

## **GV101 Week 14: Coalitions and Single-Party Governments**

### **Questions to Consider**

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Office Hours (by appointment via the [Student Hub](#)):

Thursdays, 09:30 – 10:30, CBG.4.13

Thursdays, 14:30 – 15:30, CBG.4.13

#### **Country Question:**

- Does your adopted country tend to have coalition governments or single-party governments?
- Does an office-seeking theory or a policy-seeking theory explain coalition formation in your adopted country (e.g. are coalitions always formed between parties with similar policy preferences)?

#### **Class Task:**

This week you will be undertaking a task rather than answering questions. In your group you will first be allocated some votes to cast in an election based on your policy preferences and the current polling. Once the election has been conducted you will be allocated a political party and its seats in the legislature, along with its policy positions. You will then be expected to formulate the negotiating position of your party and participate in attempts to form a coalition government, with the resultant policy positions being implemented (to the delight or chagrin of the voting population).

#### **Essential Reading Question:**

1. Clark, Golder, and Golder outline the principle of collective cabinet responsibility. What is this, and do you agree that it is a useful principle to adhere to? Why?
2. What do our conceptions of elected representatives as either office-seeking or policy-seeking suggest, respectively, about the coalitions that they will form according to Clark, Golder, and Golder?
  - a) Clark, Golder, and Golder state that '[i]n practice, we believe that politicians probably care about both office and policy and are, therefore, always making trade-offs.' Do you agree with this assessment? Why?
  - b) How should politicians exercise judgement about the extent to which they should prioritise policy and office?
3. What does the occurrence of minority governments indicate about the likelihood that either office-seeking or policy-seeking are the main concern of parties, according to Clark, Golder, and Golder? Why?
  - a) What considerations do Clark, Golder, and Golder suggest may lead an opposition party to choose to remain outside government?
  - b) By contrast, what reasons might a surplus majority government exist?

4. What are Tsebelis' three hypotheses, and what is his basis for proposing them?
  - a) Can Tsebelis' model accommodate a strategic decision by a veto player in a coalition to make sacrifices in some policy areas in order to make gains in others? If so, how?
  - b) How might Gamson's law be related to any compromises that are made between a coalition veto players?

#### Further Reading Questions:

5. What are Huber and Powell's main findings, and how do they explain them?
  - a) Do you find these findings convincing? Why? Are there any problems with them?
6. What are retrospective and prospective voting, as identified by Hobolt and Karp?
  - a) What are the implications of these types of voting for whether people will vote strategically in plurality and proportional systems respectively?
  - b) Do you consider it more likely that people vote retrospectively or prospectively? Why?

#### Essential Readings for Next Week:

- William Roberts Clark, Matt Golder, and Sona Nadenichek Golder, *Foundations of Comparative Politics* (London, Sage Publications, 2019), pp. 322-332 and pp. 377-379.
- Pranab Bardhan, 'Decentralization of Governance and Development', *The Journal of Economic Perspectives*, Vol. 16, No. 4 (Autumn, 2002), pp. 185-205.

#### Further Reading for Next Week:

The further reading questions for next week will be based on the following two sources, which you may choose to focus on:

- Andreas Auer, 'The constitutional scheme of federalism', *Journal of European Public Policy*, Vol. 12, No. 3 (2005), pp. 419-431.
- Jan Erk, 'Does Federalism Really Matter?', *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 39, No. 1 (Oct., 2006), pp. 103-120.