

## Chapter 3

# Explaining mandate fulfilment: two models of democracy

Do parties fulfil their electoral mandates? This descriptive question dominates the debate on the party mandate. It is indeed a relevant question from the perspective of political legitimacy. If the party mandate model fails to provide policy linkage, it might be needed to reconsider or amend this model. However, understanding *why* mandate fulfilment is low or high is probably even more important from this perspective. If it is understood under which circumstances the mandate model works best, one might be able to (re)create these circumstances. This connects the study of the party mandate to one of the 'great debates' in political science: what types of institutions create the best results?

### 3.1 Mandate fulfilment: how institutions make a difference

Institutions matter because they shape how people behave. Take the example of political parties: these are groups of individual people, but are often treated as if they were unitary actors, not only because this simplifies matters but also because politicians' behaviour is structured by the party institution to a large extent (Thomassen and Andeweg, 2007). Similarly, the fulfilment of electoral mandates by political parties is likely to depend on the institutional arrangements in a country. These concern the formal institutional arrangements (i.e. the electoral system), but also the informal rules of a political system (i.e. consensus-building) and the power relations between parties (i.e. party system).

The study of the impact of institutions can be subdivided into three schools of thought (Hall and Taylor, 1996). Rational choice institutionalism argues that institutional rules affect behaviour. Even if parties have exogenous preferences their actual behaviour is shaped by institutional rules. For example, the presence of certain electoral rules will influence the type of election campaign parties will run, i.e. by targeting marginal constituencies. Sociological institutionalism focuses on the 'roles' and 'norms of behaviour' that institutions bring into play and the way in which institutions limit the number of options that are perceived as viable by an actor. For example, in many countries there is an unwritten practice that governments should have majority support in parliament. In multi-party systems, this reduces the number of possible government coalitions and it also explains the anxious debates in Britain about what to do in case of a hung parliament. Historical institutionalism uses both the 'calculus' (rational choice) and 'cultural' (sociological) type of explanations. Furthermore, it tends to stress the importance of historical choices for current decisions. In relation to the previous example about the majority status of governments, one can argue that these practices are the result of historical developments.

Both 'calculus' and 'cultural' explanations of the influence of institutions can be used to explain fulfilment of the party mandate. For example, countries with a proportional electoral system tend to have more political parties than countries with a first-past-the-post system (Rae, 1967). This means that party competition is organized differently. It also has consequences for the executive power. Whereas democracies with proportional electoral systems tend to be dominated by coalitions, those with first-past-the-post systems generally have single-party government. This creates a different environment under which parties are to fulfil their electoral mandates. In addition, different expectations about mandate fulfilment arise. Coalition government inevitably means compromise. Parties know and accept it – or not, but then they would not be able to take office. With single-party governments there is hardly any political obstacle that prevents fulfilment of election pledges. As a result, people's expectations about mandate fulfilment are probably different under different institutional systems. Thus the institutional theory of the party mandate builds on both 'calculus' as well as 'cultural' type explanations.

### 3.1.1 Majoritarian and consensus democracies

The institutional design of democracy has been a major topic of political research for a long time. A classic distinction has been made between electoral systems that are proportional and those that are not (often single-member district systems). Majoritarian electoral systems generally go hand-in-hand with a smaller number of political parties; proportional representation tends to promote multi-party systems (Gallagher and Mitchell, 2005; Rae, 1967). Furthermore, majoritarian systems tend to be biased in favour of the plurality winner (the party with the most votes). Most of the time, the plurality winner receives a sizeable

majority of parliamentary seats. Because the number of parties is generally larger in proportional systems, multi-party governments are an additional characteristic of those systems. Lijphart (1999) has extended this distinction between proportional and plurality electoral systems into a typology of democracy. He distinguishes between consensus and majoritarian systems. Consensus and majoritarian democracies are different in five respects (Lijphart, 1999: 3):

1. *Concentration of power versus power-sharing* Majoritarian systems concentrate executive power in the hands of a single-party government, while consensus systems promote executive power-sharing in broad multi-party coalitions.
2. *Dominant versus balanced executive-legislative relationship* In majoritarian systems, the executive tends to be dominant vis-à-vis the legislature, while this power relationship is balanced in consensus systems.
3. *The number of parties* Majoritarian party systems are small (two parties), while consensus systems have a large number of parties.
4. *Electoral system* Majoritarian democracies have majoritarian and disproportional systems, while consensus systems have proportional representation.
5. *Pluralism versus Corporatism* Majoritarian democracies are characterized by pluralist interest group representation. Consensus systems have coordinated and 'corporatist' interest group systems.

These five characteristics constitute Lijphart's *executive-parties* dimension. They are closely connected theoretically and empirically, with the possible exception of the fifth characteristic (Armingeon, 2002). Lijphart also presents a federal-unitary dimension which is mainly concerned with (de)centralization of decision-making. For the study of the mandate model on the national level the executive-parties dimension is, however, the most relevant as it concerns party competition and executive-legislative relations. It is also the most closely connected to the distinction between proportional and plurality/majority electoral systems, which is used by many authors when talking about the same types of democracies that Lijphart describes (cf. Powell, 2000; McDonald and Budge, 2005; Golder and Stramski, 2010).

### 3.1.2 What works better?

The successful design of political institutions is an important question for politicians and scholars alike. Many debates on electoral systems, parliamentary politics and government formation have build on the distinction between majoritarian and consensus democracy. There is, however, no consensus about what system works better in terms of political representation. Some argue that power-sharing and consensus works best for most countries (Lijphart, 1999; Powell,

2000, 2006; McDonald and Budge, 2005; McDonald et al., 2007), while others point at the merits of undivided single-party government (Ranney, 1954; Downs, 1957; Thomson, 1999; Mansergh and Thomson, 2007)<sup>1</sup>. A third group of authors argues that there is no significant difference between the quality of political representation in majoritarian and consensus systems (Blais and Bodet, 2006; Golder and Stramski, 2010). Part of the explanation of these differences is that these studies look at different indicators of success, ranging from satisfaction with democracy to the like-mindedness of representatives and their voters (Lijphart, 1999). Of course, it may very well be that one system outperforms the other in certain areas and the other system works better in other areas. Those who study policy *responsiveness* find that consensus democracies usually show better congruence between voters and governments (Powell, 2000, 2006; Kim et al., 2010; McDonald et al., 2007), although this finding has been disputed recently (Blais and Bodet, 2006; Golder and Stramski, 2010). Studies into *pledge fulfilment* of parties show, however, that parties in majoritarian democracies fare better (Mansergh and Thomson, 2007). The *saliency approach* of the party mandate finds a less clear-cut pattern, but shows some support for the statement that majoritarian democracies show higher levels of mandate fulfilment (Klingemann et al., 1994). Thus, depending on the aspect of party representation that is studied and the approach taken, different results are found. Therefore, the debate on the merits of consensus and majoritarian democracy is important both in terms of its real-world implications as well as from a scientific point of view. Many different arguments and findings have been outlined, which warrant clarification and further research.

