Danish Experiences with Coalition Governments and Coalition Governance

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A DIPD READER

COALITION BUILDING

FINDING SOLUTIONS TOGETHER

DIPD

DANISH INSTITUTE FOR
PARTIES AND DEMOCRACY

The vision of DIPD is to contribute to the development of well-functioning democratic political parties, multi-party systems and other institutions as central stakeholders in the democratic culture of selected developing countries.

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ABOUT THE COVER PHOTO

The parliamentary election in September 2011 resulted in a narrow victory for the four parties in the red bloc. Three of the 'red' parties came together to form a minority coalition government – the Social Democrats with 44 seats in Parliament, the Social Liberals with 17 seats and the Socialist People's Party with 16 seats. With the support of the 12 seats from the Red-Green Alliance, the four parties controlled 89 seats. This is short of the 90 seats required to form a majority in the Danish parliament of 179 seats, but 4 seats belong to Greenland and the Faroe Islands, and some of these support the red bloc. The photo shows the key political leaders in the red bloc in a rare moment of discussing the challenges facing the coalition. From left to right they are: Villy Søvndal from the Socialist People's Party, who became Minister of Foreign Affairs; Helle Thorning-Schmidt from the Social Democrats, who became the Prime Minister in the new government; Johanne Schmidt-Nielsen from the Red-Green Alliance but not a member of the government; and Margrethe Vestager from the Social Liberal Party, who became Minister for Economics and the Interior.

Photo by Claus Bech/Scanpix

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Denis Kadima

Mr. Denis K. Kadima is the Executive Director of the Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa (EISA). He has participated in about 100 electoral and political processes worldwide in different capacities. In 2010, he worked as the Director of the United Nations Referendum and Electoral Division supporting the self-determination referendum in South Sudan and in 2011 as the Electoral Chief Technical Advisor for UNDP in Tunisia. Mr. Kadima is the founder and editor of EISA's accredited Journal of African Elections, launched in 2000. He has extensively published on party systems and electoral processes.

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Coalition bargaining and legislative agreements are the main topics in the research conducted by Flemming Juul Christiansen. His Ph.D. thesis was on legislative agreements in the Danish parliament. He has also studied coalition agreements between parties in government, coalitions on EU policies, pre-electoral coalition, and "support party" coalitions.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ANC	African National Congress
CCM	Chama Cha Mapinduzi
CHADEMA	Chama Cha Demokrasia Na Maendeleo
CUF	Civic United Front
DIPD	Danish Institute for Parties and Democracy
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
EISA	Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa
EU	European Union
FPPS	First Past the Post (electoral) System
ICC	International Criminal Court
IFP	Inkatha Freedom Party
JOMPOPS	Joint Mechanism for Political Party Strengthening
KZN	KwaZulu-Natal
LO	Landsorganisationen i Danmark (The Danish Confederation of Trade Unions)
LP	Labour Party
MMM	Mauritian Militant Movement
MP	Member of Parliament
MSM	Mouvement Socialiste Mauritien
NCCR	National Convention for Construction and Reform
NLD	National League for Democracy
NP	National Party
PF	Patriotic Front
UK	United Kingdom
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UPND	United Party for National Development

FOREWORD

By Bjørn Førde

The Board of the institute approved the strategy of DIPD for the period covering 2014 to 2017 in May 2014 under the title of Ideas that can inspire. Using this phrase was a very deliberate choice, following the first years of experience working with partners around the world, both in party-to-party contexts and in multiparty contexts. A lesson we have learned is that blueprints or magic bullets do not exist; our key strength is that we can share experiences from our own journey towards a democratic society with effective and democratic political parties as important actors.

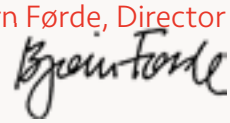
Over the years, this has resulted in the development of DIPD Readers and Guides in areas of women in politics, youth in political parties, and political parties at the local level. These are areas, where we believe Denmark has something to offer from our own practices – some ideas for inspiration!

We believe the same is true in the area of **building and managing political coalitions**. Not because Denmark is unique in this business, but simply because no single party has been in the position of having a majority of seats to govern alone for more than 100 years – and this is likely to continue as long as Denmark maintains an election system based on proportional representation. All parties dreaming about holding the position of Prime Minister have therefore had to understand and manage the need to be able to bring together a parliamentary majority – either in the coalition government itself or at least as a functioning governing majority in Parliament.

I am sure that changing Danish Prime Ministers and ruling parties have often wished they had the majority to govern on their own. Coalition governments can be difficult to manage, with all of the coalition parties wanting to highlight their particular flagship policies. Another challenge is that small parties often find it difficult to get the necessary space to profile themselves, because the larger parties by definition will dominate the agenda, resulting in the small parties often being punished in the next election. This means that coalition building and governance should be seen as the result of a long political process, and a part of a broader 'democratic culture', where democracy is seen as a dialogue that is inclusive and respectful of all groups in society, not just a game of winning with a 'winner takes it all' approach.

Many young democracies are challenged with demands to accommodate the interests of many different and diverse groups. Managing diversity is a key challenge in our time. Coalition governance can be one way of offering solutions to this challenge. Maybe this is the reason why DIPD partners in countries like Nepal and Myanmar have shown interest in having this Reader developed.

Bjørn Førde, Director



ABOUT THE PHOTO

Party leaders from six of the political parties that participated in the 2015 parliamentary elections in Denmark, in one of several debates on national television. From left to right they are: Anders Samuelsen – the Liberal Alliance; Helle Thorning-Schmidt – the Social Democrats; Kristian Thulesen Dahl – the Danish People's Party; Pia Olsen Dyhr – the Socialist People's Party; Lars Løkke Rasmussen – the Liberal Party; Johanne Schmidt-Nielsen – the Red-Green Alliance.

Photo by Jens Dresling/Polfoto

INTRODUCTION

By Hanne Lund Madsen

When DIPD partners from Nepal and Bhutan gathered in Denmark for the Municipal Election Study Tour, great interest and some surprise was expressed regarding the frequency of coalition governments, the consensus politics and the political dialogue culture in Denmark. Parties are certainly competitors, but our partners noted that in Denmark parties pay as much attention to **cooperation** as to **competition**.

In fact, in Denmark parties compete to cooperate! The parties that manage to gather support from other parties have more chances to maintain citizens' and members' support. Brian Mikkelsen (MP for the Conservative Party) explains it the following way:

"We are very pragmatic, because we know that we need to cooperate to form government and to get parliamentary support for reform measures."

The former minister was alluding to the fact that most governments in Denmark have been coalition governments.

"We know that we need to negotiate and find solutions together. We also know that when we again will be in power, we will need the cooperation of other parties to govern. Therefore, we have a very strong political dialogue culture. We compete, but we also cooperate."

This is the very theme of this Reader: cooperation among political parties, coalitions of parties, and political accords.

> "Danish politics has been called consensus-oriented politics, but this does not imply that there is no political competition or no political conflicts."

THE DANISH SYSTEM

Denmark has had coalition governments ever since 1982 right up to June 2015, where a single party minority government was formed by the Liberal Party. Generally, the coalition governments have been quite enduring, and therefore Danish politics has been called **consensus-oriented** politics. However, the extensive practice of coalitions and political policy accords does not imply that there is no political competition or no political conflicts. But the dialogue and negotiation culture has developed ways to handle this. (Pedersen, 2010: p. 177)

Governing coalition formations have only been challenged seriously a few times. Most recently it happened in 2014, when the Danish Socialist People's Party left the governing coalition with the Social Democrats and the Social Li-

beral Party due to their dissatisfaction with the handling of the sale of shares in the government owned national energy company, DONG, to private investors. In 1996 the Centre Democratic Party left a coalition government with the Social Democrats and the Social Liberal Party due to disagreements on the national budget and on the inclusion of the Socialist People's Party into the political accord. At the end, both governments endured. Finally, back in 1978, the coalition government of the Social Democrats and the Liberal Party broke down due to strong internal disagreement, and national elections were called.

These coalition politics scenarios unfold in a political landscape of around 5,5 million citizens with 10 political parties contesting for the parliamentary elections in June 2015 (see also Annex 3). The voter turnout ended at 85,8 %, which is lower than in the 2011 election, although many commentators had feared that the turnout would have been lower due to a general fatigue among citizens and especially youth with the type of political debate taking place between the two main contesting parties, the Social Democratic Party and the Liberal Party.

The electoral result gave the parties of the blue bloc a majority, with the Danish Peoples Party as the largest party of the blue block. After several attempts and hard negotiations to establish a coalition government and a majority government, the Liberal Party has established a one-party minority government.

The 179 seats of parliament (175 elected in Denmark, 2 elected in Greenland and 2 elected in the Faroe Islands) are now occupied by 112 men and 67 women (37,4%), which is less than in the last parliament and the average age of an MP is now 45 years as compared to the average age of the voters being 48 years.

> "The vast majority of Danish legislation has been passed with broad political agreement."

The main issues debated during the electoral campaign in 2015 were the following: job creation, social welfare system, immigration and refugee policies and tax. Moreover, the question of how the coalitions would eventually be constructed was intensely debated, and especially the positions of the so-called support parties were in focus because their voice even with just a few seats could potentially have a considerable influence.

COALITIONS – PREFERRED OPTION OR LAST SOLUTION?

When we look at the practice of political accords or agreements in Denmark, the overall picture is the same. The vast majority of Danish legislation has been passed with broad political agreement, also including parties that may not have been part of the governing coalition. Political accords are so common that they are now considered an important, even informal, institution in Danish politics. The nature and characteristics of political accords are also often discussed in the media. A very powerful and serious criticism of any Danish party is to blame it for wanting to break a political accord. In Denmark, coalitions and political accords are a preferred manner of organizing politics. This is characterised very aptly by the former MP and Minister, Lone Dybkjær:

"When we in Denmark started to work together in the various parties, we managed to change a lot on women's issues. We also made allies with NGOs, and the party colour did not matter much when change for women was on the agenda."

In other countries, coalition governments are considered as a weakness. In May 2015, elections in the United Kingdom took place and the debate was heated regarding the likeliness of or the necessity of a coalition government. Many parties in the UK consider coalition governance as the last option – as a necessary evil. Coalitions are a relatively new phenomenon in UK politics, which creates insecurity and unpredictability in a political culture used to an electoral system of first past the post normally creating a comfortable majority government that can rule with little regard of the minority parties.

Perhaps this is the reason why the Danish television drama "Borgen" has intrigued and fascinated the British so much. It goes behind the scenes of the Danish Parliament and shows the political talks and deals between the Danish political parties leading to coalition governments and political accords. The author Adam Price notes in an interview with the Guardian:

"Borgen, my TV drama, offers an insight into the art of compromise that any UK government must learn, now that polarized politics are gone for good."

The television drama also points to some of the difficulties in making political compromise, and it raises some of the frequent questions: Are parties dominated by the parliamentary group and with centralized party structures better to make swift political accords, whereas parties dominated by the ex-parliamentary group and the member congress tend to be entering accords less often or at least less quickly? Do you risk losing your voters if you enter a political accord, or will the party be rewarded for being able to create broad based solutions to national problems?

> "In many of our partner countries the political power struggles are organized, mediated, negotiated and forged in various types of coalitions."

It turned out that the predictions of the British opinion polls did not reflect the true outcome of the elections. The Conservatives ended up with a majority government. Also in Denmark the opinion polls did not manage to capture that the Danish Peoples Party would become the second largest party in Denmark.

Before we zoom in on some of the global and in particular Danish experiences, it is important to ask if and how it is relevant to extract lessons from a country like Denmark?

Well, the political parties that we cooperate with in our joint democracy projects request us to share our experiences and difficulties so that it can be a two-way dialogue and joint reflection. Moreover, we have taken note that a large consultation on democracy promotion partnerships concluded and recommended that international and European democracy actors should "do more to document own experiences"[1].

1 Democracy in Development. Global consultations on the EU's role in democracy building © International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance 2009.

