

Government vs Opposition Voting in the Finnish Parliament Eduskunta since World War II

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Abstract

In a parliamentary system it is by definition justified to assume the government parties voting almost always in a unitary manner in plenary votes. In a multiparty system it is, however, hard to predict how the opposition groups vote. Few studies analysing government-opposition voting in the Finnish parliament Eduskunta were published during the 1960s and 1970s. This study provides similar analyses regarding the parliamentary years of 1991-2012. Combined the studies provide an insight into the government-opposition relations since World War II. The results show that before the 1990s the government-opposition division in plenary votes appeared rather clear and the political party groups' positions followed the traditional left-right dimension. Since the 1990s, the government-opposition division has become greater. The governing coalition acts almost as a bloc while the opposition groups are divided into moderate and hard opposition. The opposition groups, however, appear in a more or less random order. Consequently, since the 1990s the left-right dimension has disappeared with respect to plenary voting.

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Introduction

In parliamentary systems it is rather obvious to assume that the government groups almost always vote together in plenary votes. In such multi-party systems it is much harder to predict how the opposition groups vote. For example, some groups might act as support parties for government coalitions while some groups might nearly always oppose the coalition for tactical or political reasons. This study analyses opposition and government groups' plenary voting behaviour in the Finnish parliament 'Eduskunta'. In the analyses below the data cover the parliamentary years of 1991-2012. Together with previous Finnish plenary voting studies published earlier in the late 1960s and early 1970s we are able to provide an insight into cooperation between government and opposition in Eduskunta since World War II.

The context of parliamentary politics in Finland has changed considerably over time. Nousiainen (2000, 2006) divides Finnish parliamentary history into three distinctive eras. The first of them lasted from the beginning of the country's independence in 1917 to the late 1930s. Representative of the time were short lived bourgeois minority coalitions. After the exceptional years of the war, distinctive to the second parliamentary era were majority coalitions which were formed around the Social Democratic Party (SDP) and the Finnish Agrarian Union (ML, later renamed as the Centre party KESK). Later in the 1960s and onwards the Communist Finnish People's Democratic League (SKDL) also participated from time to time in government. These majority coalitions were still short lived. The party groups were somewhat inflexible with their governmental policies and negotiating a solution during governmental crisis was impossible more often than not. The second parliamentary era continued to the early 1980s. The prolonging of this era was caused by "issues of foreign policy", i.e. relations with the Soviet Union (Nousiainen 2006, 294). Consequently, the National Coalition (KOK), a bourgeois party, was not considered as a plausible coalition partner even though it had grown in popularity over the decades. The third parliamentary era can be seen to have started after Sorsa's fourth cabinet (1983-1986). Governments lasting for the whole electoral period have been the standard almost without exceptions since then. What is distinctive to the third parliamentary era was also the dismissal of the old triangle of SDP, SKDL and KESK as the backbone of the coalitions. The following the Holkeri government (1987-1990) had SDP and KOK as the main coalition parties. After the Holkeri government basically any majority coalition could have and has been possible as ideological issues have not been an obstacle. A new triangular phenomenon took place during 1991-2010: out of the three largest parties (KESK, KOK, SDP) two were the main coalition partners and one was left in opposition. The 2011 elections resulted in a sudden success for the populist True Finns (PS) and the party became the third largest party in Eduskunta. Previous studies together with the applied data and analyses below will provide a rough picture of two parliamentary eras since World War II.

In the previous context plenary votes are at the core of political decision-making, however, the mass media are not interested in the votes unless there are notable dissidents within party groups or there are dissident government groups, for example. What the mass media is publishing very frequently is discussion which highlights the division between government and opposition. A weakly justified belief might well be that the opposition always votes against the government for political and tactical reasons. The previous Finnish studies, however, provide evidence that this is not the case in Eduskunta. Also the analyses below lend support to this observation. Moreover, I show that the government-opposition relations have changed considerably between the last two parliamentary eras.

While Eduskunta has its own peculiarities and nuances, it can still be regarded as a rather typical mainstream parliamentary legislature. The main research setting, which is elaborated later on, is the following: first, most probably the government groups act in a unitary manner in plenary votes while the opposition groups do not. There is no systematically coordinated opposition. Moreover, it is often the case that the opposition is comprised of parties in opposite ends of the traditional left-right dimension. Second, the opposition groups vote with the government in varying degrees while an extreme opposition always opposing the government is not likely to exist. This setting leads to the main research questions: How united is the government? How united is the opposition? Into what extent do the opposition groups vote with the government? What can we say about cooperation among the party groups during the last two parliamentary eras? The remaining step in the analysis is the theoretical question of what explains the party groups' observed behaviour. The theoretical framework presented in Arter (2006, 180-2) suggests parties exercising various strategies in parliamentary activities. The office-seeking, policy-seeking and profile-seeking (vote-seeking) strategies refer to opposition, although they can be used with respect to the governing parties as well. While the strategies are not mutually exclusive, they can be used as an aid in explaining the voting behaviour of the party groups.

This work draws heavily on Pajala (2011) published in Finnish. The data regarding the modern years in Pajala (2011) were limited to 1991-2006. The applied data below include six additional parliamentary years and now cover the 2007-2010 electoral term as well as the first two years of the 2011-2014 term. Here I also apply a variation of the cooperativeness illustration method by Laakso (1972a) instead of the original version used in Pajala (2011).

Following the introduction is a review of the previous Finnish studies and their main results concerning the second parliamentary era. Subsequent to this I introduce the theoretical framework together with an account on Finnish parliamentary opposition and its changing role in Eduskunta. The next chapter starts by presenting the data, which are followed by the yearly analyses of government-opposition voting. Next, a variation of the cooperation measure developed by Laakso (1972a) is introduced and the votes are pooled and analysed per electoral terms. In order to get a comprehensive picture between the two parliamentary eras, I compare the results with the earlier findings of Laakso and others. A short discussion concludes.

Previous and Related Research

The political dimensions constructed below are explicitly interpreted as the government-opposition dimensions. As such they cannot be treated as "ideological" dimensions, but rather as "practical" dimensions apparent in parliamentary systems. Recently Pajala (2012) analysed plenary votes in Eduskunta using the Optimal Scaling (OC) method developed by Poole (2000; 2005). OC and other scaling methods are able to provide the ideal points of the MPs in a number of political dimensions. As in latent variable analysis, the political dimensions have to be interpreted by the researcher. One of Pajala's (2012) main results is that during the last few decades the dimension having the most explanatory power is the government-opposition dimension. Higher, possibly ideological, dimensions had only very marginal explanatory power and could not be sensibly interpreted. Put another way plenary votes seem to reflect ideological dimensions rather poorly. Ideological dimensions colour the background while plenary voting is everyday politics.