One way of looking at party representation in different democratic systems is by comparing voters' and politicians' preferences, so-called *policy linkage* or *responsiveness* studies (see section 2.3.2). One of the premises of the party mandate is that citizens can influence public policy by choosing a party that they agree with. This should lead to a correspondence between the policy preferences of voters and those of politicians. This correspondence is usually measured by comparing the policy position of the median voter with the government's position. Powell (2000) shows that this correspondence is higher in 'proportional' than in 'majoritarian' democracies. This finding has been disputed by others, arguing that measuring voters' and politicians' (or parties') positions in a different way leads to the conclusion that there is no difference between the two types of democracy (Blais and Bodet, 2006; Golder and Stramski, 2010). Powell (2009) argues that this is not so much a difference in measurement technique, but a difference of time periods: in more recent years the difference between majoritarian and consensus democracies has disappeared. Over a longer time period,

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<sup>1</sup>Andeweg (2001) points out that Lijphart himself changed his mind about the merits of consensus democracy. The 'young' Lijphart argued that consociational democracy works well for heterogeneous societies, but not for homogeneous societies. The 'old' Lijphart, however, argues that consensus democracy (which is conceptually different, but strongly related to consociational democracy) works better in almost all countries.

proportional systems seem to have had the advantage.

Another line of research looks at the party mandate: whether what parties offer during elections corresponds to their parliamentary behaviour. This is part of the same process of party representation that responsiveness studies look at, but the focus is different. The question here is not whether the system leads to policy linkage between voters and politicians, but whether the choice that voters are offered during elections corresponds to how parties act in parliament (see chapter 2). In early specifications, the party mandate model was presented as a two-party 'majoritarian' political system (APSR, 1950; Ranney, 1954; Downs, 1957). Recent work argues that the party mandate model is not limited to the two-party system, but that will work better in majoritarian democracies (Thomson, 1999; Klingemann et al., 1994). The argument is straightforward. Majoritarian democracies tend to produce single-party governments, which have ample opportunity to implement their manifesto policies. No other party can stop it from fulfilling its election pledges<sup>2</sup>. In consensus countries multi-party government is the rule rather than the exception. In most consensus democracies no party (or pre-electoral coalition) wins an outright majority. After the elections government coalitions are formed. The composition of these government coalitions thus depends in large part on post-election bargaining. This practice obscures the chain of representation between voter and government. Proponents of a clear government mandate argue that this is problematic, because it limits parties' ability to implement their manifesto pledges and because voters do not know which of the parties to hold to account at the next elections (Ranney, 1954).<sup>3</sup>

This study shifts the focus from *policy enactment in government* to *policy representation in parliament*. Instead of looking whether the parties in government can enact their manifesto pledges, the aim is to study whether all parties talk about similar issues and say similar things about these issues in the election campaign and in parliament. More specifically, this study observes whether the space and structure of electoral competition are congruent with the space and structure of the parliamentary competition (see section 2.4). This encompasses a change of focus from the individual party's pledges to the configuration of the space of party competition. The use of this 'spatial approach to the party mandate' leads to different expectations regarding mandate fulfilment in majoritarian and consensual democracies than the ones put forward by classic party mandate theory. Because this study looks at both issue saliency and issue positions, I will propose separate hypotheses regarding issue saliency and issue positions. It is after all

<sup>2</sup>A similar argument has been made in the policy linkage literature (Blais and Bodet, 2006).

<sup>3</sup>Some countries with proportional representation are used to having minority governments rather than majority coalitions. This presents a different parliamentary dynamic, because in these cases usually one party is able to pursue its manifesto, just as in majoritarian democracies (although a minority government would have to find some common ground with opposition parties in parliament). Although this does present an interesting case, this study focuses on the difference between majority systems with single-party majority government and consensus systems with multi-party government, as these present the most different mechanisms of government behaviour.

possible that there is an effect on issue saliency, but not on issue positions. In addition, the causal mechanisms are not always the same for issue saliency and issue positions.

### Issue saliency

Consensus systems are expected to show higher levels of mandate fulfilment, both in terms of issue saliency as well as issue positions. The underlying explanation is, however, somewhat different for these two aspects of the mandate. The expectation that the congruence between electoral party issue saliency and parliamentary party issue saliency is higher in consensual democracies than in majoritarian democracies stems from a difference in the level of *government control over the parliamentary agenda*. In manifestos parties can talk about whatever they like for as long as they like, but in parliament they have to stick to the agenda and their speaking time is often limited. Thus, the extent to which parties can influence the parliamentary agenda explains the degree to which they can talk about the issues that they talked about a lot in their manifestos. Government control over the parliamentary agenda is higher in majoritarian than in consensus democracies. After all, one of the characteristics of a majoritarian democracy is that parliament is dominated by the executive (Lijphart, 1999)<sup>4</sup>. This theoretical point can be illustrated by plotting countries' levels of government control over the agenda (as measured by Döring (1995)) against countries' scores on Lijphart's executive-parties dimension (figure 3.1). The relationship between the two variables is strong: Pearson's correlation coefficient equals 0.679 (significant at the 0.01 level).

High levels of government agenda control are expected to lead to lower levels of issue saliency congruence. If the government determines the parliamentary agenda, opposition parties in parliament cannot address the issues they find important to the extent they might wish. If the parliament sets its own agenda, opposition parties (as well as governing parties) will have ample opportunity to table issues that they care about. This means that issue congruence, especially for opposition parties, is higher when the government does not control the agenda<sup>5</sup>:

**Hypothesis 1:** A consensus democracy shows higher levels of congruence between the electoral party issue saliency and the parliamentary party issue saliency than a majoritarian democracy.

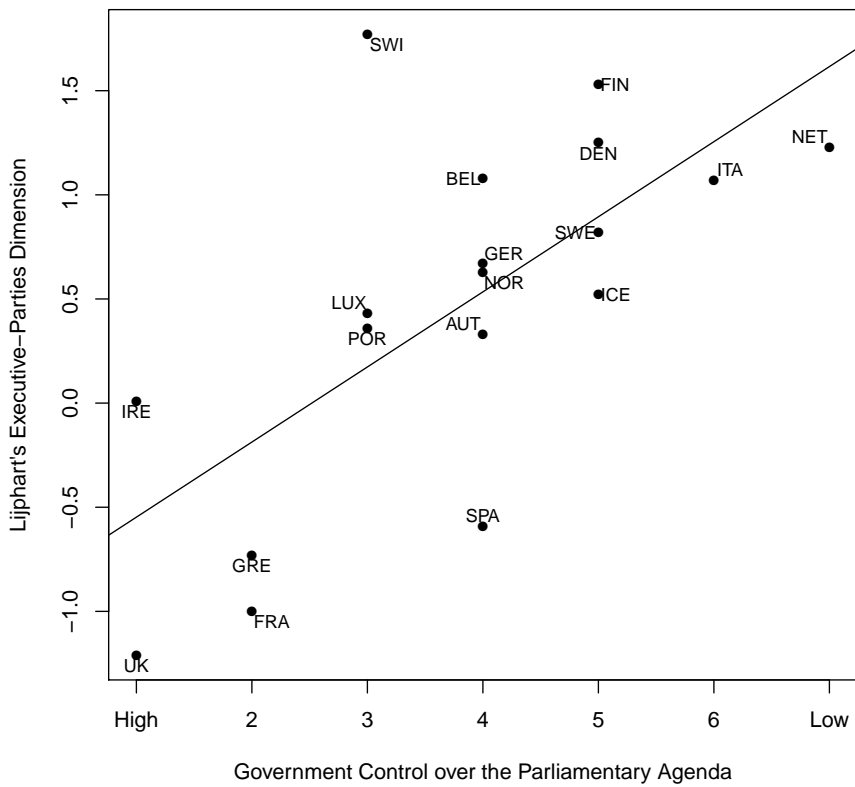
### Issue positions

The traditional theory on the relationship between regime type and mandate fulfilment rests heavily on the chain-of-representation argument: majoritarian

<sup>4</sup>Although Lijphart operationalizes this characteristic differently, namely as the average governmental term.