COALITIONS — A RARE SPECIES?

Many countries that have adopted a First Past the Post System (FPPS) typically have a single party majority government. The need for coalition building is therefore less, and the virtues of coalitions or negotiated agreements are not always readily appreciated.

Does this mean that coalitions are a rare species in countries outside Europe that have Proportional Representation (PR) electoral systems? Is there a focus on the art of coalition building in other settings as well?

The Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy has been working on party coalitions since 2003 exactly to shed light on this question, and thanks to their efforts the coalition experiences of a number of countries are now documented. Denis Kadima's research shows that pre-electoral alliances and post-election coalitions of political parties have increasingly become a significant feature of contemporary African politics. Coalition theories base themselves mainly on the experiences of Western European countries and therefore tend to focus excessively on post-election coalitions. Yet, in Africa, pre-electoral alliances occur nearly as frequently as post-election coalitions (Kadima, 2014).

A look at the number of countries experiencing pre-electoral alliances and/or coalition governments in Africa over the period up to October 2013 (as opposed to single party governments) is quite revealing. When one excludes countries, where multiparty parliamentary elections were not held for a variety of reasons (Eritrea, Sahrawi, Somalia and Swaziland), 51.0% of African states experienced pre-election party alliances in their most recent legislative elections, and 54.9% had some form of coalition government. Similarly, pre-election alliances were formed in 22 of 43 countries (51.2%) in presidential elections during the same period, when excluding monarchies (Lesotho, Morocco and Swaziland), indirectly elected presidents (Botswana, Ethiopia, Libya, Mauritius, South Africa and Tunisia) and countries not holding (presidential) elections like Eritrea, Sahrawi and Somalia (Kadima, 2014).

We can conclude that not only in Denmark but also in many of our partner countries the political power struggles are organized, mediated, negotiated and forged in various types of coalitions. This supports the relevance of sharing experiences from Denmark and many other countries to better understand the causes and consequences of coalition formation, survival and disintegration, and thereby inspire us and partners in our coalition practices.

> "In Myanmar, some parties are discussing to build pre-election coalitions and others are actually contemplating a complete merger."

THE SEARCH FOR COALITION PRACTICES

During the preparation of this Reader, the co-authors have been in search for coalition practices around the world and in Denmark in particular. The literature on coalition practices has been reviewed, and two prominent former MPs and Ministers have been interviewed regarding their coalition experiences: Former

Minister, Per Stig Møller, from the Conservative Party, and Former Minister and EU Commissioner, Poul Nielson, from the Social Democrats.

We have also consulted with our partners during a seminar in Denmark in June 2014 and again in February 2015 in Nepal, where we discussed and reflected on the drafts of this publication. The Steering Committee of the political party platform in Nepal, JOMPSOPS, shared a number of interesting questions and issues regarding coalition building: How to balance coalition and party identity? How to balance the trade-offs of coalition building?

We have also followed the recent coalition practices developing in Tanzania in the UKAWA Coalition and their search for finding workable methods of dialogue, negotiation and settlements prior to the elections in Tanzania in October 2015.

In Bolivia and Zambia where DIPD and the Danish parties engage, we also see several developments of building broader political alliances and movements, which spur interest in experiences from other countries.

In Myanmar, several political party alliances exist, where the political parties discuss issues of joint interest and sometimes make joint statements or calls for reform. Myanmar is approaching the national elections in November 2015, and some parties are discussing to build pre-election coalitions and others are actually contemplating a complete merger. In the multiparty dialogue meetings, which DIPD convenes, the parties often express interest in learning from the experiences of other countries regarding various forms of party collaboration, alliances and coalition building. Coalition practices will perhaps become more common in Myanmar if the upcoming elections will not give one single party the majority.

> “Coalitions are political power-sharing arrangements and thus from a democracy perspective considered very attractive in contrast to one party power dominance.”

In Kenya, Tanzania and Malawi the multiparty platforms supported by DIPD have over the years played an important role in facilitating dialogue among the parties and ways of cooperation. Most importantly perhaps are the efforts to help agreements on the rules of the game regarding political competition and handling of political disagreements. Our colleague in Kenya, Martha Karua, expressed it the following way:

“We want to be inspired by the Danish way of managing by trust and by playing by the rules. This is ultimately in the interest of all whether in power or in opposition.”

Inspiration from Danish and global experiences are exactly in focus in this reader. We are not seeking to develop coalition guides or manuals, which many other organisations have already done, but rather to share experiences and ideas that can be used by political party peers around the world.

FLOW OF THE READER

Chapter 1 by Denis Kadima guides us in the multitudes of coalitions. We set out with an overview of the multitudes of coalitions that exist; the types that exist, and the factors stimulating coalition building; the advantages and disadvantages of coalitions; and the effects of coalitions. Coalitions are political power-sharing arrangements and thus from a democracy perspective considered very attractive in contrast to one party power dominance. However, a coalition may also result in dominant forms of governance making the voice of the minority parties even more difficult.

In **Chapter 2** we travel on the long road to coalition building in Scandinavia broadly and in particular in Denmark, which until 2015 had been ruled by coalition governments ever since 1982. In addition, many political reforms were made through negotiated agreements reaching beyond the coalition parties. Robert Klemmensen and Flemming Juul Christiansen provide insights into the political dialogue culture in Denmark and show that political agreements (ad hoc issue -based coalitions) can be strong engines for change and reform.

Finally, in **Chapter 3** Denis Kadima draws lessons and conclusions and build the bridge to the current political realities in some of the partner countries where DIPD has entered democracy partnerships, both through multi-party partnership and party-to-party cooperation.

ABOUT THE PHOTO

The so-called 'Inclusive Government' in Zimbabwe was established in 2009 following the elections in 2008, and it was brokered by the international community, in particular the government of South Africa and the Southern African Development Community, to end a decade-long political dispute and economic recession. Morgan Tsvangirai (on the left), the leader of the largest opposition party Movement for Democratic Change, was appointed Prime Minister in the inclusive government. The leader of the ruling party since independence in 1980, Robert Mugabe, was elected President.

Photo by Jekesai Njikizana/AFP/Getty Images

CHAPTER 1
THE MULTITUDES OF COALITIONS

By Denis Kadima

Denmark and most Western European countries offer solid learning on the politics of coalition formation, survival and collapse. In the rest of the world, including Africa and India, electoral processes and government building are also dominated by the formation of electoral alliances and coalition governments. All over the world, party coalitions are influenced by the constitutional and legal framework of each country, its political culture and its social, economic and political context.

In order to better draw lessons on this important aspect of the political process, this chapter briefly looks at the following matters: Types of coalitions; factors stimulating coalition building (political regime, electoral system and legal basis of party coalitions; the contrasting roles of ideologies and social cleavages; advantages and disadvantages of coalitions; interactions between coalitions and nation-building; and effects of coalitions on political parties and party systems.

> "Particular moments of political crisis have also resulted in "forced marriages" in South Africa in 1994, in Kenya following the controversial 2007 elections, and the Inclusive Government in Zimbabwe after the 2008 elections."

TYPES OF COALITIONS

There are several types of coalitions. The classification of coalitions depends on the criteria used, such as the timing of their occurrence vis-à-vis an election; their voluntary or imposed character; and whether they take place in parliament, government or outside of the political institutions. According to these criteria, there exist pre-electoral alliances (or election pacts), legislative coalitions, coalition governments and Government of National Unity. Danish and Western European experiences are dominated by post-election coalitions and have inspired much of the literature on party coalitions.[1]

The experience of India and African countries demonstrates that pre-electoral alliances tend to occur nearly as frequently as post-election coalitions[2]. Voluntary coalitions or "marriages of convenience" have therefore been formed because no single political party could win the elections or form the government alone (Mauritius, Côte d'Ivoire, India, Democratic Republic of Congo and Senegal).

1 See the following works in particular: Gamson, 1961; Riker, 1961; Axelrod, 1970; De Swaan, 1973; Dodd, 1976; Luebbert, 1983; Warwick, 1994).

2 Kadima, Denis (2014): Introduction to the Politics of Party Alliances and Coalitions in Socially-divided Africa, Journal of African Elections, Vol. 13 Num. 1, EISA.

There have also been coalitions emerging from conditions of historical struggles for independence, liberation struggles and post-independence crises. Particular moments of political crisis have also resulted in "forced marriages" such as the constitutionally-entrenched Governments of National Unity in South Africa in 1994; the Grand Coalition in Kenya following the controversial 2007 elections and the Inclusive Government in Zimbabwe after the failed 2008 elections.

> "Voluntary coalitions or "marriages of convenience" have been formed because no single political party could win the elections or form the government alone."

FACTORS STIMULATING COALITION BUILDING

Party alliances and coalition building in Africa are unequally influenced by institutional, political, legal, social and financial factors[3]. These factors include some of the dimensions mentioned below.

THE NATURE OF THE POLITICAL REGIME

In parliamentary regimes, coalition governments heavily depend on the confidence of parliament; hence the need for consensus politics. This explains why in such regimes, negotiations and compromises are ongoing processes. Although presidential regimes also require parliamentary coalitions for the smooth lawmaking process (Altman, 2000), the extensive executive powers enjoyed by the Head of the State often lead to the latter using these powers at the expense of consensus building. It must however be noted that not all coalition governments in presidential and semi-presidential regimes are unstable.

ELECTORAL SYSTEMS AND PARTY COALITIONS

Majoritarian electoral systems, and particularly the First-Past-the-Post (FPTP) electoral systems like those applied in Malawi and Kenya (until 2012) compel political parties to choose to enter into pre-election alliances in order to avoid wasting their votes. By coming together, they increase their chances of winning elections and governing the country. Mauritius's three-way FPTP also compels parties into pre-electoral alliances given that parties are largely ethnically based. In Kenya the constitutional requirement that presidential candidates must obtain at least 50%+1 of valid votes and 25% in half of the 47 counties in the absence of which a presidential runoff between the two leading candidates will be held, has compelled parties to enter into pre-election alliances (Kadima & Owuor, 2014).

In a proportional representation (PR) systems such as that used in South Africa for the national and provincial elections there is no election threshold and votes are, essentially, not wasted. Parties do not therefore have to rush into pre-election alliances and can build post-election coalitions on the basis

3 Idem

of the number of seats each has won. Mozambique offers an interesting case with its PR system which until before the 2009 general elections included a requirement of a minimum threshold of 5 per cent of the national vote which explained the building of pre-election alliances (Kadima & Matsimbe, 2006). Since the removal of the threshold, no major pre-electoral alliances have been formed in Mozambique.

THE NATURE OF THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The legal framework governing political parties (and their coalitions) has impact on the formation, functioning and collapse of party coalitions. Political parties tend to be overregulated in Africa in order to prevent the formation of ethno-regionally-based political parties. On the other hand pre-election alliances and party coalitions are inadequately regulated which leads to abuses and conflicts (Senegal, Malawi and Kenya). Inadequate, scanty or selective regulations of party coalitions or the lack of appropriate regulations, especially in the context of presidential systems, have led to governmental instability like in Kenya 2002-2007 and Malawi (Kadima, 2008).

> "The main social cleavages in African countries are ethnicity, religion, language and geography."

COALITIONS, IDEOLOGIES AND SOCIAL CLEAVAGES

Just like in other parts of the world, party leaders in Western Europe are also interested in holding public office. However the coalitions they build are essentially based on ideological and policy considerations. This is why a coalition government consisting of the Parti Socialiste and the right wing Front National, for example, is inconceivable in today's France.

In India, while ideologies are an important criterion in entering in a coalition, they are not the only decisive factor. Ethnicity, religion, class, cast and geography are equally important and regularly lead to the building of pre-electoral alliances, parliamentary coalitions and coalition governments that cut across ideological divides. These social cleavages explain why coalitions collapse in India and why some alliances cannot just form. Furthermore, at times parties which are in a coalition government in one Indian state may find themselves in opposite sides in another state or at the national level.

