliament. The new government began the desperately needed reforms of the Italian state.

The elections of April 1996 led to the installation of a left-wing government for the first time since Italy became a republic in 1948. This was the result of the electorate's increasing discontent with traditional parties, increasing percentage of votes to non-traditional parties (from 5.7 per cent in 1987 to 14.5 per cent in 1992). The main losers of this trend were the Christian Democrats which had been able "to survive all sorts of scandals, and Italy's perennial crisis had never damaged the credibility of Italy's major party" and the beneficiary of this was the Northern League.⁸³ In the April 1996 elections, the core of the governing coalition was made up of Romano Prodi's small Catholic Party, the Italian People's Party and the formerly Communist Democratic Party of the Left (PDS), which is Italy's-largest party with 21 per cent of April 1996 vote. However, the Catholic party is not enchanted by the alliance, and the two parties have different views on social issues like abortion. The fragility of the coalition is increased by its small right-wing component, Italian Renewal (RI), which abhors the dependence on the RC.⁸⁴

The period of between 1994 to 2018 there was a degree of alternation in government between the centre-right and a centre-left coalition grouped initially around the Left Democrats (DS) and more recently the Democratic Party (PD), created out of a merger of the DS and centrist forces. Berlusconi resigned as Prime Minister in 2011 amidst pressure from the EU to reduce Italy's huge public debt, judicial investigations against him and revelations around his private life, and defections from his own coalition. He was replaced by former European Commissioner Mario Monti, who

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 560.

⁸¹ Mario Sznajder, "Italy's Right-Wing Government : Legitimacy and Criticism," *International Affairs* (London), Vol. 71, no. 1, January 1995, pp. 83-102; Joseph Farrell, "Berlusconi and Forza Italia : New Force for Old?" *Modern Italy*, Autumn 1995, pp. 40-52; Sidoni, no. 22, pp. 332-347. Pallaver argues that Berlusconi's populism is "an electronic personification of 'whole Italy', soft and opulent, A soft leadership cult". Guenther Pallaver, "L'unto del Signore: Berlusconi, Forza Italia and das Volk" *Oesterreichische Zeitschrift fuer Politikwissenschaft* (Vienna), no.3, 1995, pp. 317-328.

⁸² Sznadjer, *ibid.*, pp. 100-101.

⁸³ Vittorio Bufacchi, "The Coming of Age of Italian Democracy, Part 1 : Literature on Italian Elections 1992-94," *Government and Opposition*, Vol. 31, no. 3, p. 323.

⁸⁴ Patrick McCarthy, "Italy at a Turning Point," *Current History*, March 1997, p. 111.

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implemented a number of reforms aimed at reducing Italy's debt. The emergence of the Five Star Movement (which is harder to place on the political spectrum) as a leading party at the 2013 and 2018 elections has meant that neither the centre-left coalition nor the centre-right have been able to command a parliamentary majority. Following the 2013 elections, the centre-left and part of the centre-right (though not the League) initially formed a grand governing coalition. After Berlusconi withdrew support, a smaller part of the centre-right broke away, enabling a predominantly centre-left coalition to remain in power until 2018. In the election on 4 March 2018, the Five Star Movement emerged as the leading party (with 32.7% of the vote). The centre-right was the leading coalition with 37% of the vote. The League (with 17.4%) overtook Berlusconi's Forza Italia as the leading centre-right party, also winning a significant vote share in Southern Italy for the first time after its re-branding as a national force. Following weeks of negotiations, the League broke away from the centre-right to agree a government deal with Five Star.⁸⁵ On 1 June 2018 the new Five Star Movement – League government headed by Giuseppe Conte as Prime Minister was sworn in by the Italian President. This brought the Five Star Movement into government for the first time. The League (previously known as the Northern League) had previously been in government as a member of Silvio Berlusconi's centre-right coalition which governed Italy briefly in 1994 and then from 2001 to 2006 and from 2008 to 2011. The Italian system of government amounts in effect to one-party rule through "a series of unstable coalitions with various small partners, where the second largest party - permanently excluded from office - grows ever stronger. The opposition is subject to cross pressures - acceptance of the norms of the system in the hope of winning enough votes to come to power or equating opposition to the government in office with opposition to the regime itself."⁸⁶