<sup>5</sup>The difference between governing and opposition parties will be discussed in more detail in section 3.2.

**Figure 3.1:** *The relationship between government agenda control and Lijphart's executive-parties dimension*



Note: Low values on the executive-parties dimension indicate majoritarianism, high values consensualism. The fitted line is an OLS regression line. Sources: Döring (1995) and Lijphart (1999).

democracy offers a clear chain of representation (one party wins a majority and forms a government), thus parties will better be able to implement their mandates (Ranney, 1954; Royed, 1996; Thomson, 1999). Consensus systems lack such a clear connection between parties' electoral mandates and government policy. Government policy output is the result of post-electoral bargaining. Therefore, it is concluded that mandate fulfilment is better in majoritarian democracies.

This argument does not, however, hold in the context of parties' mandate for parliament. This study's focus is not whether individual government parties can influence policy output or policy outcome, but whether the structure of the electoral and parliamentary competition is congruent. This different view on party mandate fulfilment influences the expected relation between regime type and mandate fulfilment in three ways.

The first argument relates to the role of opposition parties. Previous studies on mandate theory have focused very much on governing. They do not look at parliamentary representation in general and the role of the opposition in particular. The essence of parliamentary democracy is that government is based on parliamentary trust. Members of parliament have their own mandate: the mandate to represent in parliament. This is equally true for opposition parties: the mere fact that they are not in government does not mean that they do not have a mandate. Only parties that fail to win any seats do not have a mandate. Opposition parties should be taken into account in the study of mandate fulfilment. When doing this, the traditional 'chain-of-representation' argument loses its strength. The question is not whether governments can enact pledges, but whether all parties stay true to their manifesto pledges during the parliamentary term. While government parties in majoritarian democracies are presumably in a rather strong position to fulfil their mandate, opposition parties on the other hand are poorly positioned. In consensus democracies government parties have to compromise to get into government, although this does not force them to adopt the governments' position in parliament: they may very well use the parliamentary arena to strengthen their own distinct policy profile – within the limits set by the coalition agreement. Opposition parties, on the other hand, have many incentives to pursue their own agenda rather than to oppose everything the government wants (see section sec:hypotheses-go). Thus, taking account of opposition parties' mandates severely reduces the applicability of the 'chain-of-representation' argument that has usually been made in defence of majoritarian democracy<sup>6</sup>.

Second, high levels of pledge fulfilment in majoritarian countries may be the result of parties' strategic behaviour concerning making and fulfilling pledges. As I argued in the previous chapter, political parties have incentives to avoid making certain pledges because of divisiveness within the party or because parties expect or know that certain policies will not be popular. By no means do

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<sup>6</sup>The precise expectations with regard to mandate fulfilment of opposition and government parties in the two types of democracy are discussed in section 3.2.



parties have to provide a broad overview of intended policies in their election manifesto. Instead, parties may selectively emphasize certain policy areas and carefully select those pledges that make them win the elections. Furthermore, the relative freedom of single-party government enables them to introduce policies that are not based on manifesto pledges. These new policies may change its position on the relevant issue dimension, even if no pledges are broken. As this study looks at policy positions and issue saliency rather than pledge fulfilment, this leads to different expectations of the differences between consensus and majoritarian democracies. Pledge fulfilment may be high in majoritarian systems, but this does not necessarily mean that parties' positions are also more congruent in terms of their policy positions in those countries.

The argument that manifestos are strategic documents is likely to work in favour of mandate fulfilment in consensual democracies. In consensual democracies 'winning' the elections does not guarantee government responsibility. Government participation has to be secured in coalition negotiations. The election manifesto is important here in two respects: the prospect of coalition negotiations motivates parties to write elaborate manifestos and, at the same time, to make sure that their manifesto does not alienate future coalition partners. The election manifestos of parties are the starting point of the coalition negotiations. It is a means to exert political leverage. If a certain proposal features prominently in a party's manifesto, the party leadership can put more pressure on prospective coalition partners to agree to that proposal. Contrarily, it lowers a party's credibility if it stands firm on a proposal that was not even in its manifesto. Parties are thus motivated to dedicate some attention to every policy area in their manifesto. This also facilitates trust among future coalition partners, for it is clear what position each party takes. Of course, parties desiring to enter a government must make sure that they do not render themselves (virtually) unacceptable to future coalition partners by taking extreme policy positions on many issues. There is some tension between the use of the manifesto as leverage in negotiations and not pushing it too far, resulting in the loss of credibility towards prospective coalition partners. Nevertheless, parties are motivated to present their policies on a range of issues in their manifesto. The need for this is smaller in majoritarian democracies, which may result in lower levels of mandate fulfilment.

The third argument relates to the binding force of a coalition agreement. Coalition governments are nowadays very often the result of coalition negotiations in which a coalition agreement has been agreed upon (Müller and Strøm, 2008). The policy positions in this document are necessarily somewhat different from the positions the coalition parties took in their manifesto – unless they all took the same position in their manifesto. For some observers this is sufficient proof that consensus democracy is inferior in terms of mandate fulfilment: the coalition agreement is necessarily different from the parties' manifestos, so the mandate does not work as well in consensus systems. The merits of a coalition agreement are sometimes ignored in this debate. The agreement is indeed somewhat different from what the individual parties promised in their manifesto, but it also

serves as an anchor for government policy (Andeweg and Bakema, 1994; Timmermans and Andeweg, 2000; Müller, 2000). Deviating from the coalition agreement will potentially cause a government crisis. Of course, coalition agreements do not enact themselves and there are often conflicts on issues that were mentioned in the coalition agreement (Timmermans and Moury, 2006; Timmermans, 1999). Parties operate a range of control mechanisms to keep tabs on their coalition partner(s), for example the appointment of junior ministers and control by parliamentary committees (Kim and Loewenberg, 2005). These mechanisms are stronger under consensus systems than under majoritarian systems, where these control mechanisms are weaker or non-existent, i.e., Westminster systems often feature weak committees. Furthermore, it appears to be much more difficult for a group of back-benchers to pull the plug on their own party's government than for a coalition party to leave the coalition government. At least the former is much less common than the latter.

These three arguments lead to the expectation that, using the 'spatial approach' of the party mandate, majoritarian democracies do not fare better than consensus democracies in terms of issue saliency. On the contrary, I expect that the combination of the three mechanisms outlined above result in higher levels of mandate fulfilment in consensus democracies:

**Hypothesis 2:** A consensus democracy shows higher levels of congruence between parties' electoral issue positions and parties' parliamentary issue positions than a majoritarian democracy.

