

motivations of politicians. At about the same time that Downs' office-seeking view of electoral competition was exerting its strongest influence on political scientists, William Riker proposed an analysis of coalition bargaining that was based on the same fundamental assumption. Riker, furthermore, viewed the gaining of office as the capture of a fixed prize to be divided among the members of the 'winning' coalition.³ No mention whatsoever was made of policy, even as an instrumental factor, in this very influential early approach to the study of coalition formation.

While the work of both Downs and Riker stimulated an intense flurry of intellectual activity, no serious attempt was made until much later⁴ to marry office-seeking theories of electoral competition to office-seeking theories of coalition bargaining and thereby produce an integrated theory of party competition; and this despite the fact that, as any experienced voter in a multiparty system knows quite clearly, the policies offered by parties at election time will almost certainly be modified by the process of coalition bargaining before anyone even attempts to put them into practice. Calculating voters must thus anticipate the process of coalition bargaining when deciding how to vote rather than naively taking the package on offer at its face value. Similarly, the behaviour of parties engaged in coalition bargaining (even those which could not give a hoot about policy) must surely be modified by the knowledge that both past and potential future supporters in the electorate are watching their performance in the negotiations that lead to the formation of a government and are recalculating their decisions about how to vote at the next election on the basis of what they see.

Notwithstanding this failure to integrate analyses of coalition bargaining with those of electoral behaviour into a comprehensive theory of party competition, it was not long before the policy positions of political parties became an important element in theories of coalition bargaining. The introduction of policy concerns into accounts of the politics of coalition was an attempt to enhance both the realism and the predictive power of the theories, since coalition cabinets in the real world, whatever else they must do, must agree a package of proposed government policies. Thus, even when member parties could not care less about policy, they do face the need to generate particular outputs

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What are the Stakes?

Before we go on to explore the process of bargaining that leads to the formation of a government, we must pause to consider what it is that the various actors are bargaining about. Only if we have an idea of what they are trying to achieve can we hope to make sense of their behaviour.

For some time, theorists of party competition and coalition bargaining tended to assume that the driving motivation of the actors was above all else to get into office. This led to the development of a theory of electoral behaviour based on the assumption that parties strive to maximize their popular vote so as to win as many seats as possible and thereby to increase their chance of controlling the executive. It follows from this that, if no party controls a majority of legislative seats after the election results have been declared, then the parties will attempt to bargain their way into the cabinet using their stock of legislative seats as resources. Since bargaining power tends to go up (and at the very least does not go down, all other things being equal) as a party's legislative seat share goes up, the prospect of subsequent coalition bargaining did not affect vote maximizing theories of electoral behaviour. The policies of the parties were a central feature of this account of party competition, though policy packages were seen as the store fronts that parties set up to attract voters rather than as something that politicians care about in and for themselves.¹ This general approach is expressed most clearly in a well known quotation from Anthony Downs's seminal account of party competition: 'Parties formulate policies in order to win elections, rather than win elections in order to formulate policies'. This is as succinct a statement as we are likely to find of what has become known as the 'office-seeking' assumption about

while in office, if only in response to unavoidable circumstances or impertinent questions from journalists. It is just not possible for a government minister to sit around in a permanent pink cloud of euphoria, simply enjoying the sheer delight of being a government minister. The job description includes an obligation to pretend, at least, to run the country. This means that a politician driven only by the purest of office-seeking motivations must to a certain extent camouflage these, even after having succeeded in getting into office.

When party policy was first incorporated into coalition theory, however, the assumption was made, explicitly or implicitly, that policy is an intrinsic end valued in and for itself rather than an instrumental means used by politicians to gain office. (This distinction has continued to distinguish theories of electoral behaviour from those of coalition bargaining.) De Swaan, for example, one of the best known early proponents of this view with his 'policy distance' theory, states bluntly that 'considerations of policy are foremost in the minds of the actors . . . the parliamentary game is, in fact, about the determination of major government policy'.⁵ One of the main arguments that we will develop in this book is that very few who have written on coalitions (not even de Swaan, for example) have fully digested the profound implications of this fundamental assumption, which carries the clear implication that membership of a coalition cabinet is no more than an instrumental means to affect policy. If major government policy can be influenced by playing the parliamentary game from a position outside the government coalition then this should be just as good, for an actor concerned only with policy, as doing precisely the same thing from the vantage point of a seat at the cabinet table. This means that we must fundamentally revise our view of what it is to 'win' the coalition game, together with our view of minority governments, of 'surplus majority' governments and of a whole range of other crucial features of the politics of coalition. It is, in short, difficult to over-emphasize the impact on coalition theory of assuming that politicians are motivated by the intrinsic desire to influence policy. Some years ago, Schlesinger drew attention to the consequences of different motivational assumptions for theories of electoral behaviour.⁶ In the rest of this chapter we explore in greater detail the various goals that might be assumed to motivate

actors engaged in coalition bargaining. We look at both office-seeking and policy-seeking motivations, viewing these both as means and as ends.

OFFICE AS AN END IN ITSELF

As we have just seen, the gospel according to Downs is that 'parties formulate policies in order to win elections' while the gospel according to de Swaan is that 'the parliamentary game is . . . about the determination of major government policy'. Within the same game-theoretic tradition, we find two quite different views of why politicians seek office. On the one hand, office is an end in itself; on the other, it is a means to affect policy. In reality, of course, most of us can think of some politicians who fit one description, some who fit the other, and some who fit both.