Italy displays certain unique political characteristics in coalition formation. Firstly, the Christian Democrats (DSs) have been part of every government from the end of World War II until 1994 and the simultaneous exclusion of the second largest party, the Communists (PCI). Secondly, the existence of parliamentary coalitions that are distinguishable from the governing ones is readily conceded and was largely the result of the so-called "strategy of alliance" that guided government coalition formation until 1994. That strategy was "less about programmes and policies than about who could be in and who must be out."⁸⁷ Fourthly, not one Italian government in the postwar era has fallen as a direct consequence of a non-confidence vote.

4. c. Coalition Agreement

There was no overall agreement amongst coalition partners regarding the contents of government policy. The formal definition of the contents was delegated to the designated prime minister who after contacts with party delegations, would write and present the governmental programme. Though it was possible for the government programme to be rather detailed, in practice it was common for it to be general and vaguely formulated. There were only two instances in the 1970s when one could speak of a formal, though not official coalition agreement. In neither case was there any formal mechanism for the dissolution of the coalition.⁸⁸

The birth of a new cabinet generally raised no hopes for stronger coalition discipline. This was largely because of the nature of the coalition agreement, which was usually a collection of weak and ambiguous compromises

⁸⁵ Stefano Fella, *The New Italian Government*, House of Commons Library, 2018.p.4

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ Volcancek, *Op. cit.*, p. 98.

⁸⁸ Volcanek and Coptta, *Op. cit.*, pp. 579-583.

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regarding a series of short-term and specific exceptions to government policy and rarely, guidelines for far-reaching reforms.⁸⁹

4. d. Changes in the 1990s

The grave economic and financial crisis of the Italian state highlighted the structural defects of the political system and the severe difficulties of the political decision making process. After the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the East-West conflict, this was followed by an ideological-political crisis which challenged the old logic of the party system along the cleavage of communism/anti-communism. This pushed the Communist Party of Italy and, above all, the Christian Democrats, into a deep identity crisis. The revelation of political scandals, the numerous tainted money affairs and the illegal party financing in which the old political class was involved, ultimately led to a radical legitimacy crisis of traditional parties. Coupled with this was the rise of regional parties, especially the Northern League in the north of the country which challenged mainstream parties and which fostered decentralization and regionalism.”⁹⁰

The party system in Italy was beginning to collapse around 1990. This was partly due to the loss of the integrative potential of the Italian elites, the increasing distance between the elite and the masses, the end of the “communist question”, and the emergence of new “party movements”. Two factors accounted for the collapse of the old parties. The continuation of an anti-corruption drive initiated by prosecuting magistrates in Milan in February 1992 coupled with the electoral law changes in August 1993⁹¹ led to a fragmentation of party organizations and a regrouping of these organizations into new types of alliances in new guises and new names (e.g. the Christian Democrats by the beginning of 1994 had split into four groups and the PSI into three groups).

Although Italy had over fifty governments between 1946 and 1993, this masked a remarkable continuity, given that the Christian Democratic party (DC) remained the main party of government throughout the period. The frequent changes in government often amounted to reshuffles of the personalities involved and occasional changes in the DC’s other smaller coalition partners. With many of its leaders under investigation for corruption (and some for links with the Mafia) the DC and the other ruling coalition parties collapsed between 1992 and 1994, leaving a political vacuum which was filled by the entry into politics of Silvio Berlusconi at the head of his new Forza Italia party.

In 1994, a new centre-right coalition led by Berlusconi won the first general election held under a new

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 582.