The congruence between issue positions in manifestos and parliamentary debates can be studied in different ways. One way is by looking at parties' positions on separate issue dimensions. For example, an economic left-right dimension is often used to capture parties' stances on economic issues. Alternatively, one can study parties' position within a multidimensional spatial representation of the party competition. Both methods are congruent with the spatial approach to the party mandate, because they are both essentially spatial representations of party policy preferences. Therefore, in the subsequent analyses party issue position congruence will be studied both in terms of parties' (relative) positions on separate issue dimensions as well as in terms of the congruence of the structures of electoral and parliamentary competition<sup>7</sup>.

## 3.2 Government and opposition

The 'most important and typical difference' between consensus and majoritarian democracies is the difference between multi-party coalitions and single-party

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<sup>7</sup>I only present a single hypothesis on party position congruence that both refers to congruence on separate issue dimensions as well as congruence within spaces of competition, for reasons of clarity. Furthermore, parties' positions on separate issue dimensions and their positions within the spaces of competition are empirically related (see section 4.5).

majority governments (Lijphart, 1999: 62). This influences the way in which government and opposition parties behave in parliament and the degree to which they fulfil their electoral mandates.

Previous studies have shown that government parties are in a better position to implement their manifesto *pledges* than opposition parties (Royed, 1996; Thomson, 2001; Mansergh and Thomson, 2007). Mansergh and Thomson (2007) find that the difference is largest in the United Kingdom, the clearest example of a majoritarian country in their dataset (84 versus 24 per cent). In the more consensual Netherlands government parties clearly fare better than opposition parties, but the gap is smaller (57 versus 33 per cent). In Ireland the difference is even smaller (50 vs. 45 per cent). Explanations for the relatively high implementation rates of opposition parties' pledges in some countries include the fact that some proposals are included in both the government and opposition manifestos. In addition, the existence of informal arrangements between government and opposition parties may lead to the enactment of opposition parties' pledges. Thirdly, the government may enact some of the opposition parties' popular pledges in an attempt to gain support among the opposition parties' voters (Thomson, 1999; Mansergh and Thomson, 2007).

Because this study looks at parties' *parliamentary* mandate, my expectations concerning mandate fulfilment differ from those of students of pledge fulfilment. After all, opposition parties may not be very well positioned to translate their election manifesto into government policy, but they should be able to stand up for their policies in parliament. In terms of the parliamentary mandate, opposition parties are not necessarily in a disadvantaged position compared to government parties. The dynamics depend on the model of democracy. In majoritarian democracies, I expect government parties to do better than opposition parties. The government does not have to strike compromises and determines the parliamentary agenda, while the dominant strategy of the opposition is to oppose every government proposal. In consensual political systems I expect opposition parties to show *higher* levels of congruence between their electoral and parliamentary saliency and positions than government parties. In these systems government parties are bound to coalition agreements, while the opposition is usually divided and therefore does not have the incentive to merely oppose all government policy.

The hypotheses concerning majoritarian democracies read as follows:

**Hypothesis 3:** Government parties show higher levels of congruence between electoral party issue saliency and parliamentary party issue saliency than opposition parties, in a majoritarian democracy.

**Hypothesis 4:** Government parties show higher levels of congruence between parties' electoral issue positions and parties' parliamentary issue positions than opposition parties, in a majoritarian democracy.

As with the other independent variables, I have distinguished between the

effect on the congruence of issue saliency and the effect on the congruence of issue positions. Government parties are expected to show higher levels of congruence. The argument concerning issue saliency builds on Döring's observation that government control of the parliamentary agenda is very high in majoritarian countries (Döring, 1995), as was outlined in the previous section. This means that the government party can decide what parliament talks about. Although the opposition parties have some opportunities to influence the agenda, the government has many more. The hypothesized result is that government parties will show higher levels of congruence between their electoral and parliamentary issue saliency than opposition parties.

The congruence of parties' issue positions during elections and in parliament is influenced by government participation in the same way. In majoritarian democracies, government parties are expected to have more congruent electoral and parliamentary issue positions than opposition parties. This is also the result of the institutional setting of majoritarian democracies. The government sets the stage in parliament; the opposition's role is to criticize and to hold the government to account. Furthermore, the opposition is the party that lost the last election. These parties might thus want to change their policy position in order to avoid another electoral defeat.

The opposition in majoritarian regimes responds to government proposals and government behaviour. This division of roles will make it an attractive strategy for the opposition to criticize basically all government policies. While the critical evaluation of government behaviour is probably a characteristic of opposition parties in many countries, the tendency to criticize is much stronger when there are only two competitors. In many majoritarian systems the opposition is truly a shadow government, ready to take over the business of the state. They can hardly make a credible case to voters if they do not present an alternative in the fullest sense of the word. Kaiser (2008) points out that there is variation in this respect between majoritarian countries and across time: in some settings this two-party dynamic is stronger than elsewhere. For example, when the Liberal Democrats became a more prominent party in British politics, it could not simply copy the Official Opposition party's strategy. Instead, it combined with Labour to oppose the Conservative government, and after the 1997 election it has to a certain extent worked together with the new Labour government. In other countries, like Canada or New Zealand the picture is even more complicated, because the number of effective parties is even larger there and because minority government has been the rule rather than the exception there. It should thus be expected that the difference between opposition and government is largest when the effective number of party is lowest<sup>8</sup>.

The dynamics of parliamentary competition are different in consensual political systems. In those democracies, I expect that opposition parties fare better at

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<sup>8</sup>Kaiser's (2008) argument essentially supports the argument presented here that the dynamics of opposition behaviour are different in systems with two parties and in systems with a lot of parties.

mandate fulfilment than government parties:

**Hypothesis 5:** Opposition parties show higher levels of congruence between electoral party issue saliency and parliamentary party issue saliency than government parties, in a consensus democracy.

**Hypothesis 6:** Opposition parties show higher levels of congruence between parties' electoral issue positions and parties' parliamentary issue positions than government parties, in a consensus democracy.

One of the characteristics of consensus democracy is that both the government and the opposition consist of multiple parties (Lijphart, 1999). The government parties generally formulate a coalition agreement which is not only binding to the government, but also to the parliamentary (coalition) parties. Coalition agreements are written to find compromises on issues that divide the coalition parties (or to log-roll). A coalition agreement will thus contain policy positions that are different from the manifesto positions of the coalition parties. This means that the coalition parties have to deviate from their manifesto policy positions and, to a lesser extent, priorities. The parliamentary coalition parties will try to offset this deviation by stressing policy positions which are more in line with their manifesto positions. However, it is to be expected that these parties will, on the whole, deviate more strongly from their manifesto position than opposition parties.

Contrary to their majoritarian counterparts, opposition parties in consensus democracies generally have quite a bit of influence on the parliamentary agenda (Döring, 1995; Andeweg, 2008). This allows them to talk about the issues they find important. Maybe not to the extent they would wish for, but there is quite a lot of room, especially in comparative terms. At the same time, the dominant mode of competition that exists in majoritarian countries does not apply to the same extent in consensus democracies. Because there are multiple opposition parties, often both from the left and from the right, simply opposing the government is not a viable strategy. An opposition party has not only to show that it differs from the government, but also that it differs from other opposition parties. In this situation, sticking to the manifesto pledges seems the most likely strategy for opposition parties. Of course, occasionally opposition parties that have suffered a large defeat in the previous elections will try to reposition themselves, but this is an exception rather than the rule, especially because government participation is not a direct consequence of the electoral result: a party can win the elections and end up in opposition or vice versa. Additionally, parliaments in consensus countries are often characterized as working parliaments, in which opposition parties have many opportunities to get their proposals accepted (Polsby, 1975). Instead of opposing the government at all costs, opposition parties are thus better off working with the government parties to get some of their proposals accepted. This gives opposition parties incentives to use their election manifesto as a parliamentary mandate and try to implement it.