If office is an end in itself then getting into the government is the only way to win. When this is the case we need to very be clear about what, precisely, is involved in 'getting into the government'. We could, for example, regard simply being one of the parties in the government coalition as the crucial payoff. Given the way in which governments are quite often described in terms of their party membership, we might assume that parties simply seek the public recognition provided by having their name on the list of government members, regardless of anything else. We do, after all, hear of the Fine Gael/Labour coalition in Ireland or the CDU/FDP coalition in Germany. Perhaps getting the party name up in lights is enough of a reward in itself. Putting it another way, perhaps all that really counts is parking the party leader's rear end on a seat at the cabinet table. If simply getting into the government is all that is important then a party that is in, once it is in, has no incentive to exclude a party that is out. Coalition formation, on this assumption, is a highly co-operative game and it is hard to see why political life would not involve a perpetual round of grand coalitions designed to keep everyone happy by parking every party leader's rear end on a seat at the cabinet table. This is not, however, the way in which office-seeking

coalition bargaining is usually portrayed; neither is it an interpretation that bears much relationship to reality.

Typically the yearning for office is seen, as it was seen by Riker, as the desire to control some sort of fixed prize, a prize captured by the winning coalition and divided among its members. Viewed thus, coalition bargaining becomes a competitive process of determining how this prize will be carved up. The assumption that the rewards of office are fixed in this sense can be seen, very crudely, as the product of a feeling among politicians that to be one of only a few parties in government is in some way more glorious, offering a bigger share of the limelight, than to be one of a large number of parties in the same government. And, after all, while we do talk of the CDU/FDP coalition in Germany, mentioning the members explicitly by name, we talk in more general terms of the *pentapartito* coalition in Italy. The less well informed may need reminding that the five parties concerned are the PSI, DC, PRI, PSDI, and PLI. Thus, if it is intrinsically satisfying to be in power, it may be intrinsically more satisfying to share power with only one other party than it is to share power with four others. This view regards 'incumbency' as a fixed prize that is shared in equal measure by all incumbents. If there are more incumbents then each gets a smaller share. Coalition bargaining then involves deciding who gets to be one of those who shares the prize.

Going one stage further again, we may assume that parties feel that there are degrees of incumbency, so that some incumbents are more incumbent than others. The Prime Minister, after all, tends to get far more of the limelight, to consume far more state dinners in interesting and exotic places and to be driven around in the back seats of bigger cars than other members of the government. Thus the party that controls the premiership might well think itself to be the senior incumbent, with a higher payoff than other incumbents. Other key government posts may have their own attractions. The Minister for Foreign Affairs, for example, gets to travel widely, to gather quite a lot of the limelight and to risk less of the odium that attaches, say, to a Minister for Social Welfare forced to cut old age pensions in a budget crisis. There may, in this way, be a pecking order of goodies to be distributed between the incumbents as the spoils of office. The bargaining game, rather than being one of win-or-lose, becomes

one in which each of the winners can win more, or less, depending on the outcome of the negotiations among them. On this view, the winning coalition in effect captures a sack of trophies of unequal value, the contents of which sack are to be shared out among its members.

This raises a galaxy of interesting possibilities, though the most generalizable ones can be grouped under two headings. In the first place, the spoils of office may be taken to have a greater or lesser 'scope'. At the one extreme they may be seen as being confined to the premiership and a few really senior government ministers; at the other extreme, patronage may extend deep into the political and social system, providing very extensive spoils for winning parties. In the second place, the spoils may be valued equally by all parties or particular spoils may be valued differently by different parties. The latter possibility reintroduces a co-operative element into the coalition bargaining game as the players can attempt to allocate particular trophies to those who value them most. Some allocations thereby become worth more than others of the same spoils.

The scope of the spoils of office will obviously vary from country to country, depending on the pervasiveness of the patronage system in operation. It is certainly conventional to take the set of cabinet portfolios as one of the key pieces of booty to be redistributed, while bargaining over who gets which cabinet portfolio does seem in practice to be at least one of the components of coalition formation negotiations. It is not even an invariable rule, however, that all members of the 'government' take cabinet seats. Some Israeli government parties, for example, have on occasion forgone the right to cabinet office, as did the CRM in the 1974 Rabin administration.⁷ The precise constitutional provisions and conventions that deal with appointments to cabinet portfolios vary a very great deal from system to system. By and large, however, it is reasonable to assume that the allocation of cabinet portfolios is, in terms of practical politics, something that is both within the control of the prospective coalition partners and a matter upon which they must all agree before they can take office and receive the payoff.

Moving beyond the cabinet, however, we typically find a whole series of non-cabinet ministerial appointments, as deputies to senior ministers, for example, or as heads of more obscure

government departments. Such positions may not strictly be formal parts of the government but they are without doubt in the gift of the government and are equally without doubt valued by those who receive them. De Swaan explicitly notes that, in The Netherlands, these junior government appointments form 'part of the overall cabinet balance' and are a significant factor in coalition bargaining.⁸ It is almost certainly the case that the same situation obtains elsewhere.

Empirical accounts of the distribution of portfolio payoffs among coalition members, as we shall see in Chapter 7, typically confine themselves to cabinet portfolios. The implicit justification for this is that what really counts in coalition bargaining is a vote in cabinet. It is true, of course, that only the cabinet can commit the government, though this carries the implication that a cabinet vote must be valued for what it can do, presumably because of its effect on policy outputs, an argument that takes us away from intrinsic office-seeking motivations. To confine our attention only to cabinet portfolios, therefore, is implicitly to admit that instrumental policy motivations are important. Browne and Franklin, for example, in their well known study of portfolio payoffs, confine themselves to accounting for the distribution of cabinet portfolios but quite explicitly justify this in terms of the instrumental desire of politicians to control portfolios in order to influence policy.⁹ Notwithstanding the citations that the Browne and Franklin findings often receive, their fundamental concern is with the outcome of bargaining among policy-seeking politicians.

