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Abstract

After a short introduction on the genesis and development of the general consociational democracy model, the paper discusses: 1. the extent to which the Netherlands did embody the consociational democracy model as developed by Arend Lijphart at the end of the 1960s; 2. social changes since then which have caused the crumbling of the once distinct subcultures; 3. attempts at a majoritarian restructuring of the Dutch political system; 4. attacks on corporatist structures in the name of partisan) electoral primacy; 5. persisting consociational features of the system, rooted in elite political culture on the one hand, and strong traditions of autonomy for minorities on the other. A separate appendix discusses the extent to which changed social circumstances have affected the role of political parties.

Keywords

The Netherlands; Consociationalism; Subcultures; Corporatism; Political Parties

Notes

Professor Hans Daalder presented an earlier version of “The Netherlands: Still a Consociational Democracy?” on 17. October 1995 at the Institute for Advanced Studies.

Rarely has a country been put so convincingly onto the map of comparative politics as The Netherlands was by my one-time fellow countryman, now an American citizen, Arend Lijphart who derived his model of a 'consociational democracy' from it. I first read the Lijphart book entitled *The Politics of Accommodation. Pluralism and Democracy in the Netherlands* when the University of California Press asked me in the fall of 1966 to be a 'reader' of the manuscript. I well remember my exhilaration with what was clearly both an intelligent and highly original study. It was written in terms of a deviant case analysis. In fact, the word 'consociational democracy' is not even found in the index of the original 1968 edition (it is in the 1975 second edition). But already in a paper which Lijphart wrote at my suggestion for the 1967 IPSA Congress in Brussels,[1] in which he challenged the then influential typology of European politics put forward by Gabriel Almond, a more general model began to appear which Lijphart elaborated further in a *World Politics* article in 1969.[2] Before I discuss the Netherlands, let me note some general points on the consociational democracy model.[3]

First, although Lijphart became and remained by far the most influential 'founding father' of the model, similar conclusions were elaborated independently at about the same time by others, notably Gerhard Lehmbruch in his excellent small book on *Proporzdemokratie*[4] based mainly on comparative insights on Austria and Switzerland, and by Jurg Steiner who worked on his dissertation on Swiss politics in Mannheim.[5] A major factor explaining these simultaneous developments was the common rejection by these authors of the relevance of the Westminster type of government which tended normatively to overshadow the experiences of other European democracies.

Second, while the model was initially elaborated as a manner to put certain European politics on the map of comparative European politics (with Switzerland, the Netherlands, Belgium and Austria as the major examples), Lijphart was soon to expand the model also to other polities (including such different ones as pre-1976 Lebanon, Malaysia or Colombia).[6] He thus started on a road which led him later to develop the polar types of 'majoritarian' versus 'consensus government', empirically validated with the aid of two dimensions in a comparative analysis of twenty-one countries (representing twenty-two cases as France figures twice) in his highly

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[1] It was published under the title 'Typologies of Democratic Systems', as the lead-article in the first issue of *Comparative Political Studies*, vol. 1 nr. 1 (April 1968), pp. 3–44.

[2] A. Lijphart, 'Consociational Democracy', *World Politics*, vol 21, nr. 2 (1969), pp. 207–225.

[3] One cannot help repeating oneself in this respect. See for an earlier and fuller comment my review of the consociational democracy literature in H. Daalder, 'The Consociational Democracy Theme', *World Politics*, vol. 26, nr. 4 (1974), pp. 604–221, as well as H. Daalder, *Ancient and Modern Pluralism in the Netherlands*, Working paper nr. 22, Center for European Studies, Harvard University, 1989–1990, notably chapter 2, pp. 24–47.

[4] Gerhard Lehmbruch, *Proporzdemokratie*. Tuebingen: Mohr, 1967.

[5] J. Steiner, *Gewaltlose Politik und kulturelle Vielfalt. Hypothesen entwickelt am Beispiel der Schweiz*, Bern: Paul Haupt, 1970; later English edition: *Amicable Agreement versus Majority Rule. Conflict Resolution in Switzerland*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1974.

[6] See the consolidation of his arguments in: A. Lijphart, *Democracy in Plural Societies. A Comparative Exploration*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977.

influential book *Democracies* (1984).[7] One might note, in passing, that many of the variables Lijphart singled out in these two dimensions are institutional ones. This showed a salutary retreat from excessively behaviorist analyses which for long tended to neglect institutional factors in the study of comparative politics.