### 3.3 The decline of the party mandate?

Institutions normally change only gradually. Consensus democracies do not become majoritarian overnight. Over longer periods of time, changes in state institutions and political parties do occur that might influence the extent to which the mandate model works. One change that seems to have occurred concerns the difference between consensus and majoritarian democracies in terms of mandate fulfilment. The debate on policy linkage between citizens and politicians suggests that the difference between majoritarian and consensus systems has disappeared in recent years (Powell, 2009). Consensus systems used to show higher levels of ideological congruence, but this is no longer the case<sup>9</sup>.

The more general question is how party mandate fulfilment has changed over the last decades. There have been many changes in parties, party systems and electoral politics, such as dealignment, changing party organizations and systems, changing party roles and the rise of populism. These have changed how parties fulfil their representative functions, both in consensus and majoritarian democracies. Some argue that the result is that mandate fulfilment has decreased over the years, while others are convinced of the opposite.

#### 3.3.1 Dealignment

Until the 1970s political scientists explained the, in their eyes, remarkable stability of party competition in western democracies. They argued that the political cleavages had been ‘frozen’ and were remarkably similar in the 1960s compared to the 1920s (Lipset and Rokkan, 1967). In addition, voters’ electoral behaviour was very stable over time (Rose and Urwin, 1970). Electoral volatility was low,

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<sup>9</sup>This gap between citizens and governments has become smaller because the congruence has increased over time in majoritarian systems. The reason for this is that these systems have become less polarized (Kim et al., 2010: 182). The most important source of a lack of congruence between voters and parties in majoritarian system is the fact that the plurality party gets an electoral bonus. Generally the plurality party receives a majority of the seats. That means that the median legislator is a member of the party that won the election, but not necessarily a member of the party that is closest to the median voter. For example, in Britain the centrist Liberal Democrats are often the closest to the median voter, but they do not include the median legislator (the government party always has the median legislator if it has a parliamentary majority). Contrary to Downs’ (1957) expectation, the main parties in a majoritarian system do not always converge towards the median. This lack of convergence (or centripetality) accounts for the low levels of congruence between the median legislator and the median voter. A decrease in polarization means that all parties move close to the political centre (where the median voter is usually located). This means that the distance between median voter and the government party will decline. Kim et al. (2010) show that all temporal patterns in the analysis of ideological convergence between citizens and governments disappear if polarization is included in the model. This argument does, however, not translate directly to the study of the party mandate. The effect of polarization on policy linkage is mainly a result of the distorting effect of the electoral system, which leads to an relatively large distance between median voter and median legislator. Polarization plays a different role in parties’ mandate fulfilment, as is outlined in the next section. In sum, it is not likely that the cross-temporal patterns of policy linkage apply to the party mandate. Therefore, I will focus on the party mandate decline thesis here.

election results presented few surprises and there were only small swings from one party to another.

How different was the tone of the literature in the early 1980s. The decade before had witnessed increases in the electoral volatility, decline of the traditional cleavages and party alignments and the rise of new issues and (new) social movements (Daalder and Mair, 1983; Dalton, 1984). These changes were apparently so strong that the debate did not focus on the question whether there were significant changes to party politics, but whether politics would go back to a more stable system of party representation or whether the dealignment of voters would be a continuing feature of contemporary politics.

The traditional political cleavages have become less pronounced in many countries. Certainly, there are still political divides between parties and between groups of citizens, but these are to a lesser extent rooted in society. The fact that people have different ideas about state intervention in the economy is no longer simply a result of them being members of different classes. Party attachment and voting behaviour is no longer a function of social differences between people. New issues have come up, such as (radical) democratization, the environment, equal rights for women, homosexuals and minorities and (later) migration and globalization (Inglehart, 1971; Pellikaan et al., 2003; Kriesi, 2008). These issues do in many cases not reflect differences between groups in society. For example, the migration issue is not simply a conflict between the existing population on one side and migrants on the other. Many non-migrants are critical about migration, while many others stand up for migrants. Cleavage politics is replaced by issue politics (Dalton, 1984: 474). Even if one argues that there is (partial) *realignment*, which is defined as “a significant shift in the group bases of party coalitions” (Dalton, 1984: 13), linkages between citizens and parties have become more flexible.

Party membership has declined significantly over the last thirty years. Except for newly established democracies in southern and eastern Europe, membership has declined by twenty to sixty per cent between 1980 and 2000 (Mair and Van Biezen, 2001: 12). In the late 1990s, party membership as a percentage of the electorate averaged at 5 per cent in twenty European countries. It is as low as 1.92 per cent in the United Kingdom. Over the same period of time, electoral turnout has declined in most countries (Gray and Caul, 2000). In addition, (gross) electoral volatility, the percentage of votes that changes from one party to another at an election, has increased (Dalton et al., 2000: 41). This signals that more and more people change their party preference between elections: they no longer have (more or less) fixed attachments to a political party and party identification has declined (Dalton, 2000).

### 3.3.2 Changing party organizations and party systems

The second development that is documented in the literature is the changing nature of party systems and party organizations. These changes are partly the

result of the process of dealignment described above. Because party membership and party attachment have declined and traditional cleavages have become less important, parties had to change their electoral strategies. Another source for changes in party systems and parties is the end of the Cold War, which had traditionally reinforced the Left-Right divide (Katz and Mair, 2009). Furthermore, policy-making has increasingly been transferred outside the realm of politics, which is especially visible in the growing importance of central banks (Majone, 1994; Mair, 2006). This development can be argued to have reduced the electoral *accountability* of political parties, because major issues were removed from the electoral and parliamentary competition<sup>10</sup>.

The changes in party organizations and party systems have resulted in a debate on the existence of various ‘party types’ (Kirchheimer, 1966; Panebianco, 1988; Katz and Mair, 1995; Koole, 1996). Before the advent of universal suffrage, parties were essentially groups of politicians who worked together in parliament or other representative bodies. These ‘elite’ or ‘cadre’ parties did not have a need to develop a large organization outside of parliament, because the vote was restricted. As voting rights were extended and new groups organized (socialists, social democrats and (orthodox) Christian democrats), the type of party organization also changed. This marked the advent of the era of the ‘mass parties’. These parties were characterized by a large membership and a large and usually strong extra-parliamentary organization. This type of organization was necessary to mobilize voters. Parties usually represented a specific societal group, such as workers, catholics, protestants or the middle classes.

Since the second world war, the mass parties seem to be in decline. Not only did their membership drop significantly in most countries, parties do also no longer cater to a specific socio-economic or religious group in society. Scholars developed new party types to capture the nature of party organization and the party system in the last decades. Two of these have been particularly influential.