Social cleavages too are essential in the building of pre-electoral coalitions and post-election coalitions in Africa. The main social cleavages in African countries are ethnicity, religion, language and geography (i.e. Malawi, Kenya, Nigeria, DRC and Côte d'Ivoire). Ideologies only apply in rare cases such as South Africa where class still largely coincides with race.

ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF COALITIONS

Coalitions have the advantage of allowing partner political parties to combine their human, financial and material resources, broaden their base and their re-

spective strengths and thus accomplish more than they could have achieved alone. However, coalitions often have the recurrent disadvantages of being unstable, conflict-ridden and of being seen as undemocratic and lacking in transparency and accountability. Coalition members may feel that their control over policies is restricted, and that too many concessions end up compromising them while coalition matters take precedence over party priorities.

> "It can be argued that coalitions have contributed to nation-building in a multiethnic society like Mauritius."

DENMARK AND MAURITIUS

Not many of us would immediately see the connection between Denmark and Mauritius, but there is in fact a link when it comes to coalition governments.

Denmark has been ruled by coalition governments and more specifically minority governments ever since 1982 and most of the political reforms were entered through coalitions or negotiated agreements. Mauritius also has a long tradition of coalition governments. In fact ever since Mauritius became independent in 1968 it has mostly been ruled by coalition governments – often consisting of at least two main parties.

Another feature is that all except for one coalition government in Mauritius has been pre-election coalitions. This has also been the case several times in Denmark, when coalitions have been identified and formed prior to elections. But there are also cases of post-election coalition formation.[4]

The striking difference between Mauritius and Denmark is the electoral system. Denmark has a PR system known to provide room, opportunity and necessity of forming coalitions. But Mauritius has a FPTP system and has often included more than two political parties in the coalitions. In this regard the case of Mauritius is interesting to many of our partner countries where the electoral system is dominated by FPTP. However, part of the explanation is that Mauritius has a unique combination: the Mauritian FPTP is actually a first-three-past-the-post system, allowing for 60 elected members to be represented in the National Assembly, each of the 20 constituencies returning three MPs and the island of Rodrigues returning two MPs. In addition, a system of "best losers" (variable correctives) prevails, attributing an extra 8 seats to non-elected candidates based on their ethno-religious affiliation (Kadima & Kasenally, 2005).

The experience of Mauritius shows the importance of not only discussing the two extremes of PR and FPTP systems, but also looking at the many mixed electoral systems which have been tailor-made to help political agreements and governability in each particular country.

4 Kadima, Denis and Kasenally, Roukaya (2005): The Formation, Collapse and Revival of Political Party Coalitions in Mauritius: Ethnic Logic and Calculation at Play, Journal of African Elections, Vol. 4 Num. 1, pp 133-164

COALITIONS — A NATION BUILDING DEVICE?

The 1884-85 Berlin Conference divided Africa into numerous entities without paying much attention to the ethnic diversity of these newly formed states. Ethnicity became the basis of political organization and, by the time of independence, the large majority of political parties were ethnically-based, adding a supplementary and crucial dimension to the political competition. The effect was devastating in countries such as Nigeria, DRC, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, Angola and Sudan. To contain ethnic polarization post-independence leaders have heavily regulated political parties. The formation of Government of National Unity has also been a "forced" mechanism for ethnic accommodation.

Increasingly electoral alliances, parliamentary coalitions and coalition governments have been voluntary mechanism for ethnic accommodation and nation-building. Coalitions are not only a vote seeking, office seeking and policy seeking strategy. They are also a device which ensures the rapprochement of political parties and communities in ethnically divided societies. It can therefore be argued that coalitions have contributed to nation-building in multiethnic society like Mauritius.

The case of Mauritius highlights an interesting lesson regarding coalitions as a nation building device and shows that a highly heterogeneous and complex ethnic landscape does not necessarily call for a dominant party and dominant ruler.

> "Party alliances and coalitions tend to disproportionately weaken the small parties while strengthening the main party in the alliance or coalition."

Sithanen shows how the multi-ethnic and multicultural nature of Mauritius has necessitated coalition building and coalition politics as a key instrument in nation building and conflict prevention. "Conflicts are thus resolved within the framework of some unwritten rules and people feel that they are politically alienated. Coalition Government provides an insurance against polarization (Sithanen, 2003).

Other experiences of coalitions as a nation building devise we find by Denis Kadima's book on the Politics of Party Coalitions in Africa (2006). Kadima observed that;

"In South Africa the 1994-1996 Government of National Unity, consisting of the ANC, the National Party (NP) and the IFP, also contributed to nation-building in the racially and ethnically divided country. This transitional constitutionally enshrined multiparty government arrangement brought together the architects of apartheid, the NP, and the party chiefly responsible for apartheid's destruction, the ANC.

One of the most successful party coalitions in the post-apartheid era in South Africa has, surprisingly, been the successive post-election coalitions between the ANC and the IFP in Kwazulu Natal (KZN) province and nationally. The ANC and

IFP came together and succeeded in eroding political violence in the KZN province and their coalition contributed to restoring peace in the volatile province after decades of hostility between supporters of the two parties."[5]

EFFECTS OF COALITIONS ON PARTIES AND SYSTEMS

While party coalitions have seemingly contributed to national cohesion and even nation-building in some contexts, their impact on the party system as a whole and on individual political parties has been mixed. Denis Kadima argues that:

"Smaller political parties usually enter into coalitions for short-term goals like jobs or to get a single issue addressed while large parties tend to focus on a long term strategy aimed at consolidating their support base. As a result, party alliances and coalitions tend to disproportionately weaken the small parties while strengthening the main party in the alliance or coalition."[6]

He also argues that a possible exception to this rule is when;

"The third largest party in Mauritius, the Mouvement Socialiste Mauritien (MSM) was able to maintain itself in power by taking advantage of the strong rivalry between the two main parties, the Labour Party (LP) and the Mauritian Militant Movement (MMM). MSM's Anerood Jugnauth managed, for 13 consecutive years, to occupy the position of Prime Minister, a period that ended only when the LP and MMM formed an alliance in 1995."[7]

> "To contain ethnic polarization post-independence leaders have heavily regulated political parties."

An additional illustration is the example of South Africa where, although there were short term benefits to individual political parties in coalition building (e.g. positions in state institutions), there were also adverse effects resulting from both entering a coalition and subsequently withdrawing from it. Each time the main party in the coalition (i.e. African National Congress or the Democratic Alliance) came out of the coalition much stronger than the smaller partners (i.e. New National Party, Inkhata Freedom Party or Independent Democrats).[8]

The above examples demonstrate that the establishment and disintegration of party alliances and coalitions undeniably affect political parties both individually and collectively. Party coalitions usually lead to the strengthening of the main party and simultaneously to the weakening of the smaller partners.

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5 Kadima, Denis (2006b): African Party Alliances: Comparisons, Conclusions and Lessons, in Kadima, Denis The Politics of Party Coalitions in Africa ed. Johannesburg: Konrad Adenauer Stiftung and EISA pp 223-239

6 Kadima, Denis (2014): Introduction to the Politics of Party Alliances and Coalitions in Socially-divided Africa, Journal of African Elections, Vol. 13 Num. 1, EISA.

7 Kadima, Denis (2014): Introduction to the Politics of Party Alliances and Coalitions in Socially-divided Africa, Journal of African Elections, Vol. 13 Num. 1, EISA

8 Kadima, Denis (2006): Party Coalitions in Post-Apartheid South Africa and their Impact on National Cohesion and Ideological Rapprochement, in Kadima, Denis The Politics of Party Coalitions in Africa ed. Johannesburg: Konrad Adenauer Stiftung and EISA pp 15-71

ABOUT THE PHOTO

The parliamentary election on 18 June 2015 in Denmark resulted in a majority for the parties belonging to the 'blue bloc': the Liberal Party, the Danish People's Party, the Liberal Alliance and the Conservatives. The parties pointed to the leader of the Liberal Party, former Prime Minister Lars Løkke Rasmussen, to form a government. Following several weeks of negotiations, Lars Løkke Rasmussen had to conclude that it was only possible to form a minority government of his own party. The new Prime Minister is here seen with his cabinet on the day when he presented it to Her Majesty the Queen.

Photo by Keld Navntoft/ Scanpix

CHAPTER 2

DANISH EXPERIENCES WITH COALITION GOVERNMENTS AND COALITION GOVERNANCE

By Flemming Juul Christiansen and Robert Klemmensen

In this chapter we outline the Danish and Scandinavian experiences with coalition governments and coalition governance. We do so by first briefly describing the historical path that has led to the political system we see working today in these countries. Then we tell about the political culture and institutional factors that lead to coalition governments.

In the third section, we look at the nature of political agreements. We discuss the preconditions for coalition governments or coalition governance and its pros and cons. We focus on the trade-offs between including different interests into legislative coalitions and the possible lack of clarity of responsibility or of party identity that this inclusion entails.

COALITION GOVERNMENTS IN DENMARK

For a span of 33 years from 1982 to 2015, all governments in Denmark have been based on coalitions, i.e. they have consisted of at least two parties. In June 2015, a single party minority government was formed.

During the 1980s and 1990s, there were occasionally four parties in government. The parties divide the portfolios in the cabinet, i.e. the ministries, between them. The largest party in government usually gets the post of Prime Minster (Damgaard, 2000). The larger parties in government also usually get the highest number of ministries, although the smaller parties in government tend to receive a higher share than according to their number of seats in parliament.

Historically, coalition governments did not develop overnight. For the first decades after parliamentary government was introduced, only one party was given the task to form a government, in the tradition established by the origin of modern parliamentary government, which is the UK House of Commons. However, unlike there, since 1906 no party has enjoyed a majority of its own. The first peacetime coalition was established in 1929 between Social Democrats and Social Liberals.

THE ROAD TO COALITION GOVERNMENTS

The road to coalition government in Denmark has been long and at times also dramatic. Denmark got its first democratic constitution in 1849. The inspiration was the Norwegian constitution of 1814, which is the second oldest democratic constitution in the world still in place. United States has the oldest, together with the Belgian constitution of 1831.

This constitution gave rise to a two-chamber system that was elected using different electoral formulas. In 1866, the constitution was changed, entailing a

change in electoral system for the second chamber, Landstinget so that it had a majority of large estate owners unlike the first chamber, Folketinget, which had a much broader electorate.

This led to a conflict between the two chambers that lasted for more than 30 years. The conflict ended in 1901, when the King appointed a government with a first chamber majority. Finally, in 1920 the King lost a political fight with the Prime Minister over who had the right to dissolve parliament and call a new election. This was the last time that a Monarch challenged democracy in Denmark.

> “Since 1906 no party has enjoyed a majority of its own. The first peacetime coalition was established in 1929 between Social Democrats and Social Liberals.”

A very important constitutional change came in 1915. Again, the electoral system was changed, including an introduction of proportional representation and allowing women to vote. So-called additional seats were rewarded according to party size, thereby pulling the plurality system in use at the time in a more proportional direction. Furthermore, the constitutional change meant that everybody could vote for the second chamber, Landstinget. At this point general suffrage was introduced with an equal vote for adults.

The final change addressed the requirements for future changes of the constitution. According to the new constitution, constitutional changes would require a referendum where at least 45 per cent of the total electorate voted for the proposed change. This provision made the constitution very difficult to amend. Moreover, the requirement of asking the electorate added an idea of popular sovereignty very close to the idea of democracy.

Sooner than Denmark, Norway went through a similar development. It had a conflict between king and parliament that was settled in favour of the latter already in 1884. At the time, Norway was in a ‘personal union’ with Sweden, meaning that the two countries were independent but shared king and matters of foreign affairs. However, in Sweden the rivalry between king and parliament regarding the right of the king to select a government of his choice did not end until the end of the First World War.

Since then, with a few exceptions in the 1940s, the monarchs of the Scandinavian countries have merely played a ceremonial role.