Thirdly, and not accidentally, the model also acquired, at least in the hands of its main creator, a strong normative overtone. It increasingly was thought to provide valuable lessons for those who wished to engage in constitutional engineering. It challenged prevalent Anglo-American tendencies to believe in the superiority of Westminster-type arrangements, notably in the case of societies with strong subcultural divisions of one kind or another. In this context, one should note Lijphart`s early plea for consociational arrangements in the case of South Africa, contained in an unfortunately lesser-known book of his, entitled *Power-sharing in South Africa*.[8] When this book appeared in 1984 it seemed strangely distant from the violent tensions in that country. But in fact, it forecast in an uncanny manner the political agenda of things to come in South Africa. One should also note that this book contains a chapter in which Lijphart offers his most precise and elaborate *Auseinandersetzung* with his critics.

But enough on the general model. Let us focus on the Netherlands.

How right was Lijphart in his analysis of the Netherlands as a consociational democracy model?

Lijphart`s book would not have been so influential and long-lasting if it had been far off the mark in its analysis of Dutch politics. Whereas the English-language edition went through only two editions, the Dutch edition[9] had an unparalleled success in going through as many as nine editions in the twenty years since it was first published (also in 1968). The book contained a graphic analysis of the strong segmentation of Dutch society and of the importance of elite accommodation. It was particularly convincing in his analysis of the manner of policy-making succinctly summarized by him in terms of seven 'rules of the game' to which I will return at the end of this lecture.[10]

Yet, at the same time the model also calls for a number of critical footnotes when held against the actual record of Dutch political history. A real treatment of this point would lead us into

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[7] A. Lijphart, *Democracies. Patterns of Majoritarian and Consensus Government in Twenty-One Countries*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984.

[8] A. Lijphart, *Power-Sharing in South-Africa*, Institute of International Studies, University of California, Berkeley, 1984.

[9] The Dutch edition, translated and revised by Lijphart himself, was entitled *Verzuiling, Pacificatie en Kentering in de Nederlandse Politiek*, Amsterdam: De Bussy, 1968.

[10] *The Politics of Accommodation*, chapter 7.

lengthy historical analyses.[11] Given the limited format of a public lecture – not to speak of the traditional canons of *rethorica* – let me concentrate on three points.

First, the model was developed in the mid-1960s, at a time when many of its most characteristic features had already begun to crack up in The Netherlands. Lijphart did of course notice this, even in the first edition of *The Politics of Accommodation*, and more fully in the second edition, as well in the later Dutch editions of his book. He deliberately changed his descriptive passages from the present tense he used in the first edition to the past tense in the latter.

Second, within the Lijphart analysis there remained something of a puzzle. If tensions between subcultures were so strong, why was it that elites still had the will and the power to contain these tensions, by engaging into what Lijphart termed a 'self-denying hypothesis'? Although Lijphart analyzed the subcultural divisions of the 1950s and 1960s, he dated the relevant elite accommodation around 1917, at the time of what the Dutch call the *Pacificatie*, when in one great compromise all parties agreed to accept general suffrage, proportional representation and full freedoms and subsidies for religious schools. But by 1910 the historical record did *not* see the fully crystallized subcultures which in Lijphart's model formed such a real peril that the elites simply had to act to prevent a break-up. In fact, such subcultural segmentation as came about was as much the consequence as the cause of the 1917 settlement. I have therefore argued many a time that Lijphart found a 'solution' for a problem which was mainly of his own making – or to be more fair: which were derived from a preoccupation of American theories of the time. Instead, I have argued, older traditions of elite accommodation, which had their roots in the Dutch Republic and the specific manner of state-formation in the Netherlands, were the very reason why subcultural divisions could develop without endangering the system in the first place.

Third, there is also something mechanistic in the Lijphart analysis. He speaks of different blocs, and portrays them as alike in most respects. Yet in doing so, he tends to give insufficient weight to the substantial differences between the three major subcultures of Calvinists, Catholics and Socialists. If Calvinists were, with the Liberals, historically near to the centers of power and the concept of the nation, Catholics and Socialists represented very much separate and subordinate groupings which only came to be fully accepted as senior partners in government by 1939 or even 1946. Some have therefore spoken of a 'second pacification' in 1939 when Socialists were for the first time given cabinet seats. Also, the Lijphart analysis tends to pay too little attention to internal differences of the subcultures,

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[11] The two most elaborate statements by myself are in: H. Daalder, 'The Netherlands: Opposition in a Segmented Society', in: R.A. Dahl ed., *Political Oppositions in Western Democracies*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966, pp. 188–236; and in: H. Daalder, 'Consociationalism, Center and Periphery in the Netherlands', in: Per Torsvik ed., *Mobilization, Center-Periphery Structures and Nation-Building. A Volume in Commemoration of Stein Rokkan*, Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1981, pp. 181–240.

which also played a substantial role in the manner in which they eventually were to dissolve and to crumble.