⁹⁰ *Guenther Pallaver*, “*Der Winterkoenig: Berlusconis Versuch*, leadership auszuueben und der repraesentativen Demokratie eine plebiszitare krone aufzusetzen,” *Oesterreichische Zeitschrift fuer Politikwissenschaft*, No.4, 1997, pp. 409-410.

⁹¹ In 1993 parliament passed new electoral laws that combine plurality and proportional rules for the Chamber of Deputies and Senate elections whereby three quarters of the parliamentary seats (475 seats out of 630 in the Chamber of Deputies) chosen on a simple majority Constituency basis, or first past-the-post system, while the remaining 155 seats are allocated proportionally on a national basis. The new laws also imposed 4 per cent for representation in the chamber. But even this has not created a stable government. The plethora of small parties in the coalition has its roots in Italian history. The aim of the winner-take-all electoral system was to produce large parties. It may do so, but so far “the parties unite for the elections and then bicker afterward”. Patrick McCarthy, “Italy at a Turning Point,” *Current History*, March 1997, pp. 11-115.

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predominantly majoritarian electoral system,⁹² defeating a centre-left coalition focused around the former communist Left Democrats (DS).⁹³ Berlusconi's coalition was controversial not only because of his vast business and media interests, including ownership of Italy's most popular private TV channels, but also because it brought into government for the first time the Northern League and the National Alliance. The Northern League, unifying various regional leagues in the early 1990s, had previously advocated the break-up of Italy, blaming Southern Italians for the country's ills. The National Alliance (AN) had emerged out of the neo-fascist Italian Social Movement (MSI). The MSI was formed by fascist veterans in the aftermath of the Second World War and continued to praise the Fascist regime until the early 1990s. Its leader Gianfranco Fini would later seek to distance the party from its fascist heritage after 1994, cultivating a more moderate conservative image.⁹⁴ The first Berlusconi government was short-lived, collapsing at the end of 1994 when the Northern League withdrew in the wake of the launch of corruption investigations against Berlusconi. It was replaced by a government of 'technocrats' led by Lamberto Dini until 1996, when the centre-left coalition won fresh elections, enabling the former communist DS to enter government for the first time, in alliance with the People's Party, the main successor party to the DC (the DC splintered with some parts allying with Berlusconi). The coalition was initially led by a former Christian Democrat Romano Prodi, but he was replaced by the DS's Massimo D'Alema in 1998. D'Alema himself was replaced by Giuliano Amato in 2000. Berlusconi returned as Prime Minister following general elections in 2001, heading a renewed coalition bringing together Forza Italia, the Northern League and National Alliance again (together with a smaller former Christian Democrat grouping). Berlusconi's coalition was narrowly defeated in the 2006 election by a renewed centre-left coalition again headed by Romano Prodi.

While the centre-right coalition in this period was held together by Berlusconi's leadership and election-winning prowess, the centre-left coalition has suffered from instability and infighting among its component parts which have included left-wing former communists and relatively conservative or centrist former Christian Democrats. Centre-left leaders sought to engineer more unity with the formation of the Democratic Party (PD) in 2007, merging the DS with the main former Christian Democrat grouping.⁹⁵ However, Prodi's government collapsed after another smaller former Christian Democratic grouping withdrew its support, precipitating new elections in 2008 which were won by the centre-right, with Berlusconi returning as Prime Minister.

Berlusconi was increasingly beset by lurid allegations about his private life, claims of misuse of public office in relation to these allegations, and a number of long-standing judicial investigations into his business affairs. This was

⁹² Following a popular referendum in 1993 which abrogated elements of the old proportional system, 75% of the seats in the Chamber of Deputies would be elected under first-past-the-post (FPTP), with 25% elected through a proportional representation top-up. This system was replaced under a new electoral law in 2005, which involved a reversion to a more proportional system but with a seat bonus guaranteeing a majority (55% of seats) in the Chamber of Deputies to the leading coalition. This system was later ruled unconstitutional, and eventually replaced in 2017 by a new one whereby 36.8% of seats are allocated through FPTP and 63.2% proportionally.