If we wish to model the behaviour of politicians who are concerned solely with the intrinsic benefits of office, it does not make much sense to confine ourselves to cabinet portfolios as the denominators of the spoils of victory. Many other patronage appointments should also, presumably, be considered. Indeed, if we equate intrinsic office-seeking with the quest for patronage-based office payoffs, we could look well beyond the legislature to all sorts of other appointments which are controlled by the incumbent government and which might form part of a looser definition of the executive. Our search might extend to the judiciary and to the civil service, senior appointments to both of which typically require at least formal executive approval. Probably the most important sphere of patronage, however, can be found in the parastatal agencies, such as the many nationalized

industry boards; water, electricity, and other service authorities; health boards; development authorities, and so on. These have mushroomed in nearly every Western political system during the post-war period. More and more, semistate bodies of one form or another have taken on roles that would formerly have devolved upon the core civil service. Typically, senior appointments to the administration of such agencies are in the hands of a particular government minister, so that these appointments provide scope for rewarding those who might be felt by members of the administration to deserve rewarding.¹⁰ This, to the best of our knowledge, is a largely unresearched area, and one that offers considerable promise if we wish to develop a broader interpretation of the payoffs attaching to a place at the cabinet table.

One theoretical consequence of viewing the payoffs of office as being more than the sack of cabinet and other ministerial trophies is that we are forced to deal with rewards that will typically be dispensed to people outside the legislature. Returning to the discussion in the previous chapter, this forces us to reconsider what we understand to be a 'party'. We can be quite clear about what is meant by a parliamentary party. Parliamentarians have legislative votes, and we may observe how particular parliamentarians are rewarded for using their votes in particular ways. Extraparliamentary party members and supporters, however, are harder to identify and to keep tabs on. They may perform services for the party that are much less tangible, or at the very least much less likely to be applauded from the roof-tops, even if these are at least as valuable as voting in the legislature when it comes to keeping a government in office. We may regard patronage appointments distributed beyond the parliamentary party as being no more than 'points' that are won and enjoyed by the party as a result of its bargaining endeavours; they may, in effect, be a way of keeping the score. Alternatively, we may regard the need to gain control over patronage appointments as an essential feature of party competition in general, as a means to reward back-room supporters who cannot or will not assume legislative responsibilities but who nevertheless need powerful incentives if they are to work their hardest for their party at election time.

In general, extraparliamentary patronage appointments can be a significant set of trophies in the sack of booty to be shared out by a winning coalition cabinet interested only in the spoils

of office. To consider them within cross-national analyses of office-seeking coalition bargaining, however, presents us with severe empirical problems, not only because their scope varies considerably from system to system, but also because they are not nearly as neatly defined as the explicit set of cabinet portfolios.

The precise evaluation of the spoils of office is another matter that may well vary from actor to actor. It is clear that, when cabinet ministries are divided up among the coalition partners, some will be regarded as more valuable than others. If all parties agree on the degree of importance to be attached to each ministry then this will imply that, when they carve up the cabinet, they will be carving up a fixed prize. The premiership may be worth four times as much as the Ministry of Sport, the Foreign Ministry twice as much, and so on; but, if everyone agrees upon what each is worth, then the total collection of portfolios will have a fixed value. In this case parties will, in a sense, be able to a score their payoffs on the basis of the mutually agreed values of the portfolios that they capture. On the other hand, different parties, as we have suggested above, may value different ministries to a different extent. One of the main reasons for this might be their desire to influence policy in particular spheres, since holding a portfolio typically gives executive power over a particular government department. This assumes an intrinsic desire to influence policy and thereby moves beyond the pure office-seeking hypothesis. It is therefore a matter to which we will shortly return.

It may be the case, however, that parties differ in their evaluation of portfolios for other reasons, though this phenomenon is more difficult to generalize. A particular senior party politician, for example, may see herself as the elder stateswoman of the legal profession and yearn to be Attorney General. Foreign affairs can assume the proportions of a vocation for particular politicians, who want to be Foreign Secretary above everything else and would actually turn down the premiership in order to fulfil this ambition. These factors are entirely *ad hoc* with reference to a particular set of party politicians; while they might be used to interpret unexpected quirks in a particular distribution of portfolios, they cannot form the basis of a general explanation. Indeed, it is difficult, within a model based on the assumption that politicians are motivated by the desire to get into office in and for itself, to see any generalizable theoretical justification for the

differential evaluation of the same cabinet posts by different parties.

POLICY AS AN END IN ITSELF

Instead of following Downs and taking the view that office is an end in itself for politicians, we may follow de Swaan and take the view that parties are motivated by the desire to influence policy. In the extreme case, we may consider parties to be concerned with nothing else but policy outputs, caring not at all about whether or not they hold office. This particular version of party strategy is probably the one that is most frequently put forward for public consumption by politicians, few of whom are willing to admit to voters that they promote policies merely in order to get into office. From the perspective of practical political analysis, furthermore, it is quite common to assume that parties are more or less motivated by the strength of their policy preferences. Communist parties, for example, are often seen as being relatively inflexible on policy when compared with, say, Christian Democratic parties. The implication is that the Communist parties have the stronger policy motivation. Such characterizations are typically based on accounts of party competition in systems where Communist parties seem to be outside the political mainstream, apparently refusing to adopt more centrist policy platforms when this appears likely to maximize either electoral support and/or coalition prospects. It is instructive, therefore, to use the behaviour and apparent motivations of the Communist Party in post-war Italy (PCI) to illustrate some of the points that we must consider when attempting to assess the relative importance of policy- and office-seeking motivations for a particular set of politicians.