THE QUEST FOR CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGES

In 1920, a minor constitutional change was passed, and the electoral law made representation of the political parties even more proportional. During the 1900-1920 period, four parties had established themselves as the major ones, and they continued to remain the major parties until an important election in 1973 (Damgaard, 1974). The fact that political representation is relatively easy to obtain in Denmark has caused many parties to be represented in parliament and has paved the way for of coalitions between parties to build majorities.

In 1953, the constitution was changed to its present version. This time all of the four parties supported the proposal and it only just satisfied the requirement.

Historians agree that the interest of the public in a constitutional change was also raised by a desire to allow a woman to inherit the throne because the king at the time had no sons but three daughters, who were more beloved in public than the brother of the king.

Politically, the constitutional changes meant that the Danish parliament became a one-chamber parliament, thereby abolishing the Landsting. In order to accept these changes, parties from the right demanded that referenda could be used for other political issues than constitutional changes. So the right to use a referendum was extended so that a third of the members of parliament could demand that a given law is decided by a referendum. This provision has only been used once – in 1963.

Why do Danish opposition parties not call for a referendum to take place more often? One likely reason is that the major parties of the red block (centre-left) and the blue block (centre-right) alternate in government frequently and want to avoid a 'boomerang effect' when they get into office themselves. However, there is an increasing demand in society for more direct political influence, and the feasibility of direct e-voting among citizens is being discussed.

Furthermore, referenda are used if sovereignty is delegated to an international organization (unless a qualified majority of at least 5 out 6 members in the Folketing passes the proposal). Like the strict provisions concerning constitutional amendments, this underscores the strong idea of popular sovereignty in Danish constitutional law. Consequently, Denmark holds referenda quite often on European Union matters.

The 1953 constitutional change was under the rule decided in 1915, and it was very close to not meet the criteria of having 45 per cent of the total electorate voting for the changes. In 1953 it was changed to 40 percent, but besides a further revision of the Throne Inheritance Act in 2009 so that the first-born child of the Monarch will succeed regardless of gender, no further constitutional changes have taken place. This means that the Danish constitution is one of the most permanent ones in the world. This is a sign of stability, but also a somewhat conservative element to Danish politics.

In Sweden and Norway, constitutional changes are easier to pass and do not require a public referendum. The Norwegian Constitution of 1814 remains in place with minor revisions. In Sweden, a major revision took place in the 1970s when an older set of constitutional acts were replaced by new ones with the explicit aim of writing a modern constitution. In Sweden there is a much stronger debate over issues of the functioning of democracy in parliament and partly in public than is the case in Denmark.

Apparently, there is also in Sweden, and partly in Norway, a stronger conviction that formal constitutional rules should be changed to "optimize" the democratic process. In Denmark, where the constitution is so hard to change, developments seem to be fewer and more informal. Unlike Sweden, constitutional revisions in Denmark and Norway have emphasized continuity in language and content of the constitutional acts.

THE ELECTORAL SYSTEM

The major reason why Denmark is the world champion in minority governments is its electoral system. Since 1953, the Danish electoral system is a highly proportional system. Currently a modified Sainte-Laguë method is used. This system produces a highly proportional division of seats in the Danish parliament. The only system more proportional than the Danish one is the system

used in the Netherlands, because in the Netherlands the whole country is one constituency.

Using this electoral system means that a high number of political parties gain representation in Parliament. After 1953, between 5 and 11 parties have been represented in each electoral cycle, and over the last decade most often around 8 parties (Elklit, 1993).

Sweden and Norway have also had a high number of minority governments, although both have recently experienced periods of majority government - Sweden between 2006 and 2010, and Norway between 2005 and 2013. Both countries have highly proportional electoral laws like Denmark.

The direct political consequence of this electoral system is that no political party until now has gained a majority on its own. Hence parties have to cooperate in order to form a government. The result is that political parties also have to compromise on policies in order to pass legislation.

In Denmark, no party has had a majority on its own since 1913, whereas in Sweden and Norway the Social Democratic parties did enjoy such majorities for some of the time between 1940 and 1970. In Sweden, the Social Democratic Party has had such a strong political force that the country was ruled by a Social Democratic prime minister for 40 consecutive years.

> “Since 1906 no party has enjoyed a majority of its own. The first peacetime coalition was established in 1929 between Social Democrats and Social Liberals.”

Danish governments have proven to be rather strong and stable despite the fact that a majority in parliament can remove a government. One reason is that the Danish prime ministers have the right to call an early election. Consequently there is a political balance between government and opposition that leads to compromise (Becher & Christiansen, 2015).

A second reason why minority governments are rather stable is that they tend to occupy the middle of the political spectrum. Since 1973 there have been an opposition to the left as well as to the right of the government. Consequently, the opposition is not behaving as a unified entity.

Finally, experts have pointed out that the political polarisation in Denmark is low compared to other political systems, making it relatively easy to reach compromise over political differences. Traditionally, Norway showed similar patterns.

THE PARTY SYSTEM: FROM FOUR TO EIGHT PARTIES

From the introduction of universal suffrage in the early 20th Century until 1970, there were four parties always represented in the Danish Folketing: Liberals, Social Democrats, Conservatives, and Social Liberals.

Each party represented somewhat clearly defined groups of society, according to their occupation. The Social Democrats had the workers; the Liberals had the farmers; the Conservatives had large estate and business owners as well as

the urban bourgeoisie; and finally the Social Liberals represented small holders and urban intellectuals. In addition to the four parties, there was also a smaller Communist Party, from 1960 replaced by the Socialist People's Party.

The 1973 election largely changed this, doubling the number of parties from 5 to 10, and the party system has never returned to its pre-1973 format. Similar developments have taken place in Sweden and Norway, but more slowly: They never had an "earthquake election" like the one that took place in Denmark in 1973.

Nevertheless, the original five party systems characterizing the Nordic countries (Conservatives, [Social] Liberals, Social Democrats, Agrarians, and Communists) has now become an 8 party system all over, supplemented by Christians, Greens, and Nationalist Right (Berglund & Lindström, 1978; Jungar & Jupskås, 2014).

> "Denmark does not have parties which mobilise only on the basis of linguistic, religious or ethnic minorities. The general perception is that when a party is in office it has to rule for the general population, not taking special interests unduly into account."

LEGISLATION PROCES

Danish laws need to be passed by the parliament. The government does not hold any decree power like in some countries such as Russia. Most laws may be passed by a simple majority. Both ministers in the government and members of parliament can propose bills. However, most bills are proposed by the government, and it is almost only bills proposed by the government that are passed into law. Besides control of the administration, this agenda control is probably the main advantage of being in government in Denmark.

To be passed, a law has to go through three readings. In the first reading, the government and the spokespersons of the political parties inform the Folketing and the public about their principled opinion about the proposal. Other members of parliament may ask them up to two questions in "short remarks". This happens very often.

The same procedure applies to the second and third reading. The second reading discusses amendments to a bill. The minister as wells as individual members may propose amendments to the bill. Amendments are quite common and they may be a way for opposition parties to get actual influence. Either the opposition makes the government propose an amendment, or the amendments proposed by opposition parties are passed - the latter is not happening very often. Amendments may also be used to solve technical or other problems detected during the reading process.

At the third reading, voting generally takes place according to party lines. Party cohesion is very strong, meaning that nearly every Member of Parliament follows the line of his or her party group. The party line voting system is strengthened by a voluntary agreement between the parties called the 'clearing system'. It means that a certain number of members can be absent from each party with-

out affecting the result of the votes, but still securing that at least half of parliament is present, which is required by the constitution.

It is difficult for parties not in government to write bills. An alternative is to propose decisions that instruct the government to propose a certain type of legislation. Such proposals are quite common, but with the exception of a period in the 1980s, they are rarely passed.

POLITICAL CULTURE AND THE POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS.

Denmark has by any account been a highly homogeneous society for one and a half century, with little fundamental cultural, ethnic or religious differences leading to political clashes. This obviously has helped enormously in securing political legitimacy and consequently also political stability for decades. Even today, Denmark does not have parties which mobilise only on the basis of linguistic, religious or ethnic minorities. Moreover, the general perception is that when a party is in office, it has to rule for the general population not taking special interests unduly into account.

Denmark is a country where interest organisations such as labour unions and the employer organizations organize a very high percentage of the labour force and of the enterprises. The labour market is governed by a basic agreement between the two major organizations of employers and employees, and this was first introduced as long ago as in 1899 in an agreement called 'the September agreement'. This was decades earlier than similar agreements in Norway and Sweden.

The labour market is therefore highly self-regulated with its own mechanisms for conflict handling, and interference from the political level is limited to situations when negotiations break down. The organizations traditionally had strong ties with the political parties with partly overlapping leaderships, but this relationship has disappeared or weakened over the last 40 years (Allern et al., 2007).

The former European Commissioner, Danish minister for Foreign Development and Cooperation and for Energy and also a Social Democratic MP, Mr. Poul Nielson, states:

"The Danish society is prosperous with high wages. The economic life provides evidence of a high degree of functionality. The mechanisms for conflict handling are a precious gift for Denmark and the way of thinking in politics is inspired by the 'Danish model'. This model for bargaining in the labour market developed early in history. The close relation between trade unions (LO) and Social Democrats introduced this way of thinking into politics."

The other Nordic countries resemble Denmark with highly homogenous societies with very few ethnic and religious divisions and a strongly unionized work force, though a little less strong in Norway where the state and not the unions have run the publicly funded unemployment benefit schemes. A difference between unions in Denmark and the two other countries is also that Danish workers are organised according to skills and not according to work place. The latter system seems to have established an even stronger link between Social Democrats and unions than was also the case in Denmark.

This link affected coalition building because the unions in Denmark until the early 1990s in reality had to be asked before the Social Democrats took part in government coalitions and major economic agreements with other parties

(Allern et al., 2007). In all of the three countries, negotiations between employer and employee's associations used to, and still are, important political events, although less so than used to be the case (Öberg et al., 2011).

80 PERCENT OF LAWS WITH 80 PERCENT OF MANDATES

Having a homogenous culture spills over into a consensual political culture and a comparatively high degree of social and political trust, making it possible to rely on a host of informal institutions. Danish political scientists have consistently shown that there is a very high degree of consensual decision-making in the Danish parliament. Studies conducted in the late sixties and in the early 2000s show that over 80 percent of the laws proposed are passed with approximately 80 percent of the mandates in parliament (Pedersen, 1967; Kurrild-Klitgaard et al., 2005).

Therefore, in an international comparison, the Danish parliament is a low-conflict parliament. The same is the case in Sweden, Norway and Finland.

The former Danish Minister, Mr. Poul Nielson, argues that the high degree of consensus represents a commitment to a political system in which the middle class remains undecided between left and right, and furthermore recognizes that solutions must be found. Moreover, he argues that in a country with only half the population of London, and with a basically ethnically homogeneous population, the differences are really not that overwhelming. He also mentions "joint responsibility for problem-solving" as a characteristic of the major parties in Danish politics, at least historically.

Former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Per Stig Møller, argues that this overwhelming consensus is partly due to institutional factors and partly due to the Danish political culture. We return to these points below.

HOW DOES A GOVERNMENT FORMATION TAKE PLACE?

The government formation process is highly organized and structured. After the election the parties give their advice to the Monarch. She then gives the right to negotiate a government to the party leader – or more rarely another candidate – who receives the support from other party leaders representing the highest number of parliamentary seats when these are added up.

So, if parties representing 94 seats point at one candidate, and parties representing 85 seats point at another, the first candidate is selected. The Queen does not have any personal influence in the process. She is advised by the outgoing Prime Minister and always follows the advice.

At the same time there are negotiations between the political parties.The party leader who is given the most votes in this process is in a privileged situation, as long as she or he 'carries the torch', because no other party leader is allowed to form a coalition. If the party leader does not succeed, he or she reports back to the Monarch, and this may take place during several rounds until a prime minister can be appointed (Damgaard, 2000).