Setting aside plenary votes, political dimensions and parties' ideal points have been studied by other means as well. Use of expert interviews by Benoit and Laver (2006) is one such possibility while the textual analysis of party programmes by Klingemann et al. (2006) is another. These data have also been gathered regarding Finland, however there is slight variation in the positioning of some of the

parties between the expert interviews and textual analyses. Recently Paloheimo (2008, 54), using multidimensional scaling in conjunction with opinion poll data, concluded that the traditional left-right dimension is still the most important ideological dimension in Finland.

While plenary votes no longer highlight the left-right dimension, this was not the case in the past. Regarding previous decades some pioneering plenary vote analyses were carried out by Risto Sänkiäho (1969), Markku Laakso (1972a; 1972b) and Pekka Nyholm (1969; 1972). This promising array of analyses seems, however, not to have continued afterwards. The data regarding the above studies concern the 1950s and 1960s and provide us with a rather good view on the second parliamentary era of Finland. As below, the historical analyses were carried out in the PPG level. However, instead of having the government majority fixed to the extreme-right the studies had the National Coalition fixed to the right (in a technical sense).

The methods applied in the Laakso, Sänkiäho and Nyholm studies varied, although the basic idea in all of them was to measure and evaluate PPG cooperation and distances by comparing group majorities vis-à-vis each other in plenary votes. Sänkiäho also compared individual Members of Parliament (MPs) somewhat along the lines of modern scaling methods. The results in the studies are rather similar regardless of the method used. The cooperation or distance measure introduced by Laakso (1972a) together with a variation of his graphical presentation method is applied below. Pekka Nyholm (1972) relied on older technique and used a slightly simpler cooperation measure proposed by Stuart Rice (1928).

Although the research of Sänkiäho (1969) is limited in data, it is methodologically the richest. He starts his account by finding out how the individual voting decisions of the MPs correlate over the votes. In order to find out factors affecting the voting decisions of the MPs the correlation matrix is then used for factor analysis. The most important factor thus obtained was the party affiliation of the MPs. Laakso, Sänkiäho and Nyholm studied various pre-defined PPG combinations over the votes as well. Deviating from other papers Sänkiäho reports an interesting detail according to which the MPs voted but few times against their respective PPG majority. This result complements the earlier voting cohesion analysis of Nyholm (1961) by showing that deviations from complete PPG voting unity are not a result of the same rebellious MPs.

Two common denominators in the historical studies are: (1) plenary votes highlight the difference between government and opposition PPGs. As said above, this is a feature parliamentary systems, however compared with the results below, the distance between government and opposition now appear to be greater (2) plenary votes highlighted the PPGs appearing according to the traditional left-right dimension as well. Here, however, the second and third parliamentary eras differ in one important aspect. Previously, the main coalition partners were always adjacent groups in the left-right dimension. In more recent times (since the Holkeri government 1987-1990), this has only once been the case. If the cabinet is not connected, this affects the plenary voting of the opposition as well.

Below we shall treat the PPGs as having just one voice. This assumption is realistic and justified as already the historical studies showed that the most important factor behind the voting decisions of the MPs was found to be the party affiliation. Indeed, intra-party voting cohesion in Finland has been very high throughout the two latest parliamentary eras. Over the decades, the voting cohesion has increased even further (Nyholm and Hagfors 1968; Pajala and Jakulin 2007). Among the Nordic countries voting cohesion in Finland has been the lowest (Jensen 2000). During the 2007-2010 electoral term, some of the PPGs had perfect voting unity, so the difference nowadays is likely to be hairbreadth. Internationally, PPGs in parliamentary systems typically have very high internal voting cohesion. The Rice cohesion index ranges from zero to one, and typically

the respective values are well over 0.9 (Rice 1928, Sieberer 2006). Systems showing low PPG voting cohesion are usually non-parliamentary. The usual examples are the European Parliament and the U.S. Congress, for which the cohesion values are around 0.6-0.7.

Opposition in Eduskunta

Finally, as the assumption of PPGs in the governing coalition voting similarly is at the very heart of parliamentary systems the main interest lies in the behaviour of the opposition. It seems there is rather little systematic research on parliamentary oppositions (for references see Pajala 2011, 216). Mainly, the literature focuses in defining and studying the nature of opposition and distinguishing different types of opposition in various countries. Regarding Finland the chapters in Arter (2006) and the monograph by Rantala (1982) are probably the most recent and comprehensive accounts. The standard Finnish textbooks review the opposition only very briefly (Nousiainen 1998; Paloheimo and Wiberg 1996; Wiberg 2008). The book series published in the honour of the 100-year-old Eduskunta include some articles (Jyränki 2006; Nousiainen 2006; Ollila 2007).

Parliamentary opposition in Finland is defined here to consist of those PPGs and MPs who are not in the government coalition. The most important tasks of the opposition usually found in the literature are listed for example by Helms (2008): (1) criticising the government, (2) scrutinising and checking governmental actions and policies, and (3) representing a credible 'alternative government'. Two kinds of opposition are identified by Sartori (1971), which are relevant here: First there is the responsible constitutional opposition, which includes PPGs who are aware of a realistic possibility of being in the government in the future. The behaviour of these parties is usually rather modest and realistic in parliaments and in parliamentary elections. The second type is a constitutional but non-responsible opposition. Parties belonging to this category are aware that their probability to govern is very low. These irresponsible opposition parties tend to be "promising wildly and outbidding" as Sartori (1971, 35) puts it. In the newest i.e. the third Finnish parliamentary era the opposition parties can all be categorised being responsible opposition parties. Basically any of the PPGs could have been in government responsibility. In the preceding second era, at least two right-wing parties (including the National Coalition KOK) were in permanent opposition for some decades, however these parties still acted more or less as responsible oppositions. During this era, the strong left-right dimension limited the number of possible government coalitions, however the gradual disintegration of the dimension opened up new avenues. According to Nousiainen (2000; 2006, 297) after the 1999 parliamentary elections any majority coalition could have been possible. Ideological restrictions were not obstacles any more. In fact, probably the same would hold for at least two previous elections as well. As Finland is not a two-party system the opposition cannot represent a credible alternative government, but its main task remains to criticise the government and to some extent scrutinise and check governmental actions and policies. Deviating from Finland the Scandinavian neighbours have a long tradition of minority governments, which often need support from opposition parties in order to pass legislation. Hence, the supporting parties might be in "opposition" in varying degrees (Christensen and Damgaard 2008). Summing up the previous, opposition PPGs in Eduskunta will present policy alternatives and hence will distinguish itself from the governing coalition.