The first new party type that was described in the second half of the twentieth century is the ‘catch-all’ party (Kirchheimer, 1966). As a result of the post-war consensus on the need for a welfare state, parties’ ideological differences had declined. Parties started to compete not so much over the question what the best policy was, but who would be best at implementing it (Stokes, 1966). Parties de-emphasized the importance of the groups they had traditionally represented and aimed their policies at basically all voters. In their appeal to a wider electorate, parties downgraded their ideologies and instead presented themselves as professionals (Panebianco, 1988). In organizational terms, these new catch-all strategies meant that individual members were much less valued than before (Krouwel, 2006). The leadership became more and more important – also be-

<sup>10</sup>However, one could also argue that if the decision to remove these policies from the political sphere is taken in a democratic manner, mandated by the electorate, there is no real problem in terms of *authorization*. Furthermore, there may be parties that want to restore political decision-making over these depoliticized issues. Even so, the tendency to transfer responsibilities to non-majoritarian institutions weakens the mandate model.



cause of changes in political campaigning following the introduction of the radio and television. Because parties did no longer present coherent ideologies to voters, they often depended on others, interest groups for example, to generate new policy ideas (Krouwel, 2006).

The second influential account of how parties have changed is the cartel party thesis, which describes parties from the 1970s onwards (Katz and Mair, 1995, 2009). The thesis draws from the literature on economic cartels to describe how parties increasingly work together with each other and with the state. Over the last three decades, parties have become somewhat removed from society, while at the same time they have become closer to the state (Blyth and Katz, 2005). One aspect of this is financial: parties were bound to look for different sources of income, because of their declining membership (Van Biezen and Kopecký, 2007). Another aspect is personal: parties have professionalized and the position of the parliamentary party (leadership) has strengthened at the cost of the strength of the extra-parliamentary party (Panebianco, 1988; Webb and Poguntke, 2005). Those who run the party are directly involved in state politics, as members of parliament or government ministers. Although many parties have given more powers to their members (e.g. voting rights at conferences and/or in party referenda), the membership has become atomized (Katz and Mair, 1995). The mid-level party cadre can no longer form a powerful counterbalance to the party leadership. One implication of this is that party leaders have more freedom of deviating from the election manifesto. After all, the chances of a rebellion within the party are very small.

According to the cartel party thesis, parties have not only become more intertwined with the state, but also with each other. Proponents of the cartel party thesis argue that parties' electorates, goals, styles and policies have become more similar than before. One example of this is that parties which one would not have expected to govern together in the past now do so, such as the 'purple' (social-democrat and liberals) governments in Belgium and (especially) the Netherlands. Part of this greater similarity and cooperation is the shared awareness of the cost of losing elections. Parties have become aware that losing elections is part of the game that will happen to every party from time to time. The solution is to reduce the costs of losing. For example, in Britain financial support for the opposition party has been introduced in 1975 and the amounts (per seats and votes) have increased substantially, by approximately 10 per cent per year (Kelly, 2009). This awareness lies at the heart of the cartelization of the party system. One result of having reduced costs of losing is that winning becomes less attractive. Although most parties will probably still prefer to participate in government, the cost of being in opposition is not too high. Additionally, being in opposition might pay off during the next general election. The result is that parties that have rather similar election manifestos anyway do not really compete either. And in parliament parties would probably be even more inclined to reach a compromise. This is likely to reduce party mandate fulfilment.

### 3.3.3 Changing party goals

The goals of political parties are often summarized by three words: *policy*, *votes* and *office* (Strøm, 1990). Most parties seek to implement certain *policies* they believe are beneficial to society, the people they represent or themselves (although they will not admit the latter). There are certainly examples of parties that do not care about policy at all, but for most parties this will be at least one of their main objectives. Parties, by definition, put up candidates for elections. They obviously want these candidates to be elected, thus getting *votes* is another objective of a political party. There are some differences between parties as to how important it is to maximize the vote. Most notably, some parties choose to put forward manifestos that appeal to a larger section of the electorate, while other parties draw up policy programmes that will only be supported by a limited niche: there is thus potentially a trade-off between policy and votes. While getting votes is thus important, this does not automatically ensure that parties can also govern, especially in multi-party democracies with coalition government. *Office* is a third goal: in office parties can actually implement their policies. In addition, controlling office brings along jobs for the party cadre and control over the resources of the state. Again, there might be a trade-off between policy and office. Parties that want to get elected and to form a (coalition) government, must be prepared to strike policy compromises.

Most parties will aim to achieve each of these three goals. The relative importance of the goals however can differ between parties and over time. In principle, the party mandate model works with all sorts of parties: policy-seeking, vote-seeking or office-seeking. For example, even if a party only presents a manifesto because it seeks votes, the mandate model works as long as the party sticks to its manifesto policies. Vote-seeking parties will probably stick to their mandate if they expect to lose the next elections if they do not implement their pledges. A similar argument can be made for office-seeking parties. Nevertheless, it is obviously much easier to achieve the goal of mandate fulfilment if parties are intrinsically motivated to realize their manifesto policies (Strøm, 1990: 569).

The changes in the political context and party system have brought about a change in the goals of parties. Whereas the organizing principles of the mass parties were the interests of their clearly defined constituencies, the catch-all and cartel parties have increasingly equated politics with entrepreneurship (Kirchheimer, 1966). The cause does no longer seek a party, but the party seeks a cause. Whereas it is hard to believe that most politicians do no longer have any genuine interest in the policies they defend, there seems to have been a shift from policy objectives to votes and office. One example is the process of depillarization in the Netherlands (Andeweg and Irwin, 2009). Before the 1970s, parties were very stable in terms of their electoral performance, exactly because cleavages were fixed. Changes in the election results represented demographic changes more than anything else. In addition, broad coalition governments were the norm. Even if parties were excluded from a coalition, this was generally the result of

policy differences rather than the election outcome. Thus, there was little to seek in terms of votes and office. On the other hand, parties did have clear policy programmes which corresponded to the societal group they represented. When this consociational system gradually but rather quickly disappeared in the 1960s and 1970s, parties had to start pursuing votes and office more actively. For example, the left-wing parties formed pre-electoral coalitions in an attempt to circumvent the domination of the Christian Democrats in the 1970s and to form a government by themselves.

### 3.3.4 Populism

The rise of populist parties may be regarded as a consequence of or a response to the developments described above. The scale on which populist parties have emerged in Western Europe and impacted existing parties warrants a separate discussion of this phenomenon (Hakhverdian and Koop, 2007; Bale et al., 2010). Populism explicitly challenges the representative credentials of the established parties. It makes a clear distinction between ‘the pure people’ and ‘the corrupt (political) elite’ (Mudde, 2004). In the eyes of populist politicians, the established parties have forsaken the people. Instead of playing their political games, politicians should listen to what the people want and do it (Mudde, 2004).

Populists argue that the system of party representation has failed (Taggart, 2004). The complaints are manifold. For one, parties do not present manifestos that are different as to present voters with a real choice. In addition, some issues are ignored by the political consensus, such as immigration and integration (Van der Brug and Van Spanje, 2009). Second, parties do not listen to what the people really want. Populists often seem to assume that there is a kind of *volonté générale*, which is consistently ignored by the political elite. Thirdly, political parties surely do not do what they promised to voters (Taggart, 2004; Abts and Rummens, 2007). Populist parties are clearly hostile to how representative democracy currently functions (Taggart, 2004). It is, however, not as clear what they propose to do instead. On the one hand many populist parties propose to strengthen direct democracy (Taggart, 2004), but at the same time they are not entirely hostile towards the idea of political representation – they primarily oppose how it functions in contemporary democracies (Mudde, 2004).