The process ends when a designated Prime Minister is able to present a government that parties holding a majority in parliament have not spoken out against. The new government is then appointed. It does not receive explicit approval in parliament. This system is sometimes called 'negative parliamentarism' because the government only has to resign when there is a majority against it. One round has been enough since the government formation of 1994. In June 2015 the Liberal Party leader had to take two rounds and finally ended up with a one-party minority government.

This procedure reflects a custom that has developed over a long time, and it shows some of the peculiar features of the combination of parliamentary democracy and constitutional monarchy. It may not be a showcase of modern constitutional law. However, the need to produce a decision, while keeping the Queen neutral in matters of party politics, requires the political parties to respect the process and thereby her position in the constitutional order.

In Denmark, governments remain in office until they resign or are defeated in parliament in a vote of no confidence. A government does not resign because there is an election, but it will usually choose to resign if there is a majority against it after an election instead of risking defeat in parliament.

In a presidential system, ministers are selected by the president and cannot under normal circumstances be dismissed by parliament. Most countries do have impeachment procedures initiated by parliament, but these are judicial processes. In a parliamentary system like the Danish, a government and its prime minister need the confidence of parliament, or at least it is required according to the principle of 'negative parliamentarism' that parliament does not express 'no confidence' in the government. It means that any government or individual minister defeated in parliament in a no confidence vote will have to resign.

Norway and Sweden also have negative parliamentarism. The Norwegian government formation resembles the Danish to a certain extent, whereas the Swedish is much different because it is conducted by the Speaker of Parliament, and the process ends with a formal vote. Since 2014 such a vote is mandatory after each general election.

> "The bloc system gives the voters the possibility to hold the current government accountable at the general elections by giving the opposition its vote."

BLOC POLITICS IN GOVERNMENT FORMATION

In most general elections in Denmark, two blocs of parties can be identified: One bloc to the left and one to the right (Green-Pedersen & Thomsen, 2005). Parties within the bloc that wins a majority will form the government. Usually it is not all parties within the bloc that join the government. The result is often a minority government, where the other parties in the bloc provide parliamentary support for the government to form and remain in office.

It has only happened once that a government was formed of parties across blocks, and that lasted for just one year. The same is the case in Sweden and Norway. However, governments across blocs are common in a number of continental European countries with 'consensus' systems such as Germany, Austria, the Netherlands, Belgium and Finland.

This means that when it comes to government formation, Denmark and the Scandinavian countries share features of 'Westminster systems': The voters have a choice between two blocs, and as a consequence also between the two candidates for the post as Prime Minister, namely the party leaders from the major parties within each bloc (Arter, 2006).

These parties are The Social Democrats from the left wing, whose leader in the 2015 election was the incumbent Prime Minister, Mrs. Helle Thorning-Schmidt; and from the right wing, her predecessor, Mr. Lars Løkke Rasmussen, the Liberal Party of Denmark. The bloc system gives the voters the possibility to hold the current government accountable at the general elections by giving the opposition its vote. If the opposition wins it will then form a government.

However, when it comes to legislation, Denmark, and also other Scandinavian countries, share the 'consensus' features of continental European parliamentary democracies because most laws are passed with broad majorities.

PORTFOLIO ALLOCATION

Over the last decades governments in Denmark have held around 20 cabinet seats on average. In most cases the Finance Ministry is given to the same party as the Prime Minister, whereas the post of Minister of Foreign Affairs is often awarded to another party (Damgaard, 2000). The party leaders always get a seat in government and take the most important posts for themselves. There is also an inner cabinet of usually seven ministers, and party leaders will be part of this.

> "Denmark shares the 'consensus' features of continental European parliamentary democracies because most laws are passed with broad majorities."

COALITION AGREEMENTS

When a coalition government is about to form, it formulates a written agreement outlining its planned policies. These coalition agreements constitute compromises between the parties. One purpose of a written agreement is to inform the public about what the government intends to do. Another purpose is to commit the ministers on the joint programme.

This also means that the ministers in each department have to coordinate with the other parties with whom they form a government. Most ministers feel an obligation to implement the policies of the coalition agreement. But these agreements do not cover every topic, and there is some space left for the individual ministers in government to decide on other matters (Christiansen & Pedersen, 2014).

COOPERATION BETWEEN GOVERNMENT AND PARLIAMENT

Each party group in parliament has a spokesperson on each thematic topic, often corresponding to the ministers, like culture, labor market, foreign policy, etc. The spokesperson represents the party in these matters in negotiations with other parties, but also inside her or his own party (Jensen, 2002). For the parties in government, these spokespersons work closely together with the relevant minister. The spokespersons belonging to another party than the minister in particular have a responsibility to take care that their interests are voiced and heard.

Mr. Poul Nielson stresses how groups of party spokespersons for each policy area (defense, transport, development aid, etc.) have opportunities to influence policies if they develop sector expertise. He mentions his own experiences as spokesperson on energy when his party was in opposition between 1982 and 1993 as an example.

COALITION GOVERNANCE

As described above, the Danish political culture is consensual and the political institutions guiding legislative work add to the power sharing. However, this way of organizing political power also comes with some important cost. The first and most important cost is that it can be extremely difficult to hold political elites to keep their promises. Clear promises are at times difficult to implement because compromises are needed in a political system such as the Danish, where political power is dispersed.

Compromises are promoted by the use of legislative agreements, which the parties make use of. The policy agreement grants veto power over the legislation, which is passed to the parties from the opposition, thus contributing votes to the legislative coalition (Klemmensen, 2005). At the same time, the general rule is that legislation passed by a policy agreement cannot be changed unless all parties in the underpinning legislative coalition agree to the changes, which in turn enhances stability and sustainability of the policies.

Mr. Poul Nielson points out that;

"Legislative agreements and ordinary legislation are quite different. Decisions in the Folketing simply need more than 90 votes in the Folketing. Partners in a legislative agreement also vote "yes" to bills agreed to, but in addition, they get a 'proviso', i.e. a precautionary clause in the agreement, and become co-decision makers. When an agreement cannot be changed, unless everybody agrees, then it is a real legislative agreement."

Thirdly, there is a common understanding in Danish coalition practice that all participating parties are responsible for and defends the legislation, which is proposed and passed. So voters are not frequently confronted with disagreement between the governing parties. However, just recently the Socialist People's Party left the coalition government due to disagreements.

> "Minority governments are more common in Denmark than in any other parliamentary democracy in the world."

MINORITY GOVERNMENTS

Danish governments are usually minority governments in the sense that the parties that form them do not control a majority. This means that the government needs to seek external support to have its legislation passed. One of the main explanations is that being in government is not that attractive relative to sitting in opposition, because the parties in government tend to lose votes over time. In Denmark in particular, the negotiated agreements has also institutionalized a pattern of seeking influence despite not holding cabinet office.

Minority governments are more common in Denmark than in any other parliamentary democracy in the world. Nevertheless, they are also quite common in the other Scandinavian countries, and most countries have experienced minority governments from time to time (Rasch, 2011). In political science they used to be looked at as a sign of inefficiency and crisis, but now it is broadly recognized that they may actually be able to work, and to work well. Denmark is sometimes mentioned as an example of that (Green-Pedersen & Thomsen, 2005).

> "A general election may change government, but a particular policy developed in accord is nevertheless not changed because the political parties stick to what they have agreed."

MINORITY VOICE AND PROTECTION

Any member of parliament can speak in the parliament (Folketing) and is protected by parliamentary immunity. Any parliamentary party group is entitled to present its views on bills. The party groups are represented in the parliamentary committees proportionally according to size. The constitution furthermore contains rarely used provisions under which the parties may delay a proposal by twelve days. Furthermore, a minority of one third of the Folketing (60 seats out of 179) may invoke a referendum over a bill. This provision has only been used once, in 1963.

The two North Atlantic parts of the Danish Kingdom, Greenland and the Faroe Islands, are guaranteed two seats each in parliament. These four seats have formally the same status as other members of the parliament have, but they rarely take part in daily matters concerning Denmark only.

The informal veto rule within agreements has a touch of minority protection to it. And the PR system gives small parties a voice in parliament and they can often get influence by entering coalitions or agreements. Sometimes, they do count in the clearing system though. There is a German-speaking minority in Southern Jutland, but this is not guaranteed representation in the Folketing.

Nevertheless, on balance, we will conclude that minority protection in the political system is actually rather limited in Denmark. This has probably something to do with being a homogenous society as mentioned above. The same is the case for Sweden and Norway, and now also Finland, although the latter country until 1992 had a 2/3 rule for most legislation, providing a minority with guarantees against change.

However, minority rights protection is very strong in the Danish human rights system and in the judicial system.

> “Danish politics is not simply governed by the (coalition) governments in office, but also by a patchwork of agreements in which various constellations of parties take part.”

PARLIAMENTARY CONTROL

The opposition does have a number of possibilities for control of the government. They can raise debates in the Folketing and ask ministers to respond to questions, and ministers are legally bound to answer them correctly (Damgaard, 1994). The number of questions asked each year has been rising over time and is now more than 10.000 a year, which has stirred a debate about possible misuse of this tool for checks and balances.

The parliamentary committees are entitled to call the ministers to face members of the committee in council, and very often these council meetings are open for the public and television to follow. These parliamentary control mechanisms are manners in which opposition and public are able to hold government accountable, and for the voters to evaluate whether they still want to support the government when the next general election takes place.

In the other Nordic countries they have very similar provisions. Moreover, the Parliamentary Ombudsman also plays an important role in overseeing the administration.

POLITICAL AGREEMENTS

Danish minority governments often find a majority for its legislation through political agreements with opposition parties. This form of coalition building is very important for how Danish minority governments are able to function. Between one fifth and one third of all laws result from such agreements (Christiansen, 2008).

These agreements constitute political compromises between the parties, either on one or on a number of political topics. When parties negotiate on a number of political topics, they are able to exchange compromises on different political topics of particular interest to them. Exchange is a key to understanding political compromise and coalition building.

One example of this could be that the Liberal-Conservative governments between 2001 and 2011 got the support for its basic economic policies from the Danish People’s Party, while at the same time agreeing that the immigration policies became very strict as demanded by the Danish Peoples Party.

There are very strong norms connected to political agreements. The most important norm is that you should stick to an agreement and be loyal to it in public. Being able to uphold agreements is generally considered one of the most important skills of Danish parliamentarians. Both former ministers, Mr. Møller and Mr. Nielson, emphasize loyalty towards agreements as being important.

That does not mean that the parties cannot disagree or have fights regarding policies. But they nevertheless strongly emphasize the importance of not breaking political agreements. This commitment is considered a condition for taking part in parliamentary work and policy compromise. And since no party has commanded a majority of its own for one century, party influence can only be reached through compromise with other parties.

Political agreements are negotiated by representatives of and on behalf of political parties. They are not just agreements between certain individual persons or party leaders. When an agreement is made, the negotiator has to get the support within the parliamentary group. A skilled negotiator will often have received a prior mandate to negotiate on behalf of the group.

In the two left-wing parties, The Socialist People's Party, and the Red-Green Alliance, a political agreement also needs the approval by the national committees of their party organisations, i.e. representatives of the party members. It may be more difficult to predict how these boards react to proposed agreements. One may argue that this extra layer of ratification by the party organisation makes it harder for the two parties to enter an agreement and also a time loss when an agreement is about to be reached (Pedersen, 2010).

Other parties may be able to agree more swiftly to proposals. On the other hand, the procedure of the left-wing parties ensures broader democratic support for the agreements they enter into.

> "During the 1980s and 1990s most state budget agreements have included parties across the centre of Danish politics."

DURATION AND TERMINATION OF AGREEMENTS

Political agreements involve passing policies and the political parties sticking to what they have agreed. But there are a number of other norms that go beyond this. The agreements endure for some time after the agreement is made. In some agreements it is stated directly for how long a period the agreement is valid; sometimes from 3 to 5 years, but some agreements are agreed upon for much longer time. Some agreements are valid until they are called off, and a party is supposed to make the call so it can be effective after a general election.