Nousiainen (2006) characterises the current role and choice space of the opposition: as the Finnish parliamentary system is currently a true majority one the opposition groups can be regarded as powerless spectators while the governmental parties negotiate and decide upon major political issues. The most important political decision making and negotiation arena is the cabinet negotiations and especially the writing of the government programme. This process lasts few weeks after the elections, however, the most important policy formulation

takes place during this short period of time. The most visible arena the opposition is left with is the plenary hall (Ollila 2007). During plenary sessions, the opposition has the opportunity to criticise the actions and policies of the government and provide their own alternatives to government bills by votes. Also parliamentary interpellations as well as government reports and announcements (which can include the votes of confidence regarding a single minister or the whole cabinet) are handled in plenary sessions.

The role of the opposition has not always been as limited. During the second parliamentary era, the postponement rule and especially two-thirds qualified majority requirement guaranteed the opposition, if united, the possibility to delay an ordinary law proposal to the next annual parliamentary session when it had to be adopted unchanged in order to become a law. Should this happen it would have been a defeat for the government. Sometimes only the threat to use the postponement possibility guaranteed the united opposition (minimum of 67 MPs) negotiation leverage. The current "true" majority system has been seen being established along with the 1992 partial constitutional reform when the postponement rule and the qualified majority requirement regarding ordinary legislation were removed from the old 1906 Constitution and the 1928 Parliamentary Act. Previous partial reforms in the 1980s to the 1928 Parliamentary Act had changed the postponement of a law proposal only to the next annual parliamentary session instead of postponing it to the next electoral term (Helander 1990; Jyränki 2006, 102-105). The old regulations can be seen as being rather efficient as laws were very rarely postponed. According to Helander (1990, 57) on average only 1.5 law proposals were postponed yearly during 1917-1986.

Modern Finnish society in general does not resemble much of what it was during the 1950s, 1960s or even the 1970s. In the past, the class cleavages were substantially wider. Since World War II Finland gradually became a very wealthy country and at the same time the class cleavages became much thinner. The vast majority of the Finnish population can be seen belonging to the upper or lower middle class. At the same time also political parties have changed and their political programmes have significantly converged (Paloheimo and Raunio 2008; Paloheimo 2008). Parties have adopted catch-all strategies which aim at maximising votes in general elections. Paloheimo and Raunio (2008) call modern parties "election parties" (*vaalipuolue*). This progress continued more or less undisturbed for decades. Only after the 2011 elections the party system experienced a major shock. The True Finns (PS), a radical populist protest party, won the elections and suddenly became the third largest party in Eduskunta.

Compared with the second parliamentary era the governing coalition can nowadays be regarded as a true bloc. Instead of the short lived cabinets of the second era, which Nousiainen (2000; 2006, 294) characterises as politically fast pulsing, overall rather unorganised and only weakly predictable, the governments have remained in power for the whole electoral periods since 1983. Now the government programmes are long and detailed thus requiring a strong commitment of the coalition partners. In the 1970s, the government programmes were few pages in length while the current programme of the Katainen government contains over 100 pages and is the result of intense negotiations after the 2011 elections. The coalition partners also sign a set of written rules guiding their behaviour in the parliament. Hence, inside the coalition the PPGs or MPs are not allowed much room to move and the bloc acts almost in a unitary manner.

The opposition, in turn, is not systematically coordinated. Its position in the parliament is hard and the main public working arena is the plenary hall. The role of the opposition is narrowed to criticise the actions of the government in speeches and providing alternatives to government bills (creating votes). Chances having an effect on major political decisions or strategies are virtually non-existent. In order to predict how the opposition parties vote we shall turn into the basic framework of PPG strategies in parliamentary systems. Accordingly, PPGs can adopt three main

strategies: first, an office-seeking strategy, second, a policy-seeking strategy, and finally, a profile-seeking (vote-seeking) strategy. The strategies are not mutually exclusive, but rather complimentary. (Arter 2006, 181-182.) These strategies lead us to the following rank order prediction of opposition PPGs.

The largest PPGs (KESK, KOK, SDP and PS since 2011), when in opposition, will adopt mainly an office-seeking strategy. These parties will remain in moderate opposition as they do not risk the chance of being considered too far from the mainstream policy consensus. In opposition they will not irritate the governing coalition too much as this might have negative consequences in future government formation.

Other, smaller PPGs, while also interested in stepping into office, have lower chances of succeeding. These parties have a stronger need to appeal to their voters and thus need to exhibit more profile-seeking strategies when in opposition. Therefore the distances of the smaller PPGs from the government majority are likely to be greater than the above large parties.

The hardest (but not necessarily extreme) opposition is likely to consist of (small) radical parties (Arter, 2006, 182). In Finland these would include the radical populist PS and possibly VAS, which is the leftmost PPG regarding the left-right dimension. These parties probably exhibit the most active policy-seeking strategy.

Finally, in the following section the voting patterns are studied per parliamentary year as well. When elections approach in the last year of an electoral term, parties need to stand out. With respect to plenary voting opposition parties can act in two ways: vote more frequently with the government or against it. The former would indicate a party getting closer to the mainstream political consensus presenting itself as a viable coalition partner. The latter would indicate a party presenting itself as a true alternative to the governing coalition. Both strategies would be carried out in order to attract voters. However, as plenary votes are mostly a product of opposition activity and opposition parties support their own initiatives, intuitively it should be the case that opposition parties move apart from the government during the last year of an electoral period.

Data and Analyses

The applied data is collected by Pajala and Jakulin (2012) and include detailed information about all 12269 plenary votes taken during 1991-2010 parliamentary years. Pajala (2013) has gathered 1077 votes for the 2011 and 2012 parliamentary years. Roughly half of the votes are budget amendment votes. These votes take place in December when Eduskunta decides upon the state budget for the next fiscal year. For more details on the votes see Pajala (2006). As I shall consider aggregate level votes instead of individual MP vote decisions, two definitions are needed for the analyses below: first, the voting choice of a PPG is the one supported by the majority of the PPGs members. Consequently, if the majority of the members of a PPG voted “yes” then the voting choice of the whole PPG is also “yes”. Otherwise the PPGs voting choice is “no”. I shall not consider abstentions or absent MPs. Second and likewise, the voting choice of the government is the one supported by the majority of the government coalition MPs. One person groups have been disregarded. For example, the True Finns exist only since 2003 even though the party had one MP (Raimo Vistbacka) during 1995-2002.