Typically viewed, at least in the immediate post-war period, as a programmatic party, the PCI has explicitly and publicly confronted the need to balance policy and office in the development of its strategy of *Compromesso storico*, or 'Historic Compromise'. Hellman describes this dilemma as follows:

The PCI, DC and PSI (with the emphasis on the first two) could together effect serious change in Italy. This could obviously not be a Socialist transformation of the country—hence the 'compromise'. But since these parties were viewed as the political embodiment of Italy's most

progressive forces, their collaboration would guarantee a consolidation of democracy and significant inroads into the country's worst structural problems.¹¹

While the explicit public image of the 'compromise' neatly sums up the dilemma facing a policy motivated party deciding to modify its programme in order to achieve power, Marradi argues that the result was nothing new: 'Since its establishment in 1921, the two bulwarks of PCI's policy have been allegiance to the Soviet Union regarding international alignments, and great flexibility as regards Italian politics.'¹² Most authors stress the PCI's continuing desire in the post-war period to avoid being left isolated on the fringes of Italian politics. Pasquino, for example, sees the Historic Compromise as a period during which 'the search for legitimacy took precedence over other claims'.¹³ This leaves open, however, the question of whether PCI politicians were motivated primarily by policy concerns, while accepting the instrumental need to participate in coalition governments in order to implement policy and the consequent policy compromises need to achieve this. The alternative view is that their policy motivations were more secondary, the product of an intrinsic desire to get into office from time to time. Pridham, in a sensitive analysis of precisely this point, concludes that policy is indeed the PCI's driving motivation:

On the important question of its willingness to govern and share power, the PCI has on the one hand linked its own legitimacy with being accepted as a governing party and it has actively sought this role, both in demanding national government participation during the 1976-79 parliament and in leading or participating in coalitions regionally or locally. Yet, the PCI has at the same time insisted on its radical aims and long-term revolutionary goals . . . In short, the PCI has linked its governmental co-operation to the question of basic policy objectives, thus suggesting that policy comes before power as such, which fits with what we know of the PCI as a distinctly programmatic party (a category happily accepted by PCI interviewees).¹⁴

Whether this accounts for the PCI's non-participation in post-1947 Italian coalition *cabinets*, however, is a moot point, since there is a good chance that their opponents would have kept them out of office whatever happened. Their main opponents, the Christian Democrats (DC), may be seen as an office-seeking party *par excellence*—'over time the DC's desire to maintain power for its

own sake has overwhelmed other considerations'.¹⁵ The politics of coalition in Italy are none the less keenly influenced by the traditionally intense anti-Communism of the DC and of the Catholic Church in general. In 1949, for example, followers of the PCI were excommunicated by Pope Pius XII, who was 'almost pathologically anti-communist'.¹⁶ This means that, as Pridham notes, 'to some extent "ideology" is in the eye of the beholder',¹⁷ with the DC consistently attempting to portray the PCI as a bunch of fanatical ideologues. This may stem in part directly from intrinsically valued Catholic beliefs held by members of the DC. It is also significant, however, that the exclusion from office of the PCI on policy grounds has allowed the DC to maintain an absolutely pivotal position in all post-war Italian coalition cabinets. Pragmatically, the DCs' refusal to deal with the PCI has done it no harm at all.

The post-war history of the PCI, therefore, illustrates quite a range of the arguments that can be made about the role of policy-seeking party motivations in the politics of coalition. In practical terms it can be very difficult to decide, when a programmatic party modifies its position in an attempt to get into government, whether this is being done for the sake of power in and for itself or simply in order to influence policy. At the very least, pretending to be concerned with policy is one of the rules of the political game in most systems, while accusing opponents of being cynical power-seekers is an equally standard political tactic. At the same time, centre parties, often in a pivotal position in the coalition system, like to portray their political rivals as members of some lunatic fringe, typically alleging an obsession with extreme policies and thereby attempting to marginalize them from the political process.

In general terms, when parties are genuinely motivated to an overwhelming degree by the intrinsic desire to influence policy, then this motivation has a fundamental impact on the entire process of coalition bargaining, as we shall see in Chapter 4. This is primarily because most policy outputs are public goods that apply to all—for better or for worse, for richer or for poorer. They apply whether or not the actors concerned have participated in the policy process, whether or not they are in cabinet; whether or not, indeed, they are politicians at all. In most democratic systems a Farmers' Party that pushes for an increase in agricultural

subsidies, for example, will increase agricultural subsidies for everyone if it is successful. It will not (at least, not legally) be able to increase subsidies only for members of the Farmers' Party. It is important to note that this is not at all to argue that substantive policy outputs will necessarily involve the production of public goods. Rather, it is to argue that policy outputs, whatever they might involve, apply equally to all. This is true even when the policy in question involves the abandoning of a more public 'good', for example that of broadcast TV signals, in favour of a more private good, for example that of pay-as-you-view cable TV. The policy as a *policy* remains a public good, in the sense that it applies in the same way to all.

Using Policy 'Dimensions' to Describe Policy Motivations

It is nowadays conventional to describe the preferred policy positions of politicians, parties, or voters, as well as the agreed policy packages of coalitions and the actual policy outputs of governments, in terms of one or more general 'dimensions' of policy or ideology. Thus, when we talk about economic policy, we describe particular economic policies as being more (or less) right- (or left-) wing. We think of one policy as being to the right or to the left of another. We think of particular parties as shifting their policies to the right or to the left. At any particular time each party in the system we are talking about is typically assumed to have a policy that is located on this 'left-right' scale of economic policy. Aspects of party policy that cannot be described in these terms can be represented on similar scales using other policy dimensions, which may deal with social policy, with church-state relations, with ethnic minorities, and so on. We can take all of the salient policy dimensions in a given system together, to define a 'policy space' in which any salient policy package can be located—whether it is a package that is offered by a politician, desired by a voter, or enacted by a government.