Hence, political agreements endure beyond general elections and potential shifts in government. This means that a general election may change government, but a particular policy agreed with other parties is not changed because the political parties stick to what they have agreed. Only when parties opposed to the agreement together win a majority, an agreement is set aside. This does not happen very often, especially not with 'broad' agreements that include many parties.

This also reflects that the party system is very stable. Any new government is supposed to respect all existing agreements where there is not an explicit majority against. Furthermore, a government leaving office can expect to continue to be part of a number of policy decisions for some time to come. From a democratic point of view this emphasizes consensus and stability, more than policy shifts and clear single party accountability like it is known in many Anglo-Saxon countries.

Some agreements are broad and may include many parties. Other agreements are narrow and only include few parties close to the government. Obviously, broad agreements are the most difficult to replace or change. There is a

tendency for more narrow agreements in highly politicised matters that fit the left-right spectre of economic policies, like tax policies, although in 2013 there was a broad agreement on taxation.

Some agreements are supported by other parties as well, without actually taking part in the agreement. However, they do not get the influence enjoyed by the parties within the agreement, but they are not bound by it either and thus free to make decisions they perceive as better after an election. Mr. Poul Nielson mentions that narrow legislative agreements present some difficulties because they create uncertainty. He argues that while broad agreements may be more difficult to reach in the first place, they are better aimed at achieving substantial changes when that is needed.

The parties in an agreement are not just supposed to stick to their agreement. They also gain certain (informal) rights and entitlements while doing so (Klemmensen, 2005). Most importantly, the parties in an agreement are called for negotiations whenever the government suggests a change in an agreed policy, and all of these parties have to agree for such a policy change to be passed. Thus, each party within the agreement holds veto power.

Furthermore, parties in an agreement are supposed to be consulted regularly, and in practice they have much easier access to information from the minister than parties outside of the agreement. Policy areas regulated by a political agreement are in reality governed by the minister in office, and the spokespersons of the political parties on the matter. In this manner, opposition parties get a kind of quasi-coalition status on the areas where they take part in political agreements.

In conclusion, Danish politics is not simply governed by the (coalition) governments in office, but also by a patchwork of agreements in which various constellations of parties take part. As a matter of fact, all parties are included in one agreement or the other!

> “For the government it is a way of getting a workable majority, and for the opposition parties it is a way of getting influence.”

CUSTOMARY PRACTICES

The agreements referred to here have no legal status. They are not part of the constitution or the parliamentary order. If political parties do not stick to the agreements, they cannot take each other to court. The only weapon is to refuse to enter other agreements. Defections from agreements are rare but they happen, and it also happens that a party is expelled from an agreement.

With no possible sanctions, why do political parties choose to stick to the agreements?

One possible answer is that minority governments have become an almost permanent phenomenon, and under these conditions both government and opposition parties have an interest in enabling exchange of support. For the government it is a way of getting a workable majority, and for the opposition

> “Taxation issues unleashed both the American and the French revolutions at the end of the 18th century, laying the foundations for the development of modern democratic constitutions.”

parties it is a way of getting influence. Under a minority government, it is the only game in town, so if you want to play, you need to attend the negotiation rooms where political agreements are made.

Mr. Møller, the former Minister of Foreign Affairs, believes that these agreements play a crucial role in understanding Danish democracy. He argues that one very important role that this institution plays is that it gives a sense of responsibility to the opposition parties. He furthermore argues that this enables the parties in parliament to strike long-term deals on projects such as important infrastructure projects, the tax code or important foreign policy issues. He also argues that it sends a signal to voters that the underlying institution cannot easily be changed. The policies become “locked-in”, using the words of the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Historically, the norms concerning agreements on new legislation have developed over time since the end of 19th Century. The most important phase was between 1890 and 1920 when parliamentary government, democratisation and the party system were also established (Pedersen, 2010). This illustrates how the development of this kind of parliamentary norms may take time to evolve and become firm and established.

Most agreements are now written in text, and some of them are like long books. They are mainly concerned with policy content, but some elements of procedure may also be covered. The purpose of having a text is to better handle complexity and clarify what the partners agreed upon, should they later disagree. The texts are usually made public. Thereby, they show the commitment of the political parties to their members, voters, and the public in general.

As mentioned above, Mr. Møller argued that agreements could be used to ‘lock-in’ policies. However, he also sees some drawbacks to using this mode of legislating. First, he is afraid that if too large a fraction of the parties in parliament participate in an agreement, it might have the effect that criticism of the legislation is never heard, because of the elite consensus. This might be seen as a political gain, but it could also be seen as potentially damaging to long-term legitimacy of the policy being enacted by the use of an agreement.

Sweden and Norway have also had long periods of minority governments, although Denmark holds the winner’s prize in this discipline. In these countries, there are also agreements between parties in government and in opposition, but the set of parliamentary norms concerning such agreements are not as developed as in Denmark. In Sweden, long-enduring agreements do exist, whereas in Norway agreements are more short-term and only dealing with policies and not with legislative procedures.

ANNUAL STATE BUDGET – THE GREAT AGREEMENT!

Many of the historical forerunners to modern parliaments had their origin in kings and princes assembling representatives of their realm to raise taxes for wars and other state affairs. Taxation issues unleashed both the American and the French revolutions at the end of the 18th century, laying the foundations for the development of modern democratic constitutions. Most parliaments decide over taxes and expenditures in annual state budgets. In the parliamentary tradition slowly evolving in Great Britain, the government would resign or not remain in office if it did not have its proposal for the state budget approved.

When Denmark got its constitution in 1849, Parliament had to pass an annual budget. After 1870, the lower chamber, the Folketing, refused to pass the budget proposals of the government on a number of occasions, but the latter refused to resign as long as it held the support of the upper chamber, the Landsting, and of the King. This strife was resolved in 1894, in what was named "the Great Agreement", where the parties agreed to various parliamentary procedures to ensure that state expenditures would always be held and taxes collected if the state budget was not passed in the first place.

As long as this old procedure is followed, Denmark should not have experiences similar to those of the United States where public functions are temporarily closed down from time to time due to unapproved budgets. With the Great Agreement, many of the procedures referred to above on political agreements were established. The parties also developed a parliamentary norm that a state budget was to be passed by "responsible parties", unless there was doubt that the government could muster a majority for it, and otherwise the government should resign or call an election.

> "The bargaining regarding the annual state budget has developed into a major "market place" for exchange of policy support across various policy issues."

Thus, in 1929 and 1983 the Danish governments called an election when its state budget proposal was defeated. After a crisis over passing the state budget in December 2014, the major Swedish parties also agreed on a practice somewhat similar to the one developed in Denmark a long time before.

Especially after the defeat in 1983, there has been a further relevant change of how coalitions are made in Denmark. Since then the minority governments have each year negotiated for agreements with opposition parties over the state budget before it has been amended and passed in parliament. These annual bargains have not only been concerned with the state budget, but have over time started to include more and more topics.

In this manner the bargaining regarding the annual state budget has developed into a major "market place" for exchange of policy support across various policy issues. All parties in the current parliament have at some point been

part of a state budget agreement. The parties usually accept the premise that they should be ready to participate in finding funding for any proposal that requires additional funding. Some budget bargains have been one major agreement covering all national budget lines, while others have been "patchworks" of minor agreement together constituting a complete agreement.

During the 1980s and 1990s most state budget agreements have included parties across the centre of Danish politics. However, after 2000, with one exception, budget agreements have been made mostly within their own 'bloc', i.e. either the right or the left wing.

The annual state budget bargains provide an important key to understand how Danish minority governments actually manage to function. It is also an example of how a long-standing tradition continuously evolves in accordance with the functional needs of time. A new development is a consequence of Denmark having joined the "Budget Pact" together with most member countries of the European Union, and the Folketing has passed a special Budget Act. This will lay out budget expectations several years ahead and set limits for deficits for the public sector as a whole. It must be expected to affect bargaining and coalition building between political parties in a manner yet to be seen. This could be a sign of reduced consensus in the Danish parliament.

However, in Norway, and more radically in Sweden and Finland, they made similar reforms during the 1990s that reversed state budgets from a bottom-up to a top-own decision with reduced focus on detail and more focus on the overall framework of the state budget. The result has been that decision-making in parliament becomes highly concentrated in one major centralized vote. This seems to make the decision a manifestation of dissent between government and opposition and much less consensual than used to be the case (Christiansen, 2012).

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

The constitution gives the government the right to conduct foreign policy without direct approval from the Folketing, but the government has to inform a special parliamentary board about foreign affairs. Ratification of treaties and military action abroad needs the approval of the Folketing, and the minority governments have also worked with long-lasting agreements with other parties taking responsibility for military action, not merely when they are decided but also as long as they are conducted (Pedersen & Christiansen, 2012).

> "EU matters have been decided in a different manner, namely by the group of EU positive parties."

THE EUROPEAN UNION – A SPECIAL AGREEMENT

In 1973 Denmark became part of the European Economic Community that later developed into the European Union. The accession act had been passed by a referendum that revealed a divided public. Over the years, several referenda have confirmed this pattern that has not followed the traditional division between

left and right. The membership of the European Union has required the Danish governments to pass legislation several times each year. About 14 percent of passed laws have had this purpose, and a further 26 percent takes EU matters into consideration.

Political parties sceptical towards the EU (Christiansen & Pedersen, 2012) have in general matters supported most of the minority governments. Consequently, EU matters have been decided in a different manner, namely by the group of EU positive parties. This group remains the same regardless of whether the left wing or the right wing is in office. Since 2004, the group works together within the framework of a "European Agreement", which differs from usual agreements because it outlines general principles and guidelines for Danish EU policies rather than specific policies.

This agreement was renewed in 2008, and a further partial renewal took place in 2014 when the parties decided on a referendum to take place no later than 2016 about Danish participation in parts of EU cooperation on legal affairs and police. Mr. Poul Nielson points out that EU policy usually does not divide the major parties. Because the issue is tricky with the voters, the parties "do not want to rock the boat".

As mentioned above, foreign affairs are traditionally matters for the government, and the same applies for the government's negotiation with other governments in the European Council of Ministers. However, very soon after the admission in 1973, a new procedure was established, in which the government got a negotiation mandate from the European Affairs Committee of the Folketing before going to Brussels to negotiate.

This national scrutiny procedure was and partly remains particular for Denmark (Christiansen & Pedersen, 2012). Therefore, also in this committee, ministers need to find coalition partners. Very often, it finds support among the EU positive "agreement" parties, but in some matters even EU sceptical parties may be ready to offer their support for concessions and thereby make life easier for the government by providing it with more majority options.


STATSMINISTERIET

ABOUT THE PHOTO

The parliamentary election in September 2011 resulted in a majority supporting a 'red bloc' government. Following weeks of secret negotiations, the new Prime Minister from the Social Democrats, Helle Thorning-Schmidt (centre), presented a three-party coalition government of the Social Democrats, the Social Liberal Party with party leader Margrethe Vestager (left) and the Socialist People's Party with party leader Villy Søvndal. Together they presented the programme called "A Denmark standing together".

Photo by Jakob Ehrbahn/Politiken

CHAPTER 3

LESSONS LEARNED AND GOOD PRACTICES

By Denis Kadima

Successful coalition building is usually not the result of a revolutionary impulsion but rather it emerges through an evolutionary process. Coalitions do not occur in a vacuum but take place organically and depend on the country's institutional determinants and economic and socio-political factors. This chapter, the last of this reader, draws conclusions and identifies practices on coalition building. Subdivided into four sections, the chapter deals with these determinants and factors that influence coalition building, survival and collapse, identifies what works and what does not work in coalition building and draws lessons for political parties and leaders wanting to build sustainable coalitions. The chapter draws extensively on the experience of Denmark, a country with a long and successful experience with coalition politics, while making reference to DIPD partner countries.