Having thus 'set the stage', let us turn now to the major topic of this lecture:

Is the Netherlands still a consociational democracy?

Lijphart has in later work distinguished four 'basic elements of consociational democracy: 1. executive power-sharing among the representatives of all significant goups; 2. a high degree of internal autonomy for groups that wish to have it; c. proportional representation and proportional allocation of civil service positions and public funds; and 4. a minority veto on the most vital issues'.[12]

Let me make two preliminary remarks. One should note first that the Netherlands have never had full power-sharing through 'grand coalitions' or 'all-party' cabinets: even though many coalitons have been broad-based, at least one major party has at all times been left out. For much the longest period since World War II (to be exact: from 1952 to 1994) this meant either the Socialists or the Liberals, as at least one of the religious parties was always represented in cabinets since the advent of universal suffrage and proportional representation in 1918.

Second, the Netherlands have not seen the full carving up of the state in offices and services, as seems to be true of the more extreme *Proporz*-system found in Austria. The bureaucracy, the judiciary, the military, the monarchy, and generally even the work-place, remained relatively free from the effects of full ideological segmentation. In fact, the system was characterized more by a fargoing autonomy for the subcultures in the cultural and social spheres (with subsidies being shared out proportionally among the subcultures) than by a full partisan penetration in the commanding heights of the polity.

Historically, the Netherlands undoubtedly presented a case of strong social segmentation. The Dutch metaphor is that of *Verzuiling*, or pillarization. In the last few decades the pillars have crumbled. One of the main props of the consociational democracy model: its strong articulation of separate subcultures, is therefore no longer present in the Netherlands.

Why did such developments take place? One must think of three different factors: elite re-orientation, mass secularization, and increasing social differentiation causing social organizations to become more and more disentangled from the ideological subculture in which they had originally developed.[13]

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[12] See *Power-Sharing in South Africa*, p. 8.

[13] I have analyzed these processes at much greater length in a Dutch-language essay 'Zestig jaar Nederland (1926–1986)', in: J.H. van den Heuvel et al. *Een Vrij Zinnige Verhouding. De VPRO en Nederland 1926–1986*,

First, under the impact of the challenges of totalitarian movements, the threats of war, poverty in the Third World, and domestic strains, both the orthodox-Calvinist and Catholic elites begun to move as early as the 1930s away from an overwhelming orientation towards the *Jenseits* to a more direct concern with the *Diesseits*. If this led to a more immediate concern with the political and social problems of the contemporary world, it also caused increasing dissension among the elites of the various religious groups on the practical stand tot be taken by the churches, and the various institutions within each religious subculture. Some began to question even the need for continuing social organizations on the basis of specific creed. If at one time Dutch Calvinists and Catholics presented an image of rocklike introvert bastions, they increasingly became a house divided. Characteristially, in the 1960s the Dutch Catholic Church, which had once been called the Pope's most faithful daughter, achieved the doubtful status of the Vatican's greatest problem child.

Second, growing elite disunity went hand in hand with what in a comparative perspective was a rather late, but all the more rapid process of mass secularization. The Netherlands changed from being one of the most church-going nations in Western Europe, to one as secular as any. And it did so within one generation.

Third, the once so coherent religious subcultures were also undermined by processes of increasing internal differentiation. Each subculture had built up its own specialized organizations to take care of particular economic and social activities in such different areas as industrial relations, health care, social work or leisure, in close interaction with the development of the welfare state. But once established, such organizations became increasingly professionalized and bureaucratized. In the process they tended to develop closer contacts with similar organizations in other subcultures (and with specialized sections of the government bureaucracy which regulated and subsidized organizations in particular sectors) than they had with institutions and organizations within their own subculture. As more and more organizations went their own way, the institutional cohesion of the different subcultures was thus largely destroyed. A system consisting of rather rigid hierarchical subcultures was gradually replaced by a welter of independent organizational networks which connected specialized agencies and parts of the bureaucracy in the making and implementation of policies. There was, one might say, a self-destructing logic in *Verzuiling*- process: its very success in fostering all manner of sectoral organizations *within* subcultures, created so many sectoral interests *across* them, that this eventually spelled the demise of the subcultures as cohesive units.