Government-Opposition voting per parliamentary year

Comparing PPG majorities with government majorities over plenary votes in a parliamentary year let us see in relative terms how often a PPG cooperates with the government. Table 1 shows the results in columns 3-12. The second column indicates the number of plenary votes in the parliamentary year and the third column shows the share of votes where the government groups were not in

complete unison. As can be seen the government groups have nearly always (in well over 90 percent of the votes) been in complete unison. On average only some 5 percent of the votes are such that one or more government groups voted against the government majority. Since 2007 the disunity of the government has been less than 1 percent and during the past two parliamentary years the cabinet has been in complete unison. In this sense the last six years in Table 1 deviate from preceding times. During 1994 and 2002 cabinet disunity is exceptionally high: regarding the former year the Christian Democrats (KD) resigned from the cabinet, as did the Green League (VIHR) regarding the latter year 2002. Also in 1996 the government disunity is rather high as in 12.4 percent of the votes the government coalition was not in complete unison. While no obvious reason for this phenomenon is apparent the disunity can be seen throughout the Lipponen II government (1999-2002) coalition, however the SDP seems to toe the government line better than others. The same applies to 2002a, however this time it is an election year. In the other columns of Table 1 we can see the cooperation scores. The bold and underline style government groups deviate clearly from the opposition groups as their cooperation scores are always very close to the maximum value 100. Once again the change in 2007 and onwards is clear as the maximum value appears more often than not in the cabinet PPG cells. Resignation from the cabinet substantially lowers the cooperation scores as can be seen in the cases of KD and VIHR in rows 1994b and 2002b, respectively.

At least as interesting are the opposition PPGs cooperation scores. An extreme opposition group, which would have cooperation score zero does not exist in Table 1, however, after the 2011 parliamentary elections the True Finns (PS) were nearly there in 2011 when their score was only 2.0 out of 100. Indeed, the hardest opposition politics has been exercised by the PS, especially after the 2007 elections. Also Left-wing Alliance VAS (when in opposition) has shown similar behaviour, most visibly during the 2007-2010 term. The agreement score of the KD has been on the rise throughout their opposition period and was already over 50 in 2010. However, the most moderate group has been KOK during 2003-2006. Well over 50 percent of the votes were such that the majority of KOK MPs voted in line with the government. For other times the same holds for the Young Finns (NUORS) and to some extent also VIHR. Whenever one of the largest groups (SDP, KESK or KOK) was in opposition, the PPG exercised rather modest voting behaviour against the government, especially in the later years. A notable exception is PS during the last parliamentary term: PS is now the third largest group; however it is almost an extreme opposition party. Only the Swedish People's Party (SFP) has been continuously in the cabinet. An interesting detail is a cycle where opposition parties tend to get closer to government during the last year of an electoral term. This observation is against the prediction stated above.

Nyholm (1961, 124-125) defines two aspects with respect to matters processed in Eduskunta. First, there are matters for which the technical contents are very important. Second, there are matters for which the political significance is high. Nyholm (1961, 124) continues to propose a dimension where one extreme would denote matters of pure technical interest. In the middle are matters with rather balanced political and technical importance. In the other extreme are matters of utmost political importance. These are votes of confidence such as parliamentary interpellations, government reports and announcements. Nyholm (1961) observed that PPGs voting unity is higher in the votes of confidence as did Pajala (2010, 14-15) regarding the current data. Keeping in mind the results in Table 1 the PPGs seem to approach the vast majority of the votes considering the technical contents of the proposals. It would seem that the political importance of the votes is not very high as otherwise the scores in Table 1 would be lower than they appear. Following the idea of Nyholm (1961) Pajala (2011) separated and analysed the votes of confidence. The hypothesis was that compared with the results in Table 1 the government groups should now show higher agreement scores and the opposition groups lower. While the prediction for the former was correct the latter

groups did not show lower scores, but in some cases even higher. The PPGs internal voting unity is higher regarding votes of confidence, however the opposition groups do not vote more often against the government in these votes as one might have assumed.

Table 1. Government Groups' voting unity and shares (%) of plenary votes during 1991-2012, where other PPGs voted with the government majority

| <i>Year</i> | <i>Vot.</i> | <i>Gov</i> | <i>SDP</i> | <i>KES K</i> | <i>KO K</i> | <i>VIH R</i> | <i>SFP</i> | <i>KD</i> | <i>VAS</i> | <i>PS</i> | <i>VR</i> | <i>VAR</i> | <i>NU OR S</i> | <i>SM P</i> |
|-------------|-------------|------------|------------|------------------|-----------------|------------------|------------|-----------|------------|-----------|-----------|------------|------------------------|-----------------|
| 1991 | 621 | 2,6 | 51,2 | 99,8 | 100,0 | 40,6 | 98,9 | 98,4 | 13,2 | | | | | 34,1 |
| 1992 | 834 | 4,9 | 26,5 | 99,6 | 99,4 | 26,1 | 98,3 | 97,2 | 17,4 | | | | | 24,1 |
| 1993 | 897 | 6,5 | 28,8 | 98,6 | 99,0 | 25,4 | 97,1 | 97,8 | 16,6 | | | | | 17,2 |
| 1994a | 179 | 12,8 | 22,9 | 96,1 | 98,3 | 25,1 | 95,5 | 92,2 | 19,0 | | | | | 32,4 |
| 1994b | 795 | 5,0 | 46,2 | 97,5 | 98,6 | 32,1 | 98,9 | 55,0 | 21,6 | | | | | 28,3 |
| 1995 | 273 | 1,8 | 100,0 | 19,4 | 100,0 | 98,5 | 100,0 | 16,5 | 99,6 | | | 27,1 | 52,0 | |
| 1996 | 315 | 12,4 | 98,1 | 24,8 | 95,6 | 95,2 | 93,0 | 26,3 | 97,5 | | | 48,9 | 53,3 | |
| 1997 | 279 | 6,1 | 97,1 | 28,3 | 99,3 | 96,8 | 99,3 | 25,1 | 97,1 | | | 54,8 | 50,9 | |
| 1998 | 372 | 7,5 | 98,7 | 34,7 | 98,9 | 95,2 | 97,8 | 26,3 | 96,8 | | | 58,1 | 62,4 | |
| 1999 | 249 | 4,0 | 98,4 | 45,8 | 99,2 | 98,4 | 98,8 | 31,3 | 98,0 | | | | | |
| 2000 | 253 | 5,9 | 98,0 | 34,0 | 98,8 | 95,7 | 98,4 | 20,9 | 96,0 | | | | | |
| 2001 | 271 | 5,9 | 99,3 | 36,9 | 99,3 | 97,8 | 99,3 | 30,6 | 97,4 | | | | | |
| 2002a | 25 | 16,0 | 100,0 | 24,0 | 96,0 | 84,0 | 92,0 | 24,0 | 96,0 | | | | | |
| 2002b | 456 | 3,7 | 98,7 | 48,7 | 99,3 | 61,4 | 98,9 | 37,7 | 97,6 | | | | | |
| 2003 | 491 | 2,9 | 98,8 | 100,0 | 68,2 | 51,9 | 98,4 | 45,6 | 25,7 | 15,7 | | | | |
| 2004 | 723 | 4,3 | 97,9 | 99,7 | 66,0 | 52,6 | 98,1 | 47,7 | 24,6 | 22,3 | | | | |
| 2005 | 815 | 1,3 | 99,8 | 100,0 | 56,8 | 39,8 | 98,9 | 37,8 | 14,7 | 14,8 | | | | |
| 2006 | 1002 | 2,0 | 99,2 | 99,8 | 64,5 | 43,1 | 99,0 | 37,7 | 11,7 | 10,9 | | | | |
| 2007 | 668 | 0,2 | 65,6 | 100 | 99,9 | 99,9 | 100 | 51,5 | 4,2 | 9,6 | | | | |
| 2008 | 722 | 0,1 | 49,7 | 100 | 100 | 99,8 | 100 | 48,9 | 4,2 | 9,0 | | | | |
| 2009 | 924 | 0,1 | 50,3 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 99,9 | 49,6 | 4,5 | 8,5 | | | | |
| 2010 | 1099 | 0,9 | 57,6 | 99,7 | 99,8 | 99,5 | 99,9 | 54,8 | 8,2 | 7,6 | | | | |
| 2011 | 448 | 0 | 100 | 62,1 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 99,8 | 99,8 | 2,0 | 9,8 | | | |
| 2012 | 629 | 0 | 100 | 60,3 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 9,2 | 8,3 | | | |