For example, if the major themes of policy debate in a given system can be well enough expressed in terms of two policy dimensions, say an economic left-right dimension and a clerical vs. anti-clerical dimension, then these dimensions can together be used to define a two-dimensional policy space such as that shown in Figure 3.1. This hypothetical example shows a Christian

Social Party (CSP) and a Social Democratic Party (SDP) having the same position on the left-right dimension, but shows the CSP to be significantly more pro-clerical than the SDP. On the other hand, the CSP has the same position as the Christian Democrats on the clerical vs. anti-clerical dimension—but is quite far apart from them on the left-right dimension.

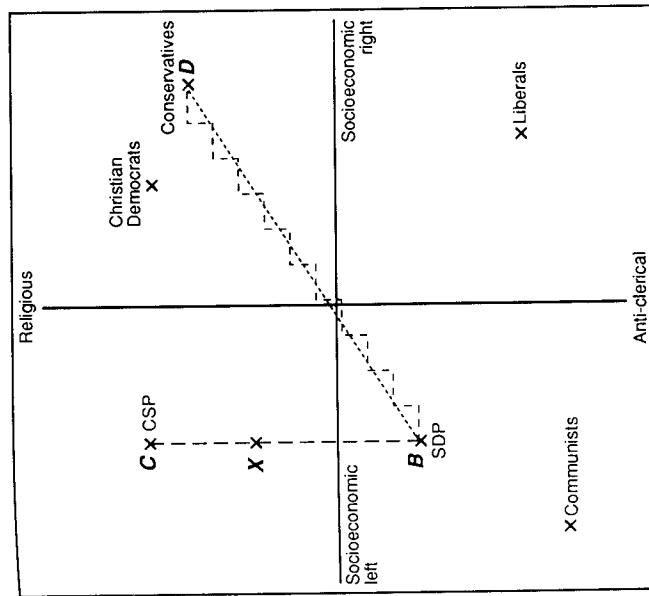


FIG. 3.1. Party positions in a hypothetical two-dimensional policy space

Expressing policy motivations in spatial terms, policy-seeking parties are assumed to be striving to create a set of public policy outputs that is located as close as possible in the policy space to their own preferred position. Any deviation of public policy from this 'bliss point' produces a related cost for the politician concerned. Politicians engage in policy bargaining, it is assumed, in order to minimize the size of these deviations, expressed as the policy distance between actual and preferred policy points. Policy bargaining, in short, can be seen as a process of policy distance

minimization. We should remind ourselves that, since the policy outputs of a government apply to everyone, this specification of bargaining strategy holds regardless of whether or not the actor in question is a member of the 'winning' coalition. If for some reason or another policy distance is minimized by a strategy that involves the actor in question staying out of office, then this should none the less be the strategy selected, if policy is the overriding motivation.

Thus, in the example shown in Figure 3.1, if a coalition forms between the CSP and the SDP with an agreed policy package located at X , the policy distance between the SDP and coalition policy is BX . The SDP, it is assumed, will be continually striving in its bargaining to reduce the size of this policy distance. If the CSP, instead of dealing with the SDP, forms a minority government on its own and continues to enact a policy package at point X (perhaps because it needs SDP support in the legislature) then the policy distance between the SDP and the government will still be BX . Considering only policy motivations, the SDP will be just as satisfied with this result as it would have been had it gone into government.

The notion of 'policy distance' is a seductively simple one that conceals a range of complex issues. One issue concerns the metric, or measure, that we should use to capture the 'distance' between two points. We are accustomed in everyday life to the Euclidean maxim that 'a straight line is the shortest distance between two points'. The application of this notion to policy bargaining means that, if we consider the policy distance between the SDP and the Conservatives in Figure 3.1, for example, we are assuming that diagonal movement between the two parties has some meaning—and that the distance between the two parties would be the straight line BD . Most game-theoretic accounts of coalition bargaining, grounded as they are in the traditions of economic theory, do indeed make such assumptions and deal in Euclidean distances. An alternative view is that the bargaining between parties that drives such movement in policy space must take the form of a series of observable movements defined on each dimension under consideration. Thus 'diagonal' movement in the space is in practice achieved by a series of steps of finite size. On this view, the distance between the SDP and the Conservatives is the length of the step-like path between B and D in Figure

3.1, in other words the distance between B and D measured using the 'city block' metric. Relatively little consideration has been given by coalition theorists to such matters, but they do, as might be expected, have a fundamental bearing on the account that is given of coalition bargaining.¹⁸

While spatial representations of policy bargaining are powerful, suggestive, and elegant from the point of view of the theorist, they present serious problems in practice. This is because establishing the preferred policy positions of real political actors can be a difficult and elusive process. Several approaches have been attempted, including the use of 'expert' judgements, the analysis of legislative roll calls, the content analysis of party manifestos and the use of mass survey data. One way of deriving expert judgements of party positions is on the basis of a good old-fashioned literature review. The researcher dives into the literature on a particular political system and eventually emerges clutching a picture of its policy space, drawn on the basis of a more or less systematic sifting of data and opinions culled from a range of published sources. This is the approach used, for example by Taylor and Laver, de Swaan, and Dodd, in their early tests of coalition theories.¹⁹ A rather more systematic approach is to apply a version of the 'delphic' technique. This proceeds by explicitly asking a wide range of country specialists to provide information about the policy positions of the actors and is the approach used by Morgan and by Castles and Mair.²⁰ This latter technique, of course, considerably spreads the risk associated with asking experts for their views of party positions, though there is always the danger that these views will in part be conditioned by the coalitions which actually formed. They must thus be used with care, though there is simply no other way of getting some of the information that can be derived from expert judgements.