Baarn: Ambo, 1986, pp. 11–71. For a parallel analysis in the perspective of an alleged *Politikver-drossenheit*, see my chapter in: M. Schmidt Hrsg., *Politikversagen? Parteienverschleisz? Bürgerverdrusz?*, Universität Regensburg (forthcoming, 1996).

If this particularly affected the two major religious subcultures, the Socialist world also experienced processes of organizational disintegration. As a minority movement in a social system dominated by others, the Socialists had formed a subculture of its own. The ideological boundaries of the Socialist subculture had been less strong, however, than that of Calvinists and Catholics. Its sway over their followers was less comprehensive, not least because the Socialists shared a 'general', non-fundamentalist or secular outlook with the Liberals. Their main organizational principle: class, did not provide an exclusive or durable basis either. Many workers were in fact organized in the rival religious subcultures, and remained there, Socialist siren songs or struggles notwithstanding. There were also many uncertainties regarding the borderline between workers and 'the' middle class so that there was no definite divide between Socialists and Liberals. In the economic expansion after World War II, the very definition of class became even more blurred. On the one hand many new middling strata arose, and on the other hand 'workers' declined in relative numbers. And those remaining were increasingly divided over such matters as differential incomes, the burden of social security, crime, or more recently the place of new immigrants.

All in all, then, both religion and class lost precision and relevance, whether in political and social organization or in voting behavior. Instead a system developed characterized by a great many specialized interest organizations, and many more volatile voters.

The majoritarian temptation

Volatile voters changed the political universe. Parties could no longer rely on their own clienteles to reconfirm existing power relations. Increased electoral opportunities offered new temptations, notably for secular parties seeking to win one-time voters from the religious parties. Socialists and Liberals believed themselves to be the main potential beneficiaries from processes of secularization. In this they had to compete, however, with a number of new parties which had to cross only the lowest possible electoral threshold in The Netherlands, while they also had to cope with a much increased voter abstention following the abolition of compulsory appearance at the ballot-box introduced in 1970. Meanwhile the religious parties did not remain passive either: following heavy electoral losses party in three successive elections of 1967, 1971 and 1972 by both the Catholic party and a less-structured protestant Christian-Historical Union, the three major religious parties (one Catholic party and two Protestant) eventually decided to federate first (1976), and then to merge into one new Christian Democrat Party (CDA) in 1980.

But new electoral opportunities did create new majoritarian pressures. Socialists and Liberals took up increasingly polarized stands to one another. Declaring that they would on no condition enter into coalition with one another they both sought to win votes from the religious parties, promising more clear-cut choices.

If this represented a common rationale for Socialists and Liberals, the conditions were not symmetrical. The Liberals being a relatively small party knew that they could never hope for an independent electoral mandate. Hence they pleaded for a standing coalition of the CDA and themselves, or at times for a national coalition. The Socialists, and other new progressive parties such as Democrats'66 and a new split-away Christian-Radical Party (PPR), did see greater electoral opportunities. They pleaded for changes which would replace the traditional post-electoral coalition bargaining by a system in which the voters would give a more immediate and decisive mandate to alternative governments. Two, somewhat different reforms were put forward by the Left to secure such a direct reform: one institutional, the other one consisting of a strategic change in party behavior.

Notably the new Democrats'66 party (its name refers to the year when this party was established) campaigned for a constitutional reform, which would introduce the direct election of a Prime Minister. They accepted the full implications of such a reform, which would give separate and possibly conflicting mandates to an executive and a parliament, with the argument that such a dualism would free parliament from the burden of forming and sustaining government coalitions, and thus make parliament a more independent controller of the executive. The proposal was soon whittled down to one for the choice of a cabinet formateur only, however, who would be chosen directly by the electorate provided he obtained an absolute majority. Such a formateur would otherwise have to respect all canons of a normal parliamentary system, including full ministerial responsibility. Even in this attenuated form, the proposal for a direct choice was voted down repeatedly and convincingly (once in 1971 and again in 1975) by both the religious parties and the Liberals.