While populism might be regarded as a response to the shortcomings of the current representative system, it also presents a particular *mode* of political representation (Arditi, 2003). Arditi argues that for populists, to use Pitkin’s (1967) terms, symbolic representation is just as important as representation as ‘acting for’. He connects a populist view of representative democracy to Manin’s (1997) concept of *audience democracy*. Audience democracy, Manin argues, has replaced party democracy: political competition is no longer something between grass-roots party institutions, but rather between professionalized organizations that are involved in media campaigns. Voters have become an audience rather than real participants in this process. At the same time, the link between voters and

politicians is argued to have become more personal (although it is unclear to what extent ‘charisma’ of the party leader plays a part in this (Van der Brug and Mughan, 2007)). This ‘personal link’ relates to a different aspect of the ‘populist mode’ of political representation: populists regard themselves as the voice of the people, rather than its representatives (Canovan, 1999; Ardit, 2003; Abts and Rummens, 2007). While they might see the necessity of representative institutions in modern democracies, populists will argue that representative democracy should be as direct as possible. They do not value the mediating function of representatives, such as deliberation or consensus-seeking. Rather, representatives should pursue what the people want. In that sense populists are clearly more on the ‘mandate’ than on the ‘independent’ side of the debate (see chapter 2).

The success of the populist parties challenges the established parties. Established parties might have moved from ‘society’ to the ‘state’, as the cartel party thesis suggests, but the presence of populist challengers may force established parties to abandon this strategy and become more sensitive to public demands (Kitschelt, 2000). Established parties sometimes try to copy populist rhetoric in order to show that they really care about ‘the people’ (Meguid, 2005; Mair, 2006). At the same time, they try to remove decisions from the realm of majoritarian decision-making (Majone, 1994; Mair, 2006), which notably reduces the policy link that the party mandate model provides. Thus, populism further changes how parties fulfil their representative functions.

### 3.3.5 How mandate fulfilment changed

There is little debate about the question whether the developments described here change the way in which parties fulfil their representative functions. However, there are diverging answers to the question on the extent to which the developments change the degree to which parties are responsive to voters and the extent to which they fulfil their electoral mandates. While some observers argue that there is a decline of party representation and party mandate fulfilment in particular, others have argued exactly the opposite.

The first argument in favour of a decline of party mandate fulfilment is derived from the catch-all party thesis. The process of a decline of cleavage voting has arguably increased parties’ need to pursue votes more actively in most countries. The percentage of the manual labourers’ vote that goes to the Social Democrats and the percentage of the religious vote for the Christian Democrats has declined in many Western European countries (Best, 2008). Even while winning the elections has been a primary concern for parties in Britain for a long time, in the past they only needed to focus on the swing vote, whereas nowadays parties can only take a small part of their vote for ‘granted’. In addition, their support is not necessarily limited to one particular group in society nor organized along a single dimension of issue competition: parties have to deal with different groups in society whose demands might not be easy to aggregate into a single policy programme. This basically describes the setting under which modern parties

operate. The result is that politicians start behaving like political entrepreneurs (Panebianco, 1988). On the one side, this could increase the quality of representation, because entrepreneurs will be generally interested in providing the goods that their clients ask for, at least if this will further their own interests (for example, if they think they will win the next elections by pursuing policies that people favour). On the other hand, it might entice highly strategic behaviour on the part of the politicians: they will only keep their electoral promises if they think that this might help them win the next election. If a political entrepreneur who is primarily interested in votes and office believes that he can increase his vote share at the next elections by changing his position, he will probably do so. The reference point for parties' parliamentary behaviour is not the party's previous election manifesto, but what it perceives to be a winning program at the next election (Mansbridge, 2003).

The cartel party thesis makes a different argument about how party change affects party representation. Instead of entrepreneurs in a political 'free market', parties have become oligarchs in a 'cartelized political market'. The cartelization of party politics ensures that no party really loses an election. The cartel ensures that the spoils of the state are divided among all parties, not only the winning parties. Because the (electoral) market has been divided among the players (parties), the competition for votes has declined. Even the competition for office is no longer as important as it once was, according to the cartel party thesis. Instead, democratic elections are "dignified parts" of the constitution' (Katz and Mair, 1995: 22). It becomes a service provided by the state for society. Parties are a part of this public service (Van Biezen, 2004). Because of the cartel, parties do no longer really care about policy, votes or office (Mair, 2006). Whereas the threat of losing votes or office used to be a major incentive for politicians to be responsive to voters, the fact that no party is definitely 'out' in a cartelized party system makes this mechanism much weaker. Therefore, Mair concludes that 'the relevance of linkages which are based on trust, accountability, and above all, representation, tends to become eroded, both inside and outside the parties' (Mair, 1997: 153).

Both the catch-all party model and the cartel party model do thus present potential problems for the quality of mandate fulfilment. The problems presented by the cartel party are clearly the largest: if politicians are no longer truly interested in policy, votes or office (but only in the stability of the state) all mechanisms to hold them to account on policies will fail, or at least they become less effective. This leads to the following two hypotheses:

**Hypothesis 7:** The congruence between electoral party issue saliency and parliamentary party issue saliency has declined over time.

**Hypothesis 8:** The congruence between parties' electoral issue positions and parties' parliamentary issue positions has declined over time.

This argument is strongly contested by Koole (1996) and Kitschelt (2000).

First, they argue that the link between state and parties might have become stronger but the two are not similar. While subsidies for parties have increased, parties are not merely state institutions or public utilities. Second, even if parties are essentially state actors that are not motivated by votes and office, why would they not make it easy on themselves by allocating resources to parties and respond to citizens' interests at the same time? There is, according to Kitschelt, no convincing reason why state-based parties could not be responsive parties which fulfil their electoral mandate. Third, there is no reason to assume that voters necessarily reject the moderate positions and compromises of the cartel parties. The mere fact that parties' policy positions would have converged does not make fulfilling the electoral mandate impossible. Fourthly, the threat of new parties will limit the success of the cartel strategy (Arditi, 2003). The emergence of successful (right-wing) populist parties in Western Europe is an example of this. While the established parties might very well want to limit competition in the political market, they simply are not able to pull it off, because of the threat of entry of new players. The argument that parties have nothing to lose in elections seems to be an overstatement. In terms of jobs: if a party loses many seats, this does not only influence the MPs' and ministers' jobs, but also that of the support staff and the staff at party headquarters. Also in terms of policy influence being in government is still to be preferred over being in opposition. The hypotheses presented in this chapter provide a test for the cartel party view on the developments in representation, namely that there is a decline of mandate fulfilment over time. Rejection of these hypotheses will support Koole's and Kitschelt's arguments that mandate fulfilment has not declined, but might even have increased.

### 3.4 Issue saliency and policy extremism

The debate on the advantages and disadvantages of consensus and majoritarian democracies offers institutional explanations of the variations in mandate fulfilment. In addition to these institutional explanations, the literature also offers explanations at the party (system) and issue level. Polarization is a party system level explanation that has recently received attention in the debate on representation. It has been used to explain policy linkage between voters and politicians. Kim et al. (2010) show that voter-government distances are lower in less polarized systems, especially in majoritarian democracies. This is explained by the fact that all parties will be closer to the median voter in a less polarized system, which reduces voter-government distances. In the case of the party mandate, however, the opposite relationship is expected to hold. Parties that take on average relatively extreme issue positions will be more congruent in their issue positions. After all, if parties feel more strongly about issues, they are probably also motivated to show higher levels of mandate fulfilment. A similar argument can be made for issues that are very salient to parties in terms of the attention

they pay to it. This section presents hypotheses on the explanatory power of issue saliency, issue position extremism and party extremism.