Notes: *Vot*: number of plenary votes; *Gov*: Share (%) of votes, in which the government coalition did not vote complete unison; 1994b and 2002b: changes in government composition; party abbreviations not in text: *VR* and *VAR* are small defected factions from *VAS*, The Finnish Rural Party *SMP* is the predecessor of *PS*; PPGs in governments are bolded and underlined.

Source: Pajala and Jakulin (2012) and own computations.

Turning further into the opposition results in Table 2 provide us with an understanding how united the opposition PPGs are in plenary votes. The most important finding is the large variance in how many groups (group majorities) voted against the government. The range is from all opposition parties down to no opposition parties. In the latter case, the votes were the result of proposals by only one MP or a minority of MPs from one or more opposition groups. Votes like these appeared especially during the Lipponen government (1999-2002) after which they seem to have disappeared almost completely. Why this is the case remains an open question. During the Aho (1991-1994) and Lipponen II governments the most frequent case was the whole opposition voting against the government. The number of opposition groups is at a minimum during the Lipponen II (*KESK*, *KD*) and Katainen (*KESK*, *PS*, *VR*) governments yet only in roughly half of the votes the opposition has been united. Preceding the Katainen administration (2011-2012) *KESK* lost the elections while *PS* was the winner. Both parties ended up in the opposition. Apparently *KESK* lost votes especially to *PS* which would explain the reluctance of *KESK* to cooperate with *PS*. Perhaps the same applies to the era of

the Lipponen II government as to some extent the KD and KESK appeal to the same voters. For other times the opposition seems to be rather evenly scattered. Since 2005 cases where one opposition group would not have been backed up by at least one other opposition group are rather seldom. Why the opposition is so scattered is probably due to the fact that votes are created as a result of proposals from opposition groups. One opposition group might be interested in some topic and sees it important or potentially advantageous to register their opinion to the plenary minutes while other opposition groups might show no interest to the matter at hand. After all, opposition in Eduskunta is not systematically coordinated.

Table 2. Shares (%) of how many opposition groups voted against the government during 1991-2012

| Year | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Σ (%) |
|-------|------|------|------|------|------|------|--------------|
| 1991 | 0,6 | 21,7 | 21,7 | 27,9 | 28,0 | | 100 |
| 1992 | 2,5 | 10,2 | 14,3 | 24,9 | 48,1 | | 100 |
| 1993 | 2,2 | 9,7 | 14,8 | 20,3 | 53,0 | | 100 |
| 1994a | 1,7 | 14,0 | 11,7 | 27,4 | 45,3 | | 100 |
| 1994b | 2,5 | 8,2 | 21,0 | 25,8 | 23,3 | 19,2 | 100 |
| 1995 | 1,5 | 12,8 | 18,7 | 33,3 | 33,7 | | 100 |
| 1996 | 4,4 | 18,7 | 21,9 | 35,6 | 19,4 | | 100 |
| 1997 | 7,2 | 18,6 | 19,4 | 35,8 | 19,0 | | 100 |
| 1998 | 9,9 | 19,4 | 23,9 | 35,8 | 11,0 | | 100 |
| 1999 | 26,1 | 24,9 | 49,0 | | | | 100 |
| 2000 | 18,2 | 18,6 | 63,2 | | | | 100 |
| 2001 | 23,6 | 20,3 | 56,1 | | | | 100 |
| 2002 | 22,2 | 23,7 | 28,5 | 25,6 | | | 100 |
| 2003 | 0,4 | 18,1 | 21,0 | 24,2 | 21,2 | 15,1 | 100 |
| 2004 | 1,1 | 16,3 | 24,3 | 24,2 | 20,9 | 13,1 | 100 |
| 2005 | 0,0 | 6,6 | 22,7 | 22,3 | 24,7 | 23,7 | 100 |
| 2006 | 0,6 | 5,9 | 23,9 | 22,5 | 24,9 | 22,4 | 100 |
| 2007 | 0 | 6,7 | 40,4 | 29,8 | 23,1 | | 100 |
| 2008 | 0 | 4,4 | 34,1 | 30,3 | 31,2 | | 100 |
| 2009 | 0 | 5,5 | 34,8 | 26,7 | 32,9 | | 100 |
| 2010 | 0,2 | 6,9 | 40,3 | 26,1 | 26,5 | | 100 |
| 2011 | 0 | 7,6 | 58,7 | 33,7 | | | 100 |
| 2012 | 0,1 | 8,7 | 59,8 | 31,3 | | | 100 |

Notes: For example in 1991 four opposition groups voted against the government in 28 percent of the votes; 1994a: KD in government; 1994b: KD not in government. Source: Pajala and Jakulin (2012) and own computations.

Government-Opposition voting per electoral term

So far we know the opposition groups are voting against the government with varying intensities. There are no extreme opposition groups which would always vote with or against the government. This is hardly surprising as there are no anti-establishment parties in Eduskunta; moreover, minority governments (with their possible support parties) have not existed for decades. In what follows the analysis focuses on electoral terms instead of single parliamentary years in order to provide a more general picture on the cooperation among the PPGs. Government majority, as previously, is assumed to be an 'actor' among the party groups. For the analyses, I shall use a variation of a measure of group cooperation (or group distance) defined by Markku Laakso (1972a; 1972b). This measure has a very intuitive vector presentation. Basically, Laakso's measure is a more sophisticated version of the previous cooperation measure of Rice (1928). The measures are, however, not comparable and Rice's measure does not have a vector interpretation (Laakso 1972a, 9). From previous Finnish literature only Laakso's results can and will be compared with the ones presented below.