As an alternative, the Left proposed the formation of electoral cartels by parties, who would submit a common program and a common list of ministers, under the explicit understanding that these would not be negotiable in case the new cartel would not gain the hoped-for backing of a majority. During the early seventies, this strategy seemed to promise success as it resulted in the formation of the Den Uyl Cabinet (1973-1977) which was centered very much on the left, with only minority participation on the part of ministers of two of the three religious parties. But on the long run, the total Left vote remained far removed from an independent majority. Deliberate polarization by the Left condemned it since 1977 for more than a decade to the opposition benches, from which they were only freed, not by increased electoral support, but by dissension among the alternative coalition of the religious parties and the Liberals. In fact, the polarization tactics from the Left had been a major factor in the decision of the religious parties to merge, and it helped to bolster the image of the new CDA party as the more reliable party of government which made the newly merged Christian Democrats under Ruud Lubbers in the 1980s even attractive to voters not normally belonging to the religious fold.

Eventually, the Socialists returned to a 'normal' coalition with the Christian-Democrats in 1989. That coalition ruled for four years, but then led in 1994 to the greatest electoral losses any

Dutch coalition has ever experienced: in a parliament of 150 members the Christian-Democrats went down from 54 to 34 seats, and the Socialists from 49 to 37. The major winners, apart from a new party of the elderly were the Liberals (now with 31 seats) and Democrats' 66 (gaining an unprecedented 24 seats). The outcome was such that at least three parties were required to form a parliamentary majority. Eventually a so-called 'purple coalition' was formed, which included Socialists, Liberals and D'66, but excluded for the first time since 1918 ministers belonging to a much weakened Christian-Democrat world.

If this coalition is relatively broad-based, it is far removed from the grand coalition posited by the consociational democracy model. In an older terminology of party typologies: the Dutch party system has come to represent rather more an 'even four-party system', presenting 'open choices'. Said differently: the tenet of full power-sharing, on the basis of secure party divisions, is a world apart from a system which my late friend, the American historian Val R. Lorwin once dubbed in a deliberate play on long German words a system of *Allgemeinkoalitions-fähigkeit* with highly volatile voters.

Corporate traditions under increasing attack

Many of us have seen definite similarities between 'consocia-tionalist' and 'corporatist' politics. I have signalled before that the simultaneous build-up of the different subcultures did indeed make for a world of extensive sectoral organizations, which assumed corporatist features as they moved across subcultural dividing lines and became intertwined with specialized government agencies.

In the last decades, however, such corporatist arrangements have increasingly come under attack, from two at first sight very different – but on closer inspection somewhat related – quarters.

One is the assumption of the 'primacy of politics'. Not least through the Left's advocacy of more direct electoral decisions, however unsuccessful, the partisan-electoral channel has gained in importance over that of corporate representation and accommodation. Parties no longer consider themselves spokesmen or sentinels of a welter of specific subcultural interests, but have deliberately sought more autonomous stances. Instead they feel bound to detailed government programs worked out during lengthy bargaining in the process of coalition formation. From that basis successive governments have not only been less respectful of group accommodation processes, but have even began to question their legitimacy. There is now something of a war going on against the 'unwarranted access' to government enjoyed by private interests represented in a myriad of advisory agencies. Such bodies are thought to make for 'treaclish politics' and to obfuscate political responsibilities. Numerous advisory agencies have therefore been disbanded. To what extent many of such groups have now settled

comfortably in the halflight of the *Antichambres*, to which Cavour rightly preferred a more public *Chambre*, is not clear.

The second factor – which works against corporate networks as well against an increasing number of government bureaus – has been the increased reliance on market forces. Such developments come out particularly in widescale 'privatization drives' as well as in an increased reliance on (very highly paid) consultants, interim managers and their like. The latter have often replaced earlier advisory agencies. This has resulted in so much 'rent-a-government' that I could not help to point to them in my farewell lecture at Leiden in 1993 as a fourth elite category of 'calculating contractors', functioning besides the three more traditional elite groups of 'magistrats' in charge of independent offices, career civil servants, and politicians produced by partisan-electoral channels.[14] As such independent 'experts' are often hired to legitimate specific policies, they bolster the stance of politicians in favor of 'the primacy of politics', thwarted by the earlier need for corporate consultations.

Whatever relevance is there still in the consociational model in the present-day Netherlands?