Let us first look at the influence of issue saliency on party mandate fulfilment. Although the relationship between issues and congruence seems plausible at face value, Thomson does not find a relationship between saliency and pledge fulfilment (Thomson, 1999: 206-7)<sup>11</sup>. Nevertheless, it is expected that parties show higher levels of mandate fulfilment on issues that are most salient to them. This will influence both mandate fulfilment in terms of issue saliency as well as in terms of issue positions:

**Hypothesis 9:** The higher a party's manifesto saliency of an issue, the higher the congruence between the electoral and parliamentary party issue saliency on that issue.

**Hypothesis 10:** The higher a party's saliency of an issue, the higher the congruence between the electoral and parliamentary party position on that issue.

The independent variable 'issue saliency' will be operationalized in two ways. First, it refers to the *absolute* issue saliency, expressed as a percentage of the total attention for issues. For example, a party might dedicate 15 per cent of its manifesto to macro-economic issues and only 3 per cent to agriculture. The second operationalization concerns *relative* issue saliency, which is how salient an issue is for a party, compared to how salient that very issue is for other parties (in the same election). Take the example of the three per cent saliency of agricultural topics. If the other parties would dedicate only one or two per cent of their manifesto to agriculture, it is a relatively salient issue for the first party. If the other parties, however, have agriculture at 10 per cent saliency, the party with 3 per cent has a low relative saliency level. The relative issue saliency score is calculated by standardizing the saliency levels of an issue across parties. The expectation is that both issues that have a high absolute saliency and those with a high relative saliency show high levels of congruence.

In addition to issues with high saliency, there are also issues on which they take an extreme position (but they do not necessarily attach high saliency to it). Policy extremism has mostly been studied as an institutional characteristic (Ezrow, 2008; Kim et al., 2010). The main question was whether proportional electoral systems create incentives for parties to adopt more extreme policies than majoritarian systems. Although formal analyses of this question do lead to this hypothesis, no empirical evidence has been found to support it (Ezrow, 2008). These studies use policy extremism as a party system characteristic. Here it is used differently: either as an issue-level characteristic or a party-level characteristic. Policy extremism as an issue-level characteristic simply indicates whether a party has a relatively extreme position on an issue dimension. This

<sup>11</sup>In Thomson's study the saliency of a pledge is measured by looking at its repetition in consecutive manifestos.

implies that parties can be extreme on one issue dimension and moderate on another. For example, the British Liberal Democrats can be regarded as rather extreme on the issue of democratic reform, while they are moderate on economic policy. The Dutch Centre Democrats (CD) were very extreme on immigration policy, but quite moderate on other issues. Policy extremism as a party-level characteristic captures whether parties take extreme positions overall. After all, some parties do take extreme positions on basically every issue (e.g. the German *Linke*), while other parties take generally moderate issue positions (e.g. the Flemish *Christen-Democratisch & Vlaams*).

I also expect that congruence will be higher for those issues on which parties have more extreme positions. Even if issues are not extremely salient to a party both in absolute and relative terms, one would expect that they are less willing to compromise on those issues. After all, these issues are more likely to define a party's policy profile. Deviating from an extreme position will then be more costly. Besides, if parties take an extreme position on an issue dimension, its members will most likely also have relatively strong feelings about it<sup>12</sup>:

**Hypothesis 11:** The more extreme a party issue position is, the higher the congruence between the electoral and parliamentary party position on that issue.

The last hypothesis presented here relates issue position congruence to the average extremism of a party's policy positions. The independent variable is a scale ranging from moderate policy positions (on average) to extreme policy positions (on average). Parties with extreme policy positions are estimated to show a higher congruence between their electoral and parliamentary positions. These parties are more likely to have a strong ideological profile and are therefore expected to be less willing to compromise in parliament. Therefore, I expect these parties to show higher levels of positional congruence:

**Hypothesis 12:** The higher the average extremism of a party's policy positions is, the higher the congruence between its electoral and parliamentary party positions.

### 3.5 Conclusion

The main explanation for variation in mandate fulfilment offered in this study is institutional. The debate between majoritarian and consensus democracy is especially relevant for the quality of representation. The main hypotheses read that consensus democracies will show higher levels of mandate fulfilment, both

<sup>12</sup>One might of course argue that this should then be captured by issue saliency. However, the way in which issue saliency is generally measured focuses on attention to issues (in terms how much a party writes or talks about it). One could argue that this measurement should also include how strongly parties feel about the issue, in terms of the language they use to express their position (Thomson, 1999: 87-92). However, this would blur the distinction between issue saliency and issue positions. Therefore, I analyse parties' issue extremism separately here.



in terms of issue saliency as well as in terms of issue positions. The model of democracy also influences the extent to which opposition and government parties are able to fulfil their mandates. In majoritarian countries, it is hypothesized, government parties will outperform opposition parties, while the opposite holds in consensus democracies. This study also takes a cross-temporal approach to the party mandate. By studying mandate fulfilment over a longer period of time, the hypothesis that the congruence between electoral and parliamentary positions and saliency decreases can be tested. Finally, some party system and party-issue-level explanations for the variation in mandate fulfilment have been offered: how salient issues are and how extreme parties' positions are.

**Table 3.1:** *Overview of hypotheses*

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**Hypothesis 1:** A consensus democracy shows higher levels of congruence between the electoral party issue saliency and the parliamentary party issue saliency than a majoritarian democracy.

**Hypothesis 2:** A consensus democracy shows higher levels of congruence between parties' electoral issue positions and parties' parliamentary issue positions than a majoritarian democracy.

**Hypothesis 3:** Government parties show higher levels of congruence between electoral party issue saliency and parliamentary party issue saliency than opposition parties, in a majoritarian democracy.

**Hypothesis 4:** Government parties show higher levels of congruence between parties' electoral issue positions and parties' parliamentary issue positions than opposition parties, in a majoritarian democracy.

**Hypothesis 5:** Opposition parties show higher levels of congruence between electoral party issue saliency and parliamentary party issue saliency than government parties, in a consensus democracy.

**Hypothesis 6:** Opposition parties show higher levels of congruence between parties' electoral issue positions and parties' parliamentary issue positions than government parties, in a consensus democracy.

**Hypothesis 7:** The congruence between electoral party issue saliency and parliamentary party issue saliency has declined over time.

**Hypothesis 8:** The congruence between parties' electoral issue positions and parties' parliamentary issue positions has declined over time.

**Hypothesis 9:** The higher a party's manifesto saliency of an issue, the higher the congruence between the electoral and parliamentary party issue saliency on that issue.

**Hypothesis 10:** The higher a party's manifesto saliency of an issue, the higher the congruence between the electoral and parliamentary party position on that issue.

**Hypothesis 11:** The more extreme a party issue position is, the higher the congruence between the electoral and parliamentary party position on that issue.

**Hypothesis 12:** The higher the average extremism of a party's policy positions is, the higher the congruence between its electoral and parliamentary party positions.

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