⁹³ The Italian Communist party (PCI), was Italy's second biggest party throughout the cold war period but had been excluded from government since 1947. In 1991, it completed its transformation into a more conventional European social democratic party, becoming the Left Democrats (DS).

⁹⁴ See Stefano Fella (2006), "From Fiuggi to the Farnesina: Gianfranco Fini's Remarkable Journey", *Journal of Contemporary European Studies*, Vol.14, No.1.

⁹⁵ The DS merged with "Democracy is Freedom – the Daisy" which itself was a merger of the Italian People's Party (the formal successor party to the DC) and other centrist groupings in 2002. Other parts of the former DC had broken away to ally with Berlusconi's coalition. Many also joined Forza Italia directly

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combined with increasing pressure from the EU and IMF to introduce reforms in the face of Italy's high levels of debt and other precarious economic indicators amidst the ongoing European sovereign debt crisis. In 2009, Forza Italia had merged with AN to form the People of Freedom (PDL), under Berlusconi's leadership, but Berlusconi then fell out with the AN's former leader Gianfranco Fini who left and formed another party. A number of parliamentarians, including Fini's group then withdrew support from Berlusconi leading to his resignation as Prime Minister in 2011.⁹⁶ The former EU Commissioner Mario Monti was appointed to head a new government of technocrats, implementing an austerity package which included an increase in the pension age. Monti resigned at the end of 2012 ahead of fresh elections in early 2013.

There was a period of deadlock following the 2013 election, with the centre-left winning a small majority in the Chamber of Deputies but failing to reach a majority in the Senate. This was the first general election contested by the new Five Star Movement. It won 25.6% of the vote in the lower house, with both the centre-left and centre-right coalitions dropping to just under 30%. Agreement was eventually reached on a grand coalition involving the PD, PDL and other centrist groups and headed by Enrico Letta of the PD. Berlusconi later withdrew support (and re-founded Forza Italia) but a breakaway group from the PDL continued to support the government enabling it to retain its majority. Letta resigned in February 2014 and was replaced by Matteo Renzi, the new leader of the PD. The Renzi government introduced further reforms including the so-called 'Jobs Act' which made it easier for employers to make workers redundant and also introduced temporary tax breaks for companies hiring workers on permanent contracts. The Renzi government also legalised same-sex civil unions in the face of opposition from the Catholic Church and the centre-right parties. At the end of 2016, a proposed reform of the constitution⁹⁷ put forward by Renzi was defeated in a popular referendum. As he had promised to do if the proposal was defeated, Renzi promptly resigned and was replaced as Prime Minister by Paolo Gentiloni (another PD politician who was previously Foreign Minister). Gentiloni remained Prime Minister until the new Conte government was finalized in June 2018.

Conclusion

Much of the instability and stalemate in Italian politics has been the result of fragmented and factionalized parties, in which political conflict or 'crisis' were created frequently.⁹⁸ One aspect which distinguished Italy from other West European democracies is the "perennial lack of political alteration" which reflects "a political culture characterized by a chronic lack of trust in parties and movements that are not in government". Changes have occurred through radical regime changes.⁹⁹ Italian politics became for its entertainment value. Moreover, for over a quarter of a century, the executive in Italy freely used decree laws, but the rate of conversion by parliament was directly opposite to the number of parties in the coalition. However, during 1983-1994, the more parties represented in a coalition, the higher the rate of decree laws converted.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁶ See Stefano Fella and Carlo Ruzza (2013) "Populism and the Fall of the Centre-Right in Italy: The End of the Berlusconi model or a new beginning?", *Journal of Contemporary European Studies*, Vol. 21, No.1

⁹⁷ The reform would have increased the executive powers of the government, and reduced the powers of the Senate (ending the model of perfect bicameralism whereby the Chamber of deputies and the Senate have equal powers).

⁹⁸ Volcancek, *Op. cit.*, p.112.