Another empirical technique for deriving policy positions, and one that quite definitely cannot be used for coalitional analysis, is the multidimensional scaling of legislative roll calls. McCrea, for example, used this technique to bring some order to the apparent chaos of party competition in the French Fourth Republic.²¹ For other purposes, the assumption that those actors who vote together also think alike can be used to tap a rich lode of information through the dimensional analysis of legislative

voting records. Since a typical executive coalition tends very frequently to vote as a bloc in legislative roll calls, however, and not only in the case of confidence votes and other key divisions, roll calls are in a very real sense outputs of, rather than inputs to, the politics of coalition. They can certainly not be used, therefore, as independent variables that might explain coalitional behaviour. In this case the objection seems to us to be so fundamental as to be absolutely overriding.

An entirely independent fix on party policy positions is provided by the policy programmes issued by the parties themselves at election time. Even these documents may, of course, anticipate possible coalitions, perhaps dropping particular policy proposals that might prove repugnant to a likely coalition partner. However, the official policy programme of a party is much closer to being an independent and authoritative source of its policy than is anything else that is on offer. A recent large-scale research project conducted under the auspices of the European Consortium for Political Research has conducted a detailed content analysis of the policy emphases of the programmes of most parties in most European systems since the war.²² These published electoral policy positions do retain a high degree of analytical independence from the coalition bargaining process, and it is on data such as these that we will tend to rely most heavily in subsequent empirical discussions.

A final technique that can be used to estimate party policy positions is the dimensional analysis of mass survey data. More and more these days, voters are asked by survey researchers to locate themselves on a left-right scale and possibly on other policy scales too. They may also be asked to locate the political parties in their system on the same scales. While voters' perceptions of party policy positions may not seem to have any bearing on coalition bargaining if we ignore anticipations of the next election, such perceptions will become increasingly central to accounts of the politics of coalition as integrated models of coalition bargaining and electoral behaviour are developed. For this reason we report estimates of such perceptions in Appendix B, which summarizes a series of published data sets dealing with the policy positions of parties in the main West European coalition systems. When all is said and done, a rather comforting conclusion can be drawn on the basis of scanning the scales in Appendix B, namely, that

different techniques, used by different researchers, tend to yield rather similar placements of the parties on the main policy scales. There is thus a reasonable consensus in the field about what the policy positions of the main coalition actors actually are.

Achieving Policy Objectives

Since policy outputs apply to those outside government as much as to those in government, we need to consider the extent to which those outside government can affect policy before we can determine the incentives for them to get into office.

There are several ways in which a party can influence policy from a position on the opposition benches. First, it may have a direct effect on legislation as it passes through parliament. Bills may be defeated, if the government is in a minority position or if members of the government defect on specific issues. The opposition may be able to delay a bill, and thereby to extract concessions from the government in exchange for its speedy passage. Second, a party may be in a position to make or break a government by supporting it or opposing it in key legislative votes, particularly in votes of confidence. This possibility can be exploited in threats to put the future of the government on the line. Legislative strategies such as this can force the government to change tack on policy outputs that do not require legislation (which of course comprise the vast bulk of real-world policy outputs). A party's ability to make such threats depends upon the extent to which it is pivotal in the legislature, which in turn depends upon the distribution of seats. If a party is pivotal, given the seat distribution, then it will be pivotal whether it is in or out of government; if it is not pivotal, then government membership can make no difference to its legislative voting power.

The third way in which the legislative game can be played in order to influence government policy is by using committees and the other institutional mechanisms of influence that are available to all legislators, whether they are in or out of office. The strength of the committee system, the power of the opposition in these committees, and their impact on key policy outputs are matters that vary dramatically from system to system. Strom, who lays great stress in his account of minority government on the role of committees in giving influence over policy to those out of office,

develops an index of the extent of oppositional influence over the government.²³ This index takes account of the number of standing committees, whether these have fixed areas of specialization, whether they shadow ministerial portfolios, whether there are procedural constraints on assigning committee positions, and whether committee chairs are proportionally distributed among all parties. All of these factors, Strom argues, enhance the power of the opposition to affect government policy and thereby both reduce the incentive of a policy-seeking party to bargain its way into office and increase the relative attractiveness of opposition.

For each of the three reasons outlined above, and considering only parties motivated exclusively by the desire to influence policy, government membership may well be irrelevant. The incentive for policy-seeking parties to join coalition cabinets may emerge, however, once we consider the business of detailed policy implementation, a matter that goes beyond the concerns of most coalition theorists. The nitty-gritty of public policy is typically carried out by a government department headed by a cabinet minister. Control over a government department may be particularly important for a policy-seeking actor once we recognize that the policy implementation process is the cumulation of a vast number of minor decisions, each of which is in itself of insufficient importance to force a government crisis. When parties value several dimensions of policy at the same time, furthermore, legislators may well be unwilling to bring down a government that is enacting favoured policies on a more salient policy dimension in order to force policy changes on a less salient dimension. Policy-seeking politicians, in short, may want to participate in the executive in order to exert an influence on the particulars of policy, reserving for broad generalities and key policy areas the flexing of bargaining muscle based on the cataclysmic threat to bring down the entire administration.

We may conclude from all this that, when policy is an end in itself, membership of the government assumes secondary importance, with the big policy questions being settled by the balance of forces in the legislature. If they are not settled at the government formation stage (and it will rarely be the case that all of them are settled at this stage) then pivotal parties may have a direct impact on legislation or an indirect impact on the executive via threats to the future of the government. The desire to affect

more detailed matters of policy, however, may provide a strong incentive for parties concerned not at all with the intrinsic rewards of office none the less to slug it out for a seat at the cabinet table, the matter to which we now turn.

OFFICE AS A MEANS TO INFLUENCE POLICY

Membership of the executive provides at least some opportunities to influence policy, though we should not forget, as we have just seen, that the threat to bring down the government, the major threat that can be deployed against a government over policy outputs, depends only upon the configuration of parties in the legislature.

Executive influence over policy takes place at several levels. First and without doubt most importantly, the cabinet makes many key policy decisions which are not subject to direct legislative review. On issues which are not matters of life or death for the government, membership of the cabinet may offer considerable control over policy outputs. This means that one of the main elements of value in the package that makes up a cabinet portfolio is the possession of a vote in cabinet decision making. Excepting the Prime Minister's control over the general agenda of cabinet meetings, this gives all cabinet portfolios equal value, since each confers a single cabinet vote. The Minister for Finance and the Minister for Foreign Affairs have no more power than the Minister for the Arts, provided that all have a seat at the cabinet table. This forces us into a consideration of intracabinet decision making, a matter considered explicitly by de Swaan in developing his policy distance theory. He assumes that cabinet decisions are based on majority voting, which leads to the conclusion that cabinet policy on a single dimension should be that preferred by the median cabinet member on that dimension. This enables de Swaan to conclude that the policy position of the median cabinet member is the 'expected' policy of the coalition.²⁴ Grossman suggests that de Swaan's assumption of majority decision making renders the minority portion of the coalition completely powerless.²⁵ However, the minority in cabinet may retain some power if its party is pivotal in the legislature, namely, if the withdrawal of its support is able to bring down the government. Once more,

we see a way in which intracabinet decision making can be affected by the balance of power in the legislature.

The second type of influence over policy that is provided by a cabinet portfolio was introduced in the previous section. It is the power of a minister to influence detailed policy outputs. When Browne and Franklin conducted their analysis of the distribution of cabinet portfolios, as we have seen, it was the ability of ministers to exert a detailed administrative influence over policy that they assumed to motivate politicians in their quest for portfolio payoffs, not a desire to hold office in and for itself.

The most important policy payoff, however, is the distribution of public offices among the various governing parties. Here, each party is awarded one or more of the government ministries (and/or sub-ministerial posts) in exchange for bringing its parliamentary support to the government, thereby establishing its formal responsibility for and primary influence over individual policy areas. Government ministries are the most tangible manifestations of policy payoffs to governing parties in that they give parties an institutional base from which to attempt to influence the entire flow of public policy . . . the control of a given set of ministries confers upon a party a particular set of institutional resources which it can manipulate in an effort to advance its policy goals.²⁶

The power to influence policy in this way obviously extends far beyond the cabinet to a range of other appointments that may be under the control of the government. (The most obvious examples include senior posts in the judiciary, the governorship of the central bank, and many of the other patronage appointments that we have already mentioned in our earlier discussion of the intrinsic rewards of office.) If parties want to control portfolios in order to affect policy, furthermore, it is likely that different parties with different policy concerns will value different portfolios to a different degree. Agrarian parties, for example, are likely to set special store by the agriculture portfolio, socialist and social democratic parties by the welfare portfolio, parties that lay a heavy emphasis on defence on the defence portfolio, and so on. There is some limited evidence to suggest that there are in practice consistent relationships between particular parties and particular ministries.²⁷ This has the implication that some allocations of a given set of portfolios to a given set of parties (those that give particular portfolios to those who most want them) may be more 'efficient' or 'valuable' than others, with the very important

consequence that even the allocation of a fixed set of government portfolios is not a constant sum game.

Instrumental Office-Seeking and the Party Hierarchy

In general terms, the pursuit of office as a means to influence policy is a matter that may open up serious divisions within political parties. Senior politicians often argue in favour of compromising basic policy objectives so as to be able to get into office and thereby to have at least some influence on real policy outputs. The alternative, they typically claim, is to retain a pure policy position, to stay out of office and thereby to have little effect on policy. Since it is the senior politicians in a party who hold the offices, such arguments allow for a happy coincidence of self-interest and idealism on their part. Down at the grass roots, however, party activists who have little chance of holding major office may distrust those who tell them, often from the back seat of a chauffeur-driven Mercedes, that policy compromises are necessary so that the party can get into office in order to fulfil at least some of its basic policy objectives.

Policy-based instrumental office-seeking depends for its ultimate justification on the heavy use of counterfactual arguments of the 'if we were out of office things would be much worse' variety. In Ireland, for example, Labour leader Dick Spring often defended in precisely these terms his party's continuing participation with a monetarist Fine Gael party in a coalition that enacted several rounds of severe cuts in public spending. Stretching the doctrine of collective cabinet responsibility as far as he could (though able to shield himself with it when convenient), Spring and his Labour ministerial colleagues were wont to drop hints about the atrocities that would have been committed by Fine Gael if Labour had not been there to hold them back. Indeed, Spring was careful to ensure that the break-up of the 1982-7 coalition followed directly from Fine Gael's refusal to move on yet another proposed tough Budget. This allowed him to make the vital argument that Labour had stayed in the coalition only while it was able to do some good and withdrew as soon as it was not. We will never know, of course, what Fine Gael would have done had it been able to govern without Labour, so we can never really evaluate the impact of Labour participation on coalition policy in Ireland. It was

certainly true in this case, however, that the main anti-coalition pressure came from Labour's grass-roots activists, who did not enjoy the luxury of ministerial appointments and remained singularly unimpressed, throughout the lifetime of the coalition government, by their party leader's protestations about all the good he was doing.

