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Why Minority Governments in Spain?
How the Party System Undermines
Investiture Rules

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9.1. INTRODUCTION

Spain, it has been suggested, represents a deviant case of the expected rela-
tionship between investiture and minority governments: minority govern-
ments are not uncommon despite the presence of a formal parliamentary
investiture hurdle (Bergman 1993). How minority governments form in Spain,
despite the existence of an investiture requirement based on an absolute
majority decision rule, remains a largely unexplored puzzle (however, see
further Reniu 2002 and Field and Botti 2013).

The designers of Spain’s current constitution clearly wished for strong and
stable governments (Van Biezen and Hopkin 2005). This preference motivated
the details of institutional design which, as this chapter will demonstrate,
ultimately facilitates the emergence and maintenance of minority adminis-
trations. For example, despite the requirement for an absolute majority in the
first round of parliamentary investiture, failure to select a government leads to a
second round where the support of a simple majority suffices for a government
to be invested.1 The rules were designed to protect governments, either major-
ity or minority, from instability and fragmentation. Moreover, the multi-level
party system (national parties operating alongside regional parties), allows
minority governments composed of a national party to win investiture votes
by buying the support of regional parties, in return for rewards which have

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1 Of eleven governments formed between March 1979 and December 2011, only two (Calvo-
Sotel in 1981 and Zapatero II in 2008) were invested in the second round of voting. All other
governments were invested with the support of an absolute majority of parliament.
included policy influence, greater decentralization, pork-barrel spending, and support for government formation at the regional level.

After presenting the rules governing the vote of investiture, the chapter addresses the question of how investiture has worked in practice. In particular, it focuses on how the custom of building informal coalitions between the large parties and regional parties has allowed the emergence of relatively stable governments.

9.2. THE POLITICAL SYSTEM

Spain is a bicameral parliamentary democracy with the King as Head of State. The Head of Government is invested in the lower house (Congress of Deputies). The upper house (Senate) is the chamber of territorial representation and is constitutionally weak; its only significant powers relate to the right to amend and delay proposed legislation. Typically, there have been coinciding majorities in both houses, reducing further the political significance of the Senate.2

The long-lasting problem of territorial rights,3 unresolved by the constitution and by the lack of political power assigned to the Senate, has in turn translated into a multi-level party system that anchors a two-part structure: national parties compete on the left–right axis and regional parties competing along the nationalism axis (Brancati 2008).4

The electoral system is proportional. Nevertheless, because districts are relatively small, it provides a majoritarian bias that favours the two largest parties. The system punishes parties with supporters dispersed across many

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2 Although Lijphart (2012) classifies Spain as a case of medium-strong bicameralism, it is better characterized as a case of weak bicameralism. This is so, on the one hand, because of the strong constitutional asymmetry between the two chambers, and on the other hand, because the chambers have frequently experienced concurrent majorities. The fact that the Senate and the Congress of Deputies are elected by different electoral systems (incongruence) has not led voters to split the ticket.

3 The territorial structure of the State has been a source of contention, as some communities make claims for further political recognition of autonomy derived from emphasizing differences such as having their own language and history (cultural nationalism, as in Catalonia) or even a different ethnic origin from Spaniards (as in the Basque country). For further analysis, see Laitin, Kalyvas, and Sole (1994) and Keating (2001).

4 In agreement with Brancati (2008), regional cleavages are not directly translated into party systems unless a decentralization process offers the window of opportunity for this to take place. The decentralization process in Spain, timidly started in the Constitution of 1978, only foresaw special competencies for four ‘Autonomous Communities’ (the unit of territorial organization of the State)—Catalonia, the Basque country, Galicia, and Andalusia (and the special status of Navarra for its ‘Regimen Foral’). With the passage of time, decentralization has asymmetrically extended to the whole territory (Requejo 1996), creating a quasi-federal political system (Heller 2002).
districts, and rewards parties with regional concentrations. Some of the regional parties are sufficiently popular to gain seats in the national Congress of Deputies, and have become important actors with considerable bargaining power when minority governments have needed support in the votes of investiture. While there are many regional parties in several provinces (the electoral districts), not all gain a seat in the national Congress of Deputies. Exceptions include CiU in Catalonia, PNV in the Basque country, CC in the Canary Islands, and, less often, other minor parties (ERC, ICV, Catalonia; HB, Basque, disappeared; GA, Andalusian; currently UPyD, CHA). Some regional parties (CiU, PNV and CC) have in fact been pivotal in the investiture vote of both the centre-right PP and the centre-left PSOE, even though they never claimed portfolios in a coalition government.

9.3. THE VOTE OF INVESTITURE: GOVERNMENT FORMATION RULES

The main characteristics of the vote of investiture in Spain are provided for in the constitution, leaving many of the details to the Congress of Deputies’ Standing Orders (SOP). Investiture takes place in the Congress of Deputies, with no role at all for the Senate. Formally, the King proposes a candidate prime minister to the Congress of Deputies (Art. 62 Const.). This formal presentation of the candidate to the Congress of Deputies for the actual vote of investiture takes place after a series of contacts between the leader of the largest legislative party and the representatives of the other parties. These negotiations are extra-parliamentary, and only when these negotiations are resolved does the King present a candidate to the Congress of Deputies. Obviously, whenever a single party has secured an absolute majority of seats, contacts with other parties are limited, since the winning party can be invested with the votes of its own MPs. However, as we will discuss in Section 5, even then, the majority party typically bargains with other smaller parties.

The time frame to nominate a candidate to be prime minister is not unlimited. Article 68.6 of the constitution stipulates that the Congress of Deputies shall be constituted within twenty-five days of the general elections. Then, according to Article 99, the King, after consulting the leaders of all parliamentary parties and through the Speaker of the Congress of Deputies, nominates a prime minister.

Once a candidate is nominated, she presents herself to the plenary, outlines the proposed programme of government without any time limit (Art. 171 SOP), and formally asks for the support of the Congress of Deputies. Once this is done, one MP from each parliamentary party group has thirty minutes to
respond. The nominee may intervene as many times as she wishes (Art. 171 SOP). The MPs of the other parties may reply once for ten minutes.

After the plenary debate ends, the chamber proceeds to the investiture vote. An absolute majority of MPs is needed in order for the nominee to become prime minister (Art. 99.3 Const.). If the candidate obtains such support, the King formally appoints the prime minister. The King also names the remaining members of government upon the prime minister’s proposal (Art. 100 Const.).

If the first investiture vote is not successful, within forty-eight hours the Congress of Deputies proceeds to a second round of voting on the same nominee. Critically, the number of votes needed to be invested is lowered to a simple majority (Art. 99.3 Const.). During the debate in advance of any second round investiture vote, the nominee may intervene for ten minutes, while the representatives of each parliamentary bloc have five minutes of reply (Art. 171.5 SOP). If this second round is unsuccessful, Article 99.4 of the constitution allows for the Head of State to nominate a new candidate prime minister, with the same procedural sequence (first round, absolute majority; second round, simple majority). This process can last a maximum of two months, counted from the day when the first investiture vote was cast. If no candidate obtains support during this period of time, the King dissolves both chambers and calls for elections, in agreement with the Speaker of the Congress of Deputies (Art. 99.5 Const.). To date, this has never happened.

In addition to the above-described case of investiture following a general election, the constitution mandates an investiture vote for governments formed after any of the following events happen: loss of a confidence vote, the resignation of the prime minister, death (Art. 101 Const.), or removal from office for criminal activity or for breach of State security (Art. 102 Const.).

The confidence vote is a procedure designed for the prime minister to confirm the Congress of Deputies’ support for government. The prime minister, in agreement with the Council of Ministers, presents a vote of confidence to the Congress of Deputies (Art. 112 Const. and Art. 174 SOP). The prime minister can choose whether the confidence is placed on the whole programme of government or on a general political declaration (Art. 112 Const.). This ambiguous formulation means that a vote submitted to confirm a general declaration is actually instrumental in giving legitimacy to part of the policies that the government is sponsoring at that time, but the vote of confidence cannot be tied to a particular bill.

Procedurally, the Speaker of the Congress of Deputies first receives the petition of a confidence vote from the prime minister, then informs the ‘Junta de Portavoces’, and subsequently convokes the plenary (Art. 174 SOP). The

5 The ‘Junta de Portavoces’ is a body within the Congress of Deputies composed of the leaders of all parliamentary party groups. It is permanent throughout the term and every time it meets, it
plenary debate follows the same rules as those applying to the vote of investiture in terms of the time limits allocated for each actor, but the voting rule is simple majority. If the government loses the confidence vote, the prime minister will immediately inform the King, who then proceeds to nominate a prime minister for investiture as Article 99 of the constitution stipulates. The presence in Spain of another large party able to enter government makes the success of this procedure a real possibility. Otherwise, elections would have to be called.

There have been two votes of confidence, both of them successful for the incumbent government. In September 1980, Prime Minister Adolfo Suarez (UCD) obtained a majority of 180 (with 164 votes against). The second vote took place in April 1990, when Prime Minister Felipe Gonzalez (PSOE) received the backing of 176 MPs (with 130 voting against).

The Spanish Constitution adopts the constructive vote of no confidence. It is described as the ‘mechanism for requesting political responsibility from the government’ (Art. 113.1 Const.). Since an alternative prime minister needs to be proposed simultaneously as part of the no-confidence procedure, this mechanism combines censure and investiture in the same vote. The decision rule is absolute majority. If a constructive no-confidence proposal is successful, the government resigns and the King formally appoints the new prime minister and government (Art. 99 Const.). In regard to the timing of the procedure, the constitution specifies that when the motion is presented to the Speaker of the Congress of Deputies, it shall not be voted on until five days have elapsed. During the first two days following submission to the Speaker, additional proposals for votes of no confidence may be presented. After those two days, no more submissions are accepted (Art. 113.3 Const.).

9.4. ORIGIN AND INSTITUTIONAL EVOLUTION

Spanish constitutions during the nineteenth century were monarchic, assigning the King all powers, including the roles of Head of State and Head of Government. Formally, some separation of powers existed, for example the presence of a unicameral parliament (or, for some time, a bicameral parliament). However, the King did not need the recognition of the Congress of Deputies, which thus operated basically as a consultative body. In 1931, the Republican Constitution was instituted. The Second Republic lasted from 1931 to the outbreak of civil war in 1936—an event which ultimately led to the establishment of the Francoist authoritarian regime (1939–75).

is chaired by the Speaker of the Congress of Deputies. It may be convoked by its own initiative, by the petition of two parliamentary party groups, or by the petition of one-fifth of MPs.
Under the Republican Constitution of 1931, the Head of the Republic and the Head of Government were separately elected, and in fact they had different terms: the former six years, without possible immediate re-election for at least six years, and the latter four years. In practice, each of the two governments formed during the Republican period lasted two years. The Head of the Republic was jointly elected by the bicameral parliament (Congress of Deputies and Senate) and a number of ‘compromisarios’. These were electors—as many as there were MPs in the Congress of Deputies—chosen by universal suffrage exclusively to select the Head of the Republic. The 1931 Constitution was very specific about the requisites which candidates had to have in order to be eligible for appointment as Head of the Republic.6 Once elections produced a candidate, he had to pledge loyalty to the Republic and to the constitution before the two Chambers. The Head of the Republic was not considered formally elected until this happened (Arts. 68–72 Const.).

The Head of the Republic was titled the prime minister, and the government was composed of the prime minister, the Head of the Council of Ministers, and other ministers. The ministers were concomitantly named by the Head of the Republic on the proposal of the prime minister. The Head of the Republic could also name, on the proposal of the Head of the Council of Ministers, additional ministers without the need to assign them any portfolio. It was specifically stated that members of the Council of Ministers were to be accountable to the Congress of Deputies, with a procedure for individual votes of confidence (Art. 91 Const.). In addition, the Head of the Republic could order the resignation of ministers who had lost support in the Congress of Deputies (Art. 75 Const.). The Republican Constitution provided for an ordinary vote of no confidence and a vote of confidence.

The Spanish Republican period was characterized by great instability. The shadow of such instability explains, to a large extent, the current constitutional design. The two governments instituted in the Republican period lasted two years each (1931–3 and 1934–6). The reason for the early termination of both governments is to be found in the climate of political conflict and social unrest during this period. On the one hand, the powerful Catholic Church and the military were against the Republic as a regime. On the other hand, the agrarian trade unions were against the key policies of the government. This climate of political crisis was compounded by constant social mobilizations against the regime and the governments. Additionally, the impact of these social and political divisions in the operation of the government.

6 The positive requirements were being at least forty years old and free of prosecution. The negative requisites were more numerous: not being in the military, either active or retired; not being a priest or a believer in the Catholic belief; not being a member of a reigning monarchy.
regime was intensified by an electoral system that created incentives for two block competition (Colomer 2001).

Overall, the combination of these factors contributed to the emergence of extremely fragile governments and, eventually, to the eruption of a civil war. Constitutional designers during the 1977 Constituent Assembly had the Republican period very much in mind as they made the choices that led to the 1978 Constitution (cf. Colomer 1995). In this view, we can look at the current Spanish constitution as a pact that explicitly attempts to avoid traumas of the past and hence established a combination of rules to produce strong and stable governments.

9.5. INVESTITURE RULE IN PRACTICE: EXPLAINING MINORITY GOVERNMENTS

Given that democracy was restored relatively recently in Spain, there are only eleven observations, including the government formed in December 2011, for the analysis of parliamentary investiture. All governments have been single party, half of them minority. In most cases, the party taking office has been supported in the vote of investiture by additional parties. These parties are listed in the last column in Table 9.1, which reports details of the votes of investiture for the period 1979–2012.

In five of the ten elections held between 1976 and 2011 one party obtained more than 50 per cent of the seats in parliament (three times the PSOE, twice the PP). Interestingly, in three of these five occasions, the majority party informally bargained with regional parties for their support at the time of the investiture vote. Importantly, neither the small nor the large parties have ever wanted to form a coalition government. As a consequence, even though most investiture votes displayed the support of several parties, Spain has never experienced a coalition government in the period under study here. Moreover, all governments lasted about the same time, and have been, on average, equally successful in getting their legislative agenda passed, whether under majority or under minority legislative support (Capo 2003; Field 2008; Ajenjo and Molina 2011).