> "Denmark is an interesting case owing not only to the frequency of coalition governments in this parliamentary regime, but also the frequency of lasting minority governments."

INSTITUTIONAL DETERMINANTS OF COALITIONS

The institutional determinants of coalition building include type of political regime and electoral system and the legal framework. Coalitions occur frequently in parliamentary regimes which are not dominated by one or two political parties, particularly in the context of proportional representation electoral system. This is the case of Denmark and other Scandinavian kingdoms. These are constitutional monarchies well known for the frequency of consensus-based and well-functioning coalitions.

It must be noted that any political regime where government formation depends on securing the confidence of parliament and where no political party control absolute majority of seats, coalition building will be the rule of the game for governmental stability and survival as well as easy law-making process.

Denmark is, however, an interesting case owing not only to the frequency of coalition governments in this parliamentary regime but also the frequency of lasting minority governments. In many other political contexts including parliamentary regimes, like Nepal, minority governments would not last more than necessary. In Chapter 2 of this reader the authors argue that minority governments are more common in Denmark than in any other parliamentary democracy in the world and observe that they also occur frequently in the other Scandinavian countries.

The authors argue that Danish minority governments tend to be paradoxically stable with a long lifespan. They explain this stability and longevity by a number of factors:

- → The Danish prime ministers are constitutionally empowered to call an early election whose timing may be at the expense of his/her opponents;
- → Minority governments usually occupy the middle of the political spectrum and are therefore not too ideologically removed from other main political parties;
- → Opposition parties often do not behave as a unitary actor which favours the continuation of the government;
- → Political polarisation being insignificant, compromised is easily reached;
- → A political dialogue culture providing enabling and condusive environment
- → "Negative parliamentarism" entails that the government only resigns when there is a majority against it.

Similarly there exist institutional rules that stabilise coalitions. For example, in Germany government dissolution is difficult because votes of no confidence are hard to stage.

Aside parliamentary regimes, semi-presidential political regimes also require coalition building for governmental stability and smooth legislative process. This is more so under the context of "cohabitation" in France[1] when the President and the Prime Minister come from ideologically-disconnected political parties.

Finally, while presidential regimes can choose to rely on the executive powers of the head of state, they too may need to control the majority in parliament in order to pass legislation. This explains why coalition building is not restricted to parliamentary systems and extends also to presidential regimes. This is even more so in those presidential and semi-presidential regimes with two-round electoral systems as the losing candidates often enter in alliance with one of the remain candidates.

It is worth noting that in socially diverse countries using the first-past-the-post electoral systems like in Kenya and Zambia, political parties tend to choose to enter into pre-election coalitions in order to avoid wasting their votes. By coming together, parties increase their chances of winning elections. In practice, these countries have had very varying electoral performances. In Kenya

1 Pierce, Roy (1991): The Executive Divided Against Itself: Cohabitation in France, 1986–1988, in Governance, Volume 4, Issue 3, 270–294,

the constitution sets a high threshold for electing the president by requiring a majority of at 50%+1 as well as a minimum of 25% of the votes in 24 of the 47 counties. This reinforces the need for parties to coalesce prior to the elections.

The excessive powers of the President of the Republic in countries such as Zambia, makes the post of president the only valuable prize. As a result, any alliances in which candidates do not secure the presidential ticket are seen as meaningless, unattractive and ultimately collapse. This explains the collapse of the electoral alliance formed in June 2009 by Hakainde Hichilema's party, the United Party for National Development (UPND) and Michael Sata's Patriotic Front (PF) to contest the 2011 election together. However, deep mistrust and disagreement over the alliance's presidential candidate and accusations of tribalism from both sides led to the breakdown of the electoral few months before the election date.

Another institutional determinant is the presence of a legal framework governing coalitions or the lack thereof. In many African countries, party leaders have complained about the inadequacies of legislation on political parties or their excessive regulation. Similarly, legally coalitions are poorly regulated leading to legislative blockage, political polarisation and even political instability. Learning from past mistakes Kenya has introduced some regulations to make coalitions function better.

In Denmark, like in other Scandinavian countries and Western democracies, coalitions are not regulated and their agreements do not enjoy a legal status. However, these countries have a century long tradition of coalition building. Because it is a permanent feature of politics in these countries, the risk of betraying coalition partners is too high when one considers things from a long-term perspective.

> "Ideology has not been an essential factor in party coalition building or splitting in countries like Zambia, Mauritius and Kenya."

ECONOMIC AND SOCIO-POLITICAL DETERMINANTS

Apart from political factors analysed above, coalitions of political parties are heavily influenced by economic and socio-political determinants. These determinants include ethno-linguistic and regional characteristics, ideology, social class, the nature of the party system, the prevailing political culture, the general state of democratisation, financial motivations and the quality type of the political leadership.

Denmark is a very homogeneous country in terms of ethnicity, religion and culture. Political mobilisation is essentially articulated in terms of ideology and policies in the interest of the public as opposed to ethnic differences. Similarly coalition building follows the same patterns contrary to African and Asian countries where political parties are mostly formed around social characteristics. Ideology has not been an essential factor in party coalition building or splitting in countries like Zambia, Mauritius and Kenya.

In Kenya, the 2013 coalitions were not borne out of ideological compatibility between the main parties. Electoral and government politics in Kenya are dom-

inated by ethnic arithmetic as mobilisation is done around ethnic community numbers. The choice of alliance and coalition partner is based on ethnicity and more specifically on ethnic size complementarity given that no party can win to govern alone. Coalitions are built to gather sufficient number to outdo the other. Given the ethnic base of political parties, ethnicity, tribe and region are of essence in this process.[2]

International actors influenced indirectly the formation of a coalition in Kenya. This is the indictment of Uhuru Kenyatta and William Ruto by the International Criminal Court (ICC) in The Hague. This unusual factor motivated the formation of the Jubilee Alliance in support for the joint presidential elections ticket of these leaders in the 2013 Kenya general elections. As part of bringing justice to post-election violence, the ICC had indicted Uhuru Kenyatta and William Ruto, then accused of having been co-perpetrators in the post-election violence in 2007-8. The pre-trial chamber of the ICC later confirmed the charges for Kenyatta and Ruto.

The unintended effect of the ICC, was the bringing together of Kenyatta and Ruto who began mobilising support around the ICC process. Given the fact that the two leaders come from two large ethnic groups in Kenya, their communities mobilised into solidarity with them. The prayer meetings and the mass rallies addressed by the two leaders convinced them that they could form a formidable coalition to contest the 2013 elections. This coalition won the presidential elections.[3]

Alistair McMillan's analysis suggests that in India the most common alliances or coalitions are not ideologically based and bring together nationally prominent parties and regionally focused parties. The motivation for coalescing here is electoral gain in the national legislature for national parties. As for regional partners, they aim to secure protection from their national ally for their more parochial concerns.[4] The Indian evidence also suggests that a sophisticated electorate understands and tolerates the ideological and policy trade-offs that coalitions require when they bring ideologically distinct parties together.

In Myanmar, there are many signs of coalition building efforts even if they are not primarily aimed at elections but on reaching agreements on key issues of national interest in the country and in parties coming together to influence the course of the democratic and economic reform process.[5]

However, political parties also enter into coalitions in order to win elections. Access to power often comes with various privileges, including financial advantages. Coalitions provide financial security for its coalition partners by way of parliamentary seats, ministerial positions and other well remunerated posts.[6] Arriola argues that politicians require to be paid upfront to enter into electoral alliances which advantage to the incumbents over opposition leaders in patronage-based politics across Africa.[7]

Finally the prevailing political culture of consensual decision-making in

2 Kadima, Denis and Owuor Felix (2014): Kenya's One Decade of Experiments with Political Party Alliances and Coalitions: Motivations, Impact and Prospects, Journal of African Election, Vol. 13 Num. 1. pp 150-181. EISA

3 Kadima, Denis and Owuor, Felix (2014): op.cit.

4 McMillan, Alistair (2014): The Causes of Political Party Alliances and Coalitions and their Effects on National Cohesion in India, Journal of African Election, Vol. 13 Numb. 1, pp 181-206.

5 DIPD programme documents on Myanmar.

6 Kadima, Denis (2006b): African Party Alliances: Comparisons, Conclusions and Lessons' in Kadima, Denis The Politics of Party Coalitions in Africa ed. Johannesburg: Konrad Adenauer Stiftung and EISA pp 223-239.

7 Arriola, Leonardo (2013a): Capital and opposition in Africa: Coalition building in multiethnic societies, World Politics, Vol. 65 Vol. 2: pp 233-272.

Danish politics is an important factor in building successful coalitions. Such political culture is not built overnight. This is a missing link in democratising regimes. In Nepal it has been observed that "coalitions tend to work well during political crises when return to normalcy is the shared agenda of all partners. Once normalcy is restored, squabbles for division of spoils of office begin which then undermine the effectiveness of the government".[8] In JOMPOPS there is generally agreement that "Nepal needs to nurture a culture of multiparty dialogues and collaborative politics to strengthen democracy."[9]

In countries where democracy is still work in progress coalition building tends to be dominated by personal ambition and power struggles among leaders which often results to factionalism and splits. Party leaders easily make deals for their personal benefit at the expense of the coalition. The dominance of founding leaders also frequently explains the frequency of floor-crossing and splits. The political economy of many countries, especially in the context of limited career opportunities outside of government, often leads to the building of unprincipled coalitions[10].

> "Coalitions provide financial security for its coalition partners by way of parliamentary seats, ministerial positions and other well remunerated posts."

WHAT WORKS?
WHAT ARE THE PRACTICES AND LESSONS?

WHY ARE COALITIONS BUILT- WHY ARE SOME NOT FORMED?

There are several reasons why political parties enter into alliance or coalition with others. In general, political parties build coalitions when the electorate does not give an absolute majority to one single party to form the government or when the constitution requires a larger majority than one single party can commend to make or amend the law (e.g. budget law or constitutional amendment).

It is, at times, difficult to understand why some electoral pacts with great potential to win an election end up not being formed or why they break up before election. The reasons are many and include excessive confidence by every candidate to win the race alone and disagreement over who will be the leader/candidate of the pact.

ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF COALITIONS

There are benefits and disadvantages to participate in coalitions. Some of the advantages are:

- Broader constituency representation
- Combined human, financial and intellectual resources
- Harmonised policies
- Lower risk of passing radical and controversial laws and policies.
- Coalition governments seen as more legitimate and democratic.
- Ability to share the credit for the coalition government's successes
- Possibility of policy continuity over a long term

8 Findings at the DIPD Coalition Seminar with Nepal partner, JOMPOPS.

9 Idem.

10 Kadima, Denis (2006b). African Party Alliances: Comparisons, Conclusions and Lessons' in Kadima, Denis The Politics of Party Coalitions in Africa ed. Johannesburg: Konrad Adenauer Stiftung and EISA pp 223-239.

Among the disadvantages one can identify are the following:

- Conflicting ideologies weakening government
- Slower decision, legislation and policy making processes
- Weaker and indecisive government
- Limited space for making tough decisions or implement radical policies
- Unstable, conflict-ridden and of seen as undemocratic
- Coalition matters may take precedence over individual party priorities and lead to internal divisions within parties
- Inadequate transparency
- Less chances for re-election for some of the coalition partners (e.g. Nick Clegg's Liberal Democrats in the UK in 2015)

These advantages and disadvantages apply differently in different socio-political and economic contexts.

NEGOTIATIONS

Parties wanting to enter in a coalition need to know their own strengths and limits and what they can expect from the coalition in terms of policies and their share of power. This entails that parties wanting to enter into a coalition must prepare and come up with a negotiation strategy and give mandate to a team of skilled negotiators. If it is not the first time a party enters in alliance or coalition, they shall learn from past experiences and mistakes. It must be pointed out that coalition politics led to the demise of some parties, especially when entering in unpopular coalitions, not supported by their constituents. This is why it is important to have a communication strategy both internally within the party and externally in order to reach ones' constituents.

INVOLVEMENT OF CONSTITUENTS VERSUS AN ELITE AFFAIR?

The chapter on Denmark indicates that political agreements are negotiated by party representatives on behalf of the parties and are not simple agreements between party leaders and must receive the support of the parliamentary group. The chapter also notes that the kingdom's two left-wing political parties require that a political agreement be approved by the national committees of their respective party organisations. While making it harder to reach an agreement, this provision ensures at the same time wider support for the agreements within the concerned political parties, which ultimately contributes to broader buy-in and consensus.

In developing democracies, party coalitions tend to begin and end with the elites. It is wise to bring along the constituents that these elites represent. A coalition which benefits from broad support beyond the narrow interests of the elite stand a good chance to be successful and to last.

POWER-SHARING AND ALLOCATION OF PORTFOLIOS

Coalitions entail the sharing of power through the allocation of portfolios. This is an important aspect of the negotiations. In Denmark the largest party in government usually gets the post of Prime Minister and the big parties get the highest number of ministries. Interestingly the smaller parties often disproportionately secure a higher portion of portfolios than their share of parliamentary seats. This paradox was also observed in the 2012 government in Lesotho where a group of smaller parties joined forced and secured important posts in the coalition government and parliament.

POLICY DIALOGUE AND CONVERGENCE

Coalition building is not only about portfolio allocation to the partners. It is in essence about the integration of the policies advocated by the various coalition partners. An integrated policy platform would enable the coalition partners to develop and adopt common policies, ensuring a sense of ownership, group cohesion and shared vision and objectives with issues of convergence constituting the basis of cooperation while areas of divergence being isolated for further consultation. One must be aware however that coalition policy dialogue and harmonisation cause gridlocks and delays in decision-making.

Christiansen and Klemmensen observe that policy compromises are promoted in Denmark by the use of legislative agreements and policy agreement as they grant the opposition parties having contributed votes to a specific legislation the right to approve any subsequent amendment of such legislation, including a veto right. This mechanism's long term perspective enhances policy stability, sustainability and predictability and allows for the governing coalition to give a sense of responsibility to the opposition.

WORKING TOWARD COMMON GOALS

Government formation is not the only aim in the building of coalitions. Political parties also enter into coalitions to advance specific policies or even to block the passing of some legislation by the majority party. Danish political parties from the governing coalition and the opposition benches have a long tradition of coalescing in order to pass legislation. This is done through political agreements known as forlig which are political compromises between parliamentary parties. In Denmark, the annual national budget process is the best illustration of how Danish parties come together on an issue and not only to form a government. Obviously the fact that a budget bill defeated in parliament leads to the resignation of government and the subsequent calling of fresh elections has been a strong incentive for compromise.

In Tanzania where the governing party, the Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM), is an over-dominating party controlling nearly 75% of parliamentary seats following the 2010 general elections, coalition building has until recently appeared like a futile exercise. However when President Jakata Kikwete announced the rewriting of the Union's Constitution with public input, a number of opposition parties came together, and formed the Coalition of the Defenders of the People's Constitution. Better known by its Swahili language name, Ukawa, the Coalition was composed of four parliamentary opposition parties, namely the Chama Cha Demokrasia Na Maendeleo (CHADEMA), the Civic United Front (CUF), the National Convention for Construction and Reform (NCCR) – Mageuzi and the National League for Democracy (NLD). Ukawa partner parties worked well together during the drafting of the constitution by the Constitutional Review Commission and in the Constituent Assembly. They claimed that their aim was to ensure that the views expressed by the public were truly included in the draft Constitution.

Disagreements between the ruling CCM and Ukawa led to sporadic boycotts of the Constituent Assembly by the opposition coalition. Ukawa's argument for leaving the Constituent Assembly on 16 April 2014 was that CCM used to edit the draft Constitution which resulted from public submissions, to its own advantage. The resulting draft constitution was rejected by the Ukawa leaders and segments of civil society. Subsequently the leaders of the four parties signed a Memorandum of Understanding binding their political parties in unity for the

"No" campaign and the October 2015 General Election. Initially scheduled for 30 April 2015, the constitutional referendum ended up being tacitly adjourned with no appointed date for its holding.

The Ukawa experience made the partner political parties realise that they can work together and achieve their goals. According to The Citizen newspapers the Ukawa parties signed a Memorandum of Understanding to field and support one candidate at parliamentary and presidential levels in the 25 October 2015 General Election with the aim to unseat the CCM. The newspaper revealed that the pact contains seven key areas of action (i) harmonisation of parties' policies with the view to find common ground as Ukawa; (ii) field one candidate in all levels; (iii) mode of cooperation to be formulated and circulated to leaders of the parties; (iv) a joint 'No Campaign' against the referendum; (v) create common front with issues of national interest, (vi) defend the union and (vii) work with like-minded groups.

It is early days to determine whether the Ukawa Coalition will remain united once candidates have been selected, especially the presidential candidate, and whether it can achieve some of its electoral objectives.

> "A coalition which benefits from broad support beyond the narrow interests of the elite stands a good chance to be successful and to last."

CONCLUDING REMARKS

In conclusion, the longevity and effectiveness of a coalition depend on the ability of the party coalition leaders to maintain permanent dialogue and address differences through dialogue. Such approach is likely to help reinforce a sense of mutual respect between the partners. Mechanisms, structures and procedures to deal with conflicts within the coalition can be instituted and agreed upon by all the affiliated parties in order to help ensure that the coalition is functional and effective.

ABOUT THE PHOTO

Following the election in 2011, a three-party government was established following tough negotiations. This consisted of the Social Democrats as the largest party, and the Social Liberal Party and the Socialist People's Party as the two small parties – with the Social Liberal Party to the right of the Social Democrats, and the Socialist People's Party to the left. Navigating such a government through the waters of small and large political issues can be a tough ride. In the beginning of 2014 the Socialist People's Party left the government, and a two-party government was agreed between Social Democrats and Social Liberals. The photo shows Prime Minister Helle Thorning-Schmidt after having presented her cabinet to Her Majesty the Queen.

Photo by Keld Navntoft/Scanpix

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ANNEX 1: CHRONOLOGY OF COALITIONS

Below is a chronical overview of the major developments in Danish democracy and in the coalition building practices. The various coalition governments are where possible indicated as respectively red and blue coalitions.

TIME LINE	MAJOR EVENT/COALITION	COMMENTS
1849	First constitution	Voting rights for all men above age 30 with own household to legislative assembly
1866	Constitutional revision	Democracy reduced with undemocratically elected upper House
1870-1920	Four major parties in DK founded	Liberal Party in 1910 (1870)Conservative Party in 1915 (1870)Social Democratic Party in 1871Social Liberal Party 1905
1870-1901	Conflict over parliamentary government	Liberal Party wants a government to resign if it has no support in parliament. The King and the Conservatives resist
1901	Introduction of parliamentary government	First Liberal government. Had a majority in the more democratically elected lower house.
1906	First coalition government	Two liberal party groups come together
1910-1913	Last time one party had a majority of its own	Liberal Party had exactly half the number of seats
1915	New constitution	Democratization. Universal suffrage for all men and woman above age 25. Both chambers of parliament democratically elected. Proportional representation instead of single past the post.
1920	Last time the Monarch challenged democracy	The king dismissed a government that still had support in the lower house. After a general strike, the king appointed a new government with parliamentary support and afterwards he accepted the parliamentary principles.
1929-1940	Social Democrats and Social Liberals in coalition	First peacetime coalition government involving a socialist and a non-socialist party.
1940-45	Wartime coalitions	German occupation with a coalition government of five parties 1940-43 and 1945. Direct German rule 1943-45
1950-53	Liberal-Conservative coalition	First peacetime coalition between former opponents
1953	Constitutional reform	Unicameral parliament introduced
1957-60	Social Democratic, Social Liberal and Justice Party coalition	First three party coalition in peacetime
1960-64	Social Democrat and Social Liberal coalition	Large Social Democratic Party holding PM office. Increasing divisions between the two parties

1968-71	Liberal, Conservative and Social Liberal coalition	First coalition between Social Liberals and Conservative
1973	Landslide election	Number of parties in parliament doubled from 5 to 10. 44 % of all voters changed party and one third of the MPs were voted out of parliament
1973-75	Liberal single party minority government	Based on only 22 seats out of 179
1975-78	Social Democratic single party minority government	Based on 54 seats and later 65 seats after 1977 election
1978-79	Social Democratic and Liberal Party coalition	Only coalition ever across the centre. It failed after one year
1982	Hereafter all governments in DK are coalitions until June 2015	
1982 -88	Coalition between Conservatives, Liberals, Centre Democrats, and Christian Democrats	Four party "four leaf clower" government. First and only Conservative Prime Minister since 1901. 'Alternative majorities' against the government in parliament
1988-1990	Coalition between Conservatives, Liberals, and Social Liberals	Ends the 'alternative majorities'
1990-1993	Coalition between Conservatives and Liberals	Resigns without calling an election
1993-94	Coalition between Social Democrats, Centre Democrats, Social Liberals and Christians	Only majority government after 1971.
1994-96	Coalition between Social Democrats, Social Liberal and Centre Democrats	Centre Democrats leave government due to disagreement on policy
1996-2001	Social Democrats and Social Liberal coalition	The two parties stick together but the immigration issue becomes more prominent and cause problems for the cooperation.
2001-2011	Liberal-Conservative coalition	Danish People's Party permanent support party secures stable majority in parliament
2011-14	Coalition between Social Democrats, Social Liberals and Socialist People's Party	Socialist People's Party in government for the first time, but leaves government due to policy disagreements
2014-15	Social Democrats and Social Liberal coalition	The two remaining parties remain if office for the rest of the electoral term
June 2015	Liberal Party forms a single party minority government	Based on 34 seats only and depending on three other parties in Blue Bloc for survival

ANNEX 2: PARTY POLICY BLOCS 1920-2015

Political party policy block "formations" from 1920 — 2015

1920-45	Social Democratic Party Social Liberal Party	Liberal Party Conservative Party
1945-53	Unclear block policy – but Liberal Party and Conservative cooperation	
1953-66	Social Democratic Party Social Liberal Party	Liberal Party Conservative Party
1966-73	Social Democratic Party Socialist People's Party	Liberal Party Conservative Party Social Liberal Party
1973-1982	Unclear party policy blocks	
1982-93	Social Democratic Party Socialist People's Party	Conservative Party Liberal Party supported by Social Liberal Party
1993 — 2015	Social Democratic Party Social Liberal Party	Liberal Party Conservative Party
Anno 2015	Social Democratic Party Socialist People's Party Social Liberal Party Red Green Alliance The Alternative*	Liberal Party Conservative Party Liberal Alliance Danish Peoples Party

* At parliamentary elections in June 2015 in Denmark a new party, the Alternative, contested at the elections and got into Parliament. The Alternative is considered to belong to the red block in Danish politics and got 9 seats.

ANNEX 3: RESULT OF 2015 ELECTION

PARTY	VOTES	%	SEATS
Social Democrats (A)	924,940	26.3	47
Danish People's Party (O)	741,746	21.1	37
The Liberal Party (V)	685,188	19.5	34
Red-Green Alliance (Ø)	274,463	7.8	14
Liberal Alliance (I)	265,129	7.5	13
The Alternative (Å)	168,788	4.8	9
Danish Social Liberal Party (B)	161,009	4.6	8
Socialist People's Party (F)	147,578	4.2	7
Conservative People's Party (C)	118,003	3.4	6
Christian Democrats (K)	29,077	0.8	0
Independent candidates	3,066	0.1	-
Invalid/blank votes	41,073	-	-

The 4 parties – the Liberal Party (V), the Danish People's Party (O), the Liberal Alliance (I) and the Conservatives (C) – got a total of 90 seats against 85 seats for the red parties – the Social Democrats (A), Red-Green Alliance (Ø), the Alternative (Å), Danish Social Liberal Party (B) and the Socialist People's Party (F)

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