The Rice (1928) and Laakso (1972a) measures are basically just simple measures of distance between two voters over some set of votes. First we assume the voting choice of a PPG being the choice favoured by the majority of the PPG. The majority assumption is in our view rather justified as the voting minorities of the

PPGs, if any, are typically marginal (Pajala 2010). Next we assume the voting choice of the government being the one supported by the majority of government groups' MPs. There are four possibilities how two groups A_i and A_j can vote: Both can vote "yes" (YY) or "no" (NN) or the groups can disagree (YN or NY). So, the more there are YY and NN cases thus lowering the number of YN and NY cases the closer the groups are. The difference between the voters' cooperation and disagreement is then divided by the number of votes V . Formally, Laakso's distance C in a vote can be obtained as

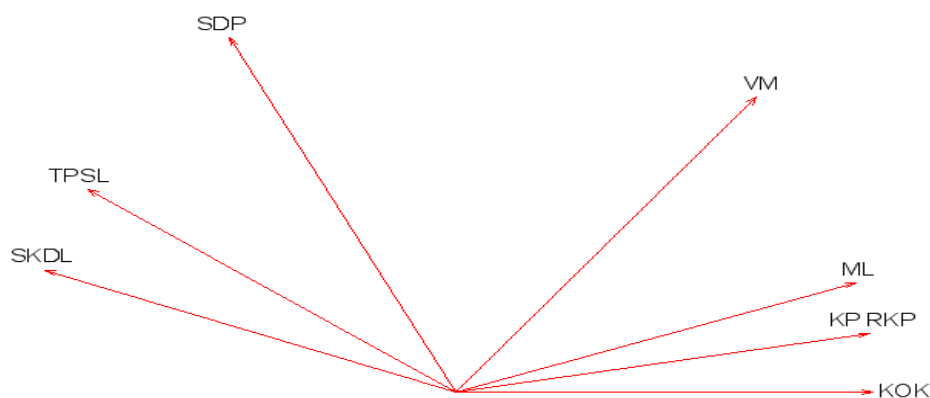
$$C_{A_i A_j} = \frac{(YY + NN) - (YN + NY)}{V},$$

where index $C_{A_i A_j}$ can have values in the range of $[-1, 1]$. Value 1 denotes complete agreement and -1 complete disagreement between two voters over the votes. At zero the voters (dis)agree on half of the votes. The computation over the votes will result in a distance matrix. The closeness or cooperation between two groups can now be illustrated geometrically by representing the groups as unit vectors and computing the angle between the vectors by using the values of $C_{A_i A_j}$. If we consider the PPGs as vectors in a space, their relation to the government majority can be visualised in the upper half of a unit circle (the length of the vectors is irrelevant). The government vector is fixed to the rightmost position i.e. the positive x-axis. Starting from origin the end point of the government vector is thus at (1, 0). A PPG vector always disagreeing with the government and having an index value of -1 would be mirroring the government in the negative x-axis ending at (-1, 0). A voter having an index value of 0 would be (dis)agreeing with the government in exactly half of the votes having a vector equal to the positive y-axis ending at (0, 1). The index value is simply the angle between the unit vectors. In Laakso's original visualisation, the index value is the projection of a voter's vector to the x-axis. Now, it is of course a matter of taste which version is applied. We like to apply the simpler visualisation and highlight the closeness of the government parties by using the angle as the index value. The projection version diagrams would instead boost the differences with respect to the government parties due to the underlying non-linear trigonometry. For details on Laakso's original method see Pajala (2011). As an example consider groups KOK and The Agrarian Union (ML) in Figure 1 having $C_{A_i A_j}$ index value 0.83. Converted to degrees we have $90 \cdot 0.83 = 75$ degrees (to the right of y-axis). Likewise KOK and SDP have $C_{A_i A_j} = -0.36$ in Figure 1. Converted to degrees we get $90 \cdot -0.36 = -32$ degrees (to the left of the zero point i.e. the y-axis).

Instead of having the government majority as the rightmost voter Laakso (1972a; 1972b) put KOK as the rightmost vector. The choice was quite understandable as at the 1960s KOK was considered the right-wing extreme in the technical sense that there was nothing to the right of KOK. Thus, all other groups could be measured against KOK. This resulted in a sort of pre-defined left-right dimension. In order to shed light to the second parliamentary era of Finland we turn to the three governments analysed in Laakso (1972a). The oldest of these was Lehto's caretaker cabinet followed by Virolainen's (KOK, ML, SFP, KP) right-wing coalition and finally the subsequent Paasio government (SDP, SKDL, KESK) which was a centre-left-wing coalition. Figure 1 shows the political landscape during the Virolainen government 1964-1966. The basic party setting and left-right dimension is almost identical regarding all three previous governments as it is in Figure 1. Although Lehto's preceding caretaker cabinet was not responsible politically, practically the only difference with regard to Figure 1 was ML and VM being close together roughly where ML is in Figure 1. During the Paasio government, the left-wing coalition partners (SDP, SKDL) together with TPSL were close together roughly where TPSL is in Figure 1. Also KESK was close to the left-wing coalition

partners being only a hair to the right. The right-wing parties considerably resemble the respective setting in Figure 1. The movement of ML from one side of the y-axis to the other was the largest PPG movement during these three governments of the second parliamentary era. All in all the division into socialist and non-socialist parties was very clear as Figure 1 shows.

Figure 1. Government and opposition voting during the Virolainen government (1964–1966)



Notes: Party abbreviations not in text: TPSL = Social Democratic League, VM = Liberal League, KP = Liberal People's Party.

Source: Nyholm (1972a) and own computations.