Why do regional parties support the investiture of the national government even though they do not participate in the cabinet? In the first place, they retain the flexibility that they would have lost had they entered into a formal coalition, and are able to bargain with the government on an ad hoc basis regarding the policies they care about. At the same time, they do not suffer any of the electoral punishment the national government may endure, or they may endure in their regions because they have formally supported a national party through membership of a coalition government.
Table 9.1 Votes of Investiture in Spain (1979–2012)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vote Date</th>
<th>Vote Cause</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Cabinet Formed</th>
<th>MPs Yes</th>
<th>MPs No</th>
<th>Abst.</th>
<th>Absent</th>
<th>Type Government</th>
<th>Supporting Parties</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>30/03/1979</td>
<td>General Election</td>
<td>Confirmed first round</td>
<td>Suarez</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Minority</td>
<td>Mixed Group (+1) Andalucista (+3) Coal. Democratica (+4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20/02/1981</td>
<td>Resignation of Suarez</td>
<td>Rejected first round</td>
<td>Not formed</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Not formed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23/02/1981</td>
<td>Resignation of Suarez</td>
<td>Interrupted by coup d'état</td>
<td>Not formed</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>Not formed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25/02/1981</td>
<td>Resignation of Suarez</td>
<td>Confirmed second round</td>
<td>Calvo-Sotelo</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Minority</td>
<td>Minoria Catalana (+9) Coal. Democratica (+12) Mixed Group (+14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/12/1982</td>
<td>General Election</td>
<td>Confirmed first round</td>
<td>Gonzalez I</td>
<td>207</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Majority</td>
<td>PNV (+8) Minoria Catalana (+11) Mixed Group (+1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23/07/1986</td>
<td>General Election</td>
<td>Confirmed first round</td>
<td>Gonzalez II</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Majority</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/12/1989</td>
<td>General Election</td>
<td>Confirmed first round</td>
<td>Gonzalez III</td>
<td>167*</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Minority</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9/07/1993</td>
<td>General Election</td>
<td>Confirmed first round</td>
<td>Gonzalez IV</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Minority</td>
<td>GIU (+17) PNV (+5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/05/1996</td>
<td>General Election</td>
<td>Confirmed first round</td>
<td>Aznar I</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Minority</td>
<td>CC (+6) PNV (+5) GIU (+16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26/04/2000</td>
<td>General Election</td>
<td>Confirmed first round</td>
<td>Aznar II</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>Majority</td>
<td>CC (+7) GIU (+15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16/04/2004</td>
<td>General Election</td>
<td>Confirmed first round</td>
<td>Zapatero I</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>Minority</td>
<td>ERC (+8) BNG (+2) IU (+5) CC (+3) Mixed Group (+1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09/04/2008</td>
<td>General Election</td>
<td>Not Confirmed first round</td>
<td>Not formed</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>No government formed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/04/2008</td>
<td>First Round Failure</td>
<td>Confirmed second round</td>
<td>Zapatero II</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>Minority</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20/12/2011</td>
<td>General Election</td>
<td>Confirmed first round</td>
<td>Rajoy</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>Majority</td>
<td>UPN (+1) FORO (+1)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: * The Speaker of the Congress of Deputies interpreted the SOP (Art. 20) to mean that 167 MPs constituted the necessary absolute majority for investiture for that term, together with the Junta de Portavoces. In all cases, it is assumed that the winning party (either PSOE or PP) votes en bloc for their candidate in the vote of investiture. Thus, listed in the right column are the MPs belonging to those parties who voted yes for the government formation, apart from the MPs of the large party. I have traced these votes by reading the nominal votes in the ‘Diary of Sessions’ of each vote of investiture for each observation and crossing the names of MPs voting yes with the list of party members (source: <http://www.congreso.es>, under the link ‘Members’).
Second, the regional parties’ situation in their own parliament also help explain their behaviour in the national arena. As Field (2014) argues, ‘parties that are governing at the regional level are more likely to support a minority government than regional parties who are in the opposition in their region’ (see further, Aguilera de Prat 2001; Reniu 2001; Capo 2003; Artés Caselles and Gisbert 2004). The two regional parties that have most frequently supported the large national party during investiture, the Catalan CiU and the Basque PNV, have been the governing parties in their respective regions for decades. In the Catalan case, CiU was successfully in power from 1980 until 2003. In the Basque country, the PNV governed in formal coalition with the branch of the national PSOE in that region for the period 1985–98 (Capo 2003). In this sense, bargaining with the large national parties prior to the investiture vote is part of a comprehensive strategy for these parties, which take into consideration their positions at the regional and local levels. As a matter of fact, it is at the local, as opposed to the regional or national, levels where coalition governments are often formed (Reniu 2002). Furthermore, since the electoral cycles in the regions are disconnected from the national one, regional parties face only a small risk of being electorally punished for supporting the investiture of the national government. All these factors thus explain why regional parties—especially CiU and PNV—are in an advantageous position when it comes to bargaining over investiture support. It should be noted that the bargain is also advantageous to the two large parties, because they know that nationalist parties prefer policy influence to ministerial portfolios. This clearly provides the large parties with some space to manoeuvre when making particularized offers.

What do regional parties get from their support of national parties at investiture? Given their regional base, their goals are primarily to increase their control over resources generated within, or going to, their region. For example, Aguilera de Prat (2001) shows that, because of its support of the PSOE minority governments in the investitures of 1993 and 1996, the CiU was very successful in transferring to the Catalonian governments revenue generated by the collection of direct taxes by the national government. Specifically, CiU efforts led to the doubling of direct tax revenue transferred from the national government between 1993 and 1996 (Aguilera de Prat 2001). In 1993, CiU obtained control over property tax, inheritance tax, and taxes on donations and gaming (Montero 2005), as well as control over the police force and a new health finance system (Heller 2002). The CC, the party of the Canary Islands, offers another example. In the government of 1993–6, CC gained increased local control over health services, control over EU investment funds, the recognition of uniqueness as an insular province, and a reduction of expenditure, particularly during the 1990s (see Montero 2005, 71).
province taxes (Heller 2002). The PNV fiscal achievements in this same period were significantly smaller; but this is in part because it started from a higher level of decentralization: the Basque government of the time already received 100 per cent of the tax revenue collected in the region. For this reason it focused its demands on the control of nationally provided employment funds, which it obtained partially during the subsequent minority government, 1996–2000 (Heller 2002).

Turning to the minority government of 1996–2000 (Aznar I), as a result of its support at investiture, CiU was able to gain regional authority over ports, the transfer of traffic authority, and the partial transfer of the employment office by participating in the job training policy. Moreover, it was able to reduce highway tolls in the region and to push national reform so that the military service would be abolished. The PNV was successful in eliminating civil governors and in acquiring the transfer of apprenticeship and internship programmes (related to employment claims that came from the previous legislature). These two parties were concerned with the increase in acquisition of authority transfers, while CC was focused more on resources for the Canary Islands, as shown in the two minority governments examined here (Heller 2002).

One final consideration for understanding investiture practice in Spain has to do with the central position in policy space of the two large parties (the centre-left PSOE and the centre-right PP). This advantageous position allows them to block any potential coalition among opposition parties that would not contain them. In this sense, it is not surprising that opposition parties have rarely tried to build an overarching coalition against the government in the legislative arena. In other words, the spatial advantage of the large party translates into a safe stable legislative term once it has secured investiture. In turn, the party has secured investiture precisely because the party system provides incentives for governments to be formed as single parties. There are other factors contributing to the disincentive for coordination among opposition parliamentary party groups (Ajenjo and Molina 2011). As Reniu (2001) argues, the three main regional parties have very different goals: CiU and CC are clearly policy-oriented parties, while PNV is an electoral-oriented party. Given the differences in preferences among the regional parties, they are disinclined to coordinate among themselves; instead they prefer to bargain separately. Thus the large parties can always count on a divided set of smaller parties from whom to seek support at investiture.

### 9.6. CONCLUSION

One of the most interesting aspects of the Spanish case is the fact that it possesses a formal vote of investiture requiring an absolute majority in the first
round, but relaxes the decision rule to a simple majority if a second round is required. This sequence of procedures arguably empowers the larger parties during government formation negotiations with the consequence that they have been able to form minority governments. At the same time, one or more of the smaller parties are incentivized to cooperate in the first round of investiture through the extraction of policy or other benefits from the government. In addition, the vote of confidence works under simple majority rule, but the vote of no confidence is constructive and requires absolute majority support. Clearly, these rules favour the incumbent government and suggest that the rules of government formation and termination were designed as a package (see also Sieberer, Chapter 18, this volume).

In order to be stable and durable during periods of minority government, the large parties make agreements with regional parties, particularly with CiU, PNV, and CC. Governing parties obtain stability, durability, and predominance in decision-making in exchange for policy concessions. Bargaining in the vote of investiture is a win–win situation. While governments retain some space to determine what to offer, regional parties prefer policy influence to cabinet portfolios. At the same time, the regional-based parties are not tied to all parts of the government programme, so they may support the government in some policies without enduring the electoral punishment which incumbent governments tend to face. The large parties occupy a privileged position in the policy space, being able to block any potential coalition among opposition parties, thus making a vote of no confidence improbable. In conclusion, both the procedures and the practice of investiture tend to facilitate the formation and continuity of single-party governments, which are stable.

REFERENCES