What is clear from the preceding discussion is that the neat analytical distinction between the desire for office in and for itself, and the desire for office as a means to influence policy, can easily become blurred in practice. This is especially true given the additional benefits of office that are enjoyed by senior party figures, even by those who are genuinely concerned about policy. We have also seen that the broad thrust of government policy can be influenced as easily by flexing legislative muscle as it can by working within the executive, thereby removing one of the main incentives for policy-seeking parties to bargain their way into office.

POLICY AS A MEANS TO GAIN OFFICE

Unlike theories of party competition, theories of coalition bargaining tend to assume, if they consider policy at all, that politicians value policy outputs for their own sake. In contrast, most of the analyses of electoral competition that have been based on the work of Downs assume that party policy is something used by politicians solely to help them win elections. While one of the recent growth areas of political science has been in the development of theories of electoral behaviour built on assumptions of intrinsic policy-seeking,²⁸ and a few authors have considered the impact of instrumental policy-seeking on coalition bargaining,²⁹ there remains a considerable gap between theories of electoral behaviour and theories of coalition bargaining on this matter.

If we regard a party policy package as something that is put forward solely in order to win elections, then we must expect policy to have an impact on coalition bargaining only to the extent that parties have an eye on the next election when they consider entering a particular coalition. In other words, only a theory of coalitional behaviour that assumes some form of dynamic interaction between coalition bargaining and electoral competition,

along the lines suggested by Austen-Smith and Banks or Laver,³⁰ is able to accommodate instrumental policy motivations in coalition bargaining. The problem for coalition theory, therefore, is that it has up until now been essentially static, assuming implicitly that politicians do not look forward to the next election when they bargain. Coalition theory, in short, has failed to take heed of Schlesinger's dictum that 'office-seekers must be future oriented'.³¹ This makes it difficult for the theories to accommodate the notion of 'instrumental' office-seeking. Even those models that claim to be dynamic such as those of Grofman or Laver and Underhill,³² tend to be only locally dynamic in the sense that they look at the process involved in a single coalition formation rather than at the more global interaction between coalition bargaining and electoral competition over a series of elections.

Austen-Smith and Banks, however, have recently made a determined attempt to set this situation to rights, developing an integrated model of coalition bargaining and electoral competition that is based very firmly in the Downsian tradition of assuming politicians to be concerned with policy only for instrumental reasons. 'Parties' ex ante policy preferences will be a function only of the *difference* between their electoral policy positions and the final policy outcome . . . Even if parties are only concerned with winning elections . . . , *future* benefits will be a function of the current difference between the electoral position of the party and the formal policy outcome of the legislature.³³ Office-seeking parties are concerned with policy outputs, on these assumptions, solely because future voters will vote on the basis of the gap between what was promised at the last election and what subsequently happened in the legislature. The authors then go on to construct a 'simple' three-party model of coalition bargaining and electoral competition that illustrates quite clearly how complicated even simple dynamic models can be. They ignore many of the factors that we might want to bring into play in a full consideration of policy manipulation designed to fulfil longer-term office-seeking objectives, including the discounting of future costs and benefits, the credibility costs of changing policies, the extent to which parties are 'tainted' with the policies of coalitions to which they have belonged in the past, and so on. None the less, the Austen-Smith and Banks model, discussed in greater detail in Chapter 5 below, serves to illustrate very clearly that the

development of an integrated model of coalition bargaining and electoral competition, driven by the instrumental manipulation of party policy to gain office, will force a fundamental re-evaluation of the theory of party competition.

A full consideration of the impact of instrumental policy-seeking, then, demands a dynamic theory of party competition; and a dynamic theory of party competition requires an extension of our assumptions about the motivations of the actors to cover how they feel about the future. Unless we take account of such longer-term motivations and explore how they affect party competition over a sequence of elections and governments, we are reduced to treating each round of coalition bargaining as an entirely independent event, proposing no more of a relationship between politics in Germany in 1983 and 1987 than, say, between politics in Germany in 1987 and politics in Iceland in 1947. This is clearly unrealistic.

Taking a longer-term view of the motivations of politicians, however, we see why an office-seeking party may engage in vigorous policy bargaining, a matter that is only beginning to surface in existing theoretical treatments of the politics of coalition. When an office-seeking party bargains over policy with an eye to the next election, however, there is no 'ideal' policy point that determines its payoffs. Coalition policy outputs, in this case, are no more than weapons in the war between the parties.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

We can generate quite different accounts of coalition bargaining by making different assumptions about what motivates the key actors. Office-seeking parties may bargain over policy, if that is what they are attempting to sell to the electorate. Policy-seeking parties may scramble for office, if that is how they hope to influence the flow of government outputs. On the other hand, policy-seeking parties may not care whether they are in government at all, if they are confident of being able to dictate policy to the cabinet from a pivotal position in the legislature. Actors with a longer-term time perspective will use their experience of previous interactions between coalition formation and electoral politics to gauge the impact of one coalition on subsequent

elections and balance the impact of one election programme against subsequent coalition prospects.

Above all, it is clear that the simple notion of 'winning' the coalition game can only be defined in the context of a set of explicit assumptions about the motivations of the actors, a point made very clearly by Schlesinger.³⁴ Until we know what the stakes are, it is hard to know which game is being played and how to win it. Yet many of the existing theoretical accounts of the politics of coalition are remarkably vague, when we really get down to it, about the precise assumptions that they make about the motivations of the actors. In particular, coalition theories often fail to distinguish between the valuation of either office or policy in and for itself, and the instrumental valuation of office or policy as elements in a broader strategy of party competition.