⁹⁹ Bufacchi, *Op. cit.*, p. 331.

¹⁰⁰ Volcancek, *Op. cit.*, p. 110.

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Party organizations and alliances in Italy are still in a state of considerable flux, and it is difficult to predict which alliances and parties will be shaping party government in the millennium. However, a major change, which is likely to last is that “the basic dynamics between the organizations and alliances is one of bipolarity, something which is markedly different from the situation existing until 1992 when the DC still occupied the centre”.¹⁰¹

Coalition governments and their problems have dominated the Italian political scene since the fall of Fascism. The deep transformation of the early 1990s has not basically altered the ground realities. The fragmented party system wish no less (and often more) than seven parliamentary parties and the long-term permanence of pro-System/anti-System schism till the 1990s reveals a complicated, conflict-prone and seldom disciplined and at the same time a fundamentally irreplaceable, coalitions. The “Lack of real alternatives... had contributed significantly to ‘stable instability’ of Italian governments”. Short-lived coalitions have only marginally changed from one cabinet to another while the number of attempts to build a new majority, and the number of prime ministerial candidates throughout the entire postwar period were very different. However, in all cases the iron-clad rule of the dominance of parties outside the government remained valid: when a coalition is in parliament or otherwise, out of discussion a fresh vote of confidence could very quickly be achieved. No changes could endanger the inner balance in coalitions and these could be resolved through various devices: changes in personnel, allocation of departments, and party composition.¹⁰²

The divorce of responsibility between parties and governments had encouraged party leaders to pursue party goals without inhibitions/restrictions and typically without giving much attention to governments. At the same time and as a result there of party leaders did not support institutional prestige and legitimacy which they should have done as a result of a direct linkage to government responsibility.¹⁰³

The core of the problem in Italy today as before, is the defects of a real political responsiveness which would make governments Stronger, the representatives more disciplined and the parties less belligerent.¹⁰⁴ Today as before the rules of the game of coalition governments are considerably flexible and in the general framework of limited government. There is no normal coalition agreement and/or a list of seal priorities which has been given by coalition parties to the cabinet. The motion of work of the cabinet is based on formal parliamentary confidence-/no-confidence motions and external mechanisms (above all the leadership summits of majority parties).¹⁰⁵ Italian governments diverge from others in that “they have not demonstrated that they can successfully govern or even move their policies to the fore of the parliamentary calendar.”¹⁰⁶

The events of the early 1990s have shown that it is not enough to build that government which have a majority from elections (and not from coalition negotiations after elections) and build stronger prime ministers. The fragmentation of the party system together with an unstable electorate and unstable political positions of a few parties explain the rapid fall of the Berlusconi’s coalition government in the 1990s and its replacement between elections and government formation appears to have been accepted as a “normal” characteristic of new politics. The further

¹⁰¹ Newill and Bull, *Op. cit.*, p. 107.

¹⁰² Verzielli and Cotta, *Op. cit.*, p. 621.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, pp. 621-622.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 622.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ Volcancek, *opcit.*, p. 112.

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development of the new party System, especially the consolidation and strategic positions of the new parties will have a decisive influence on the life of coalitions and the stability and efficiency of governments.

While coalitions might freely form to overrun or create governments there does not seem to be any available internal mechanism whereby a coalition can ensure that its members will make particular decisions.¹⁰⁷ Minority governments need the ‘tacit support of some winning coalition, and this will be forthcoming only to the extent that the policy outcome implemented by the government is at least as good as any which the winning coalition could achieve by replacing the government.’¹⁰⁸ That is also why cabinet ministries are important consolation prizes. Government coalitions may therefore survive even in the absence of legislative successes because of the absence of credible alternatives.

¹⁰⁷ David Austen-Smith and Jeffrey Banks, “Stable Governments and the Allocation of Policy Portfolios.” *American Political Science Review*, Vol.84, no. 3, September 1990, p. 904.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid*, p. 905.