Moving to the third parliamentary era Figures 2a-2f shows the political landscapes of the Aho (1991-1994), Lipponen I (1995-1998), Lipponen II (1999-2002), Vanhanen I (2003-2006) and Vanhanen II / Kiviniemi (2007-2010) governments and the first two years of the Katainen (2011-2012) governments. The government majority (GOV) is always located as the rightmost vector. Compared with Laakso's (1972a, 1972b) result the most obvious difference is the closeness among the government groups: with respect to every government in the third era the coalition partners virtually show a unitary voting behaviour regardless of the composition of the government. The only old cabinet which resembles the modern ones is at some extent Paasio's centre-left coalition. Nowadays the vectors of the coalition partners are hardly distinguishable and opposition groups are very clearly apart from the cabinets. Compared with the previous decades another important difference is that the left-right dimension cannot be seen any more. The government is a separate tight cluster and the opposition parties differ from the cabinet in a more or less random order. In Figures 2a-2f, the y-axis (not drawn in the Figures) for which the cooperation measure is zero can be interpreted as a divider: groups to the right of the positive y-axis are more likely to vote with the government than against it and on the left side of the y-axis the groups are more likely to oppose the government than to vote with it. The PPGs seem to form three clusters: one is the cabinet on the right. Second is the moderate opposition. A good example is KD, VIHR and KOK in Figure 2d, or KD and SDP in Figure 2e. It appears every government has at least one opposition party which is more likely to vote with it than against it. Examples are KOK in Figure 2d and KESK in Figure 2f. The third cluster are the less moderate or hard opposition. Examples are PS and VAS in Figures 2d-2e. The hardest opposition is also the most recent as is shown in Figure 2f (VR and PS). In fact, the opposition has become harder over time in Figures 2d-2f. Only if we set the resigned KD (resignation took place almost at the end of the 1991-1994 electoral period) aside in Figure 2a the political landscape during the Aho government is perhaps the most polarised when compared with the other times. The Christian Democrats resigned from the cabinet in 1994 and the Greens of

VIHR in 2002. The effects can be seen in Figures 2a and 2c. After the resignations both parties deviate significantly from the cabinet, but only became moderate opposition parties. During every government, the opposition is rather scattered lending support to the observation that the opposition is not systematically organised.

Figure 2a. Government and opposition voting during the Aho government (1991-1994)

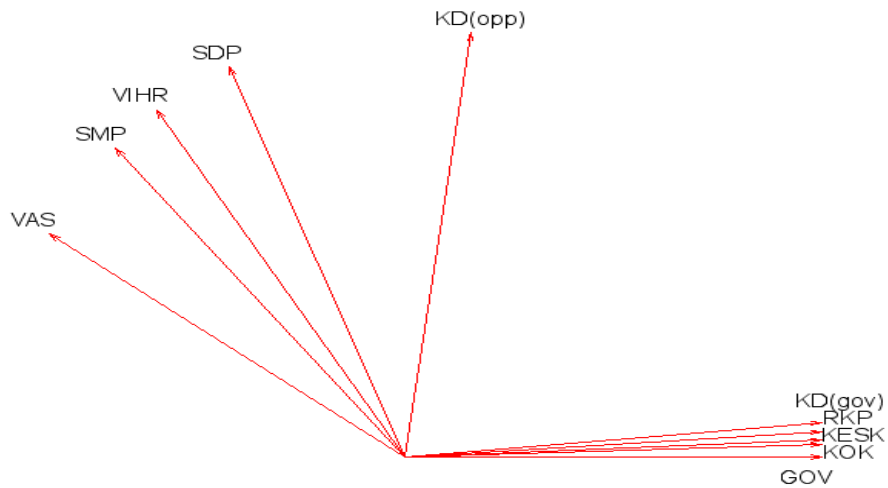


Figure 2b. Government and opposition voting during the Lipponen I government (1995-1998)

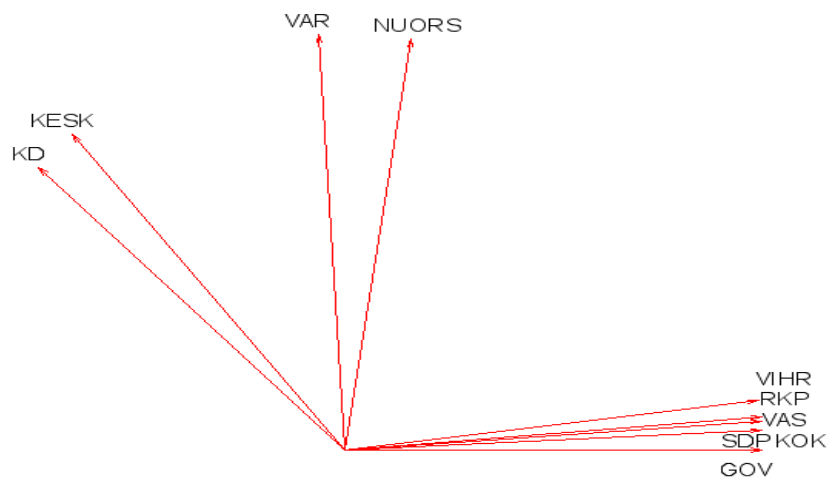


Figure 2c. Government and opposition voting during the Lipponen II government (1999–2002)

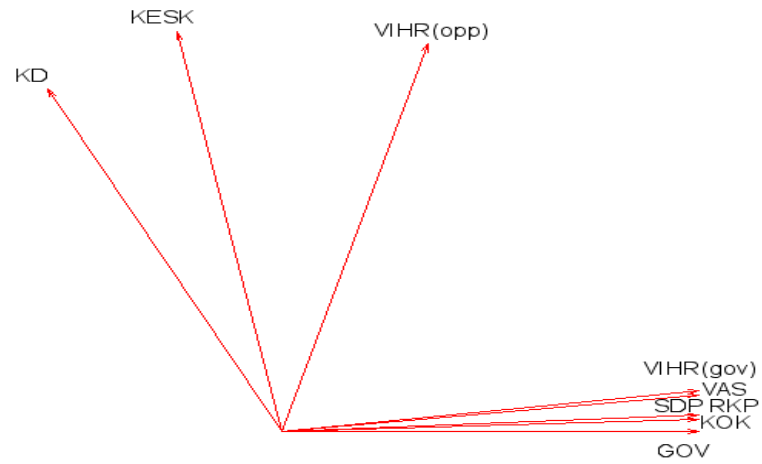


Figure 2d. Government and opposition voting during the Vanhanen I government (2003–2006)

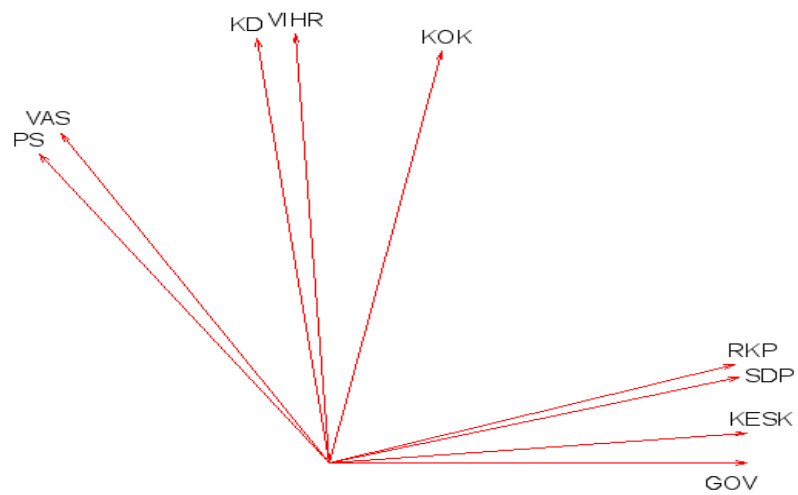
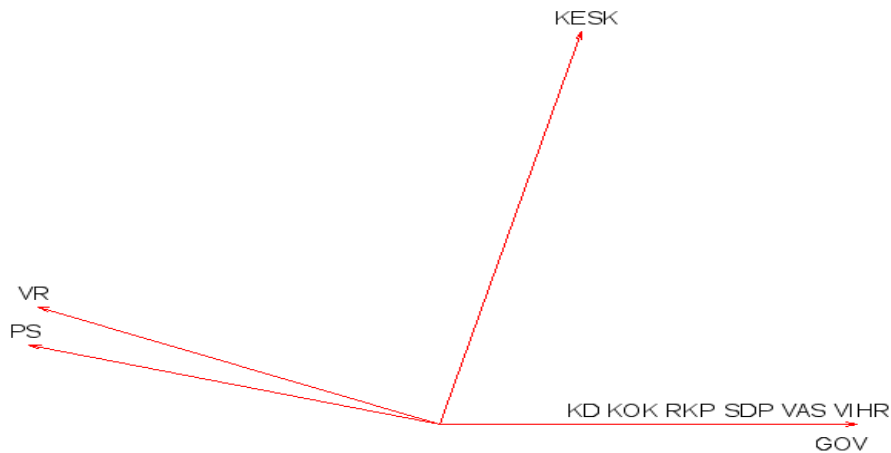


Figure 2e. Government and opposition voting during the Vanhanen II and Kiviniemi governments (2007-2010)



Figure 2f. Government and opposition voting during the first two years of the Katainen government (2011-2012)



Discussion

To recap, the purpose of the paper was to measure cooperation among PPGs in plenary votes. More precisely, the idea was to measure cooperation between government and opposition groups using information obtained from the comparison of group majorities to government majorities over parliamentary votes during 1991-2012. By comparing these results with previous literature the aim was to map out the patterns of PPG cooperation in Finland since World War II.

Two main results could be found in the previous literature published in the late 1960s and early 1970s. First, plenary votes divided the government groups and the opposition groups into two separate and distinctive camps. Second, the votes also showed the PPGs following the traditional left-right dimension. During the 1950s nearly half of the plenary votes were of type that pitted Communists (SKDL) against others (Nyholm 1961, 134). The previous studies provide us with a rough picture on parliamentary dynamics until the mid-1980s. Using the terminology of Nousiainen (2000; 2006) the previous literature is about the second parliamentary era of Finland. In comparison the above results provide us with a picture on the subsequent third era of majority parliamentarism. The most important result has continued to be the clear division into government and opposition groups as in

previous times. Moreover it is now the case that government groups are a bloc voting virtually always in a unitary manner. The difference with the second era governments is clearly observable. Also, during the second parliamentary era the polarisation of the groups was rather high. The opposition groups were very far from the governing coalition. It seems there was less polarisation at the beginning of the third era, though since 2007 the polarisation seems to have been on the rise. A second important result was the absence of the left-right dimension with respect to the PPGs. This result is not entirely unexpected as for example the Lipponen I and II 'rainbow' coalitions practically included the whole dimension while KESK was in opposition. The same of course applies to Katainen's 'six pack' coalition in office at the time of writing.

Looking at the plenary votes it seems that ideological differences or variety among the political parties and hence also the PPGs have almost entirely disappeared. The former 'ideological' opposition has been replaced with its modern version which consists of PPGs that were left out of the coalition in the government negotiations. Exacerbating the situation we could perhaps talk about a more or less 'technical' opposition. This, however, applies also to the governments as ideology was a strong factor in government formulation after World War II and almost up to the 1990s. In those days, the lifespan of a government was considerably shorter in comparison with the modern ones lasting for the whole four-year electoral period. During the second parliamentary era, the parties were rather inflexible ideologically and politically causing frequent government crisis. Since the 1990s basically any party combination including two out of the three (or four) largest parties has proven to be able to work. Ideological issues have not been the main obstacles. The best examples of this are the oversized coalitions of Lipponen and Katainen.

The rank order prediction of opposition PPGs was rather successful. The largest PPGs (KESK, KOK, SDP), while in opposition, were found in the modest opposition and sometimes voted more likely with the government than against it. An exception to this was PS in the current electoral period. After the 2011 elections the party became the third largest PPG, however, adopted a completely different voting pattern being almost in extreme opposition. This is a new feature in Finnish politics. As a small party, PS was predicted to be in the hardest opposition together with VAS, which appeared to be the case. Finally, other small parties were found to be farther away from the government as the above three large ones, as expected. Against the somewhat intuitive prediction, the opposition parties moved closer to governments during the last year of an electoral period. Details of this rather interesting observation are left for further research.

What was not visible any more in the latest parliamentary era was the left-right dimension which was still so obvious in the preceding times. It is of course the case that above I have specifically analysed the government-opposition dimension. However, according to the scaling results in Pajala (2012) this dimension has the most explanatory power with respect to plenary voting. Higher dimensions were hardly interpretable and at the best showed only weak traces of a possible left-right dimension. It is of course possible to order the parties from left to right and several data sources provide estimations for such positions. Still, the difficulty is that only VAS is unanimously seen as the leftmost party, but for the rest there is no consensus. A further thing is that government coalitions are not comprised of ideologically adjacent parties in the left-right sense. This is probably the main reason why the left-right dimension is nowadays virtually non-existent regarding plenary voting. As a concluding statement, this study has shown that (with the possible exception of the most recent electoral term) Eduskunta is not at all the divided and extremely polarised public arena that one might suspect by following the arguments in plenary popularised by the mass media.

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Ceausescu's population policy: a moral or an economic choice between compulsory and voluntary incentivised motherhood?

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to explain why, in 1966, the Romanian leadership adopted a wholly restrictive pronatalist policy, based on the strict limitation of abortion, instead of one based on socioeconomic incentives to families, as suggested by technocrats. Previous literature shows disagreement on whether the choice was motivated by moralistic or economic considerations. In order to find an answer to this question, hundreds of pages of archival material unpublished so far have been analysed, including the minutes of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, statistics, documents identified in the Ministry of Health Archive, and the technical reports that were on the table at the time of the decision. The conclusion of this study, drawn on the basis of these documents, indicates that at the time of 1966, regardless of the suggestions of the technocrats, a decision had already been taken by Ceausescu himself. This decision was influenced directly by economic considerations, namely the wish to obtain the maximum pronatalist effect at a minimum budgetary cost.

JEL Classification

J10; J13; J18

Keywords

Pronatalist policy; abortion; Romanian Communist Party; birth rate