At first sight, the answer to this question would seem to be negative: the crumbling of the traditional pillars, increased electoral volatility, majoritarian temptations, parties as largely autonomous agents, fargoing challenges to corporate networks: all that would seem a far cry from the neat consociational model which many observers stil believe to characterize the Netherlands. Of the four major characteristics of the model the idea of full executive power-sharing, of a high degree of internal autonomy, of minority vetoes on the most vital issues, would not appear to be very relevant anymore. At most one could say that the principle of proportional representation still holds. One might argue that the role of parties in the proportional allocation of civil service position and public funds has increased somewhat, paradoxically at the same time that parties have lost in other functions they traditionally represented.

However, for at least two reasons, one should be careful not to draw too drastic conclusions.

In the first place, one should note an interesting article by Arend Lijphart, in which he re-assesses his own analysis of Dutch politics in the light of his new insights on comparative democracies, including the somewhat wider notion of 'consensus government'.[15] He proves, to his evident satisfaction, that the Netherlands did not move very greatly after all in its position on the two fundamental dimensions which he uses in his *comparative* placement of democratic

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[14] See H. Daalder, *Van oude en nieuwe regenten, of: Politiek als beroep*, Leiden 1993; reprinted in H. Daalder, *Van Oude en nieuwe regenten. Politiek in Nederland*, Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, pp. 101–137.

[15] A. Lijphart, 'From the Politics of Accomodation to Adversarial Politics in the Netherlands: A Reassessment', *West European Politics*, vol. 12, nr. 1 (January 1989), pp. 139–153.

political systems, remaining very much a clear example on the opposite side to Westminster government. In other words: even though the Netherlands may no longer be a 'consociational democracy', it certain still belongs to the category of 'consensus government.'

Secondly, I must return to my own earlier argument with Lijphart on the issue of elite accommodation. As you will remember, I emphasized that such accommodation did not result from what Lijphart called his 'self-denying prophesy' – that is: elites being aware of imminent dangers taking effective measures to prevent these from coming true – but from much older traditions in the political culture of the Netherlands. Such traditions did not only prevent the system from actually showing the strains which Lijphart thought he saw, but also helped to explain better the later processes of both the building and the crumbling of the different 'pillars'. Such traditions have not disappeared in the Netherlands.

One can illustrate this if one does not concentrate so much on Lijpharts four major characteristics of 'consociational democracy', but on the seven 'rules of the game' which Lijphart had singled out: government as 'business' (instead of a 'game'), agreement to disagree, summit diplomacy, proportionality, depoliticization, secrecy, and the Government's right to govern. Many of these rules still hold in Dutch policy-making: it still is extremely serious, there is an abiding emphasis on the Government's right to govern, depoliticization is still found in the strong expert tone of policy-making (although the experts are now no longer experts rooted in parallel subcultures, tbut ad hoc 'contractors'). If secrecy has diminished, policy-making is still far from transparent. And in some respects 'summit diplomacy' has been carried to new extremes in the institutionalized weekly meetings of the the Prime Minister, the two vice-premiers of the other two government parties and the leaders of the party groups supporting the cabinet, which precede each cabinet meeting. As ministers and undersecretaries of each governing party also meet separately before, with the party chairman of each party present as well, such 'summits' are indeed very well prepared.

More generally: I am inclined to attribute the greatly increased tolerance for alternative lifestyles, as well as the relatively successful containment of racist parties, to the traditional pluralist and accommodationist styles of Dutch political culture. It would be wrong to regard the Dutch as being particularly tolerant or open-minded. But the inevitable living-together of very distinct groups in a small geographic space, has made sufferance of others at least a necessity, best solved by the principle of: leave well alone, whatever one's gripes and complaints.

There are no strong pillars in the Netherlands anymore, but there continues to exist a great deal of accepted diversity which lessens conflict.

Appendix

The changing function of parties

As my course at the Institute is on comparative parties and party systems, allow me a digression on the changed position of political parties as a result of such processes.

In the hey-day of *verzuiling* Dutch parties were, as I already said, mainly 'holding companies' and sentinels for the specific subculture they represented. Lists of candidates were drawn up on the basis of elaborate procedures which ensured the presence of spokesmen for the many specialized interests in their midst. A combination of religion and class largely structured the vote. Elections tended to be more a periodical census than an expression of concrete electoral opinions regarding policies or personalities.

Now, all this has changed: as the cohesion of the different subcultures broke down, as social organizations more and more went their separate ways irrespective of former ideological ties, and as voters became increasingly mobile, the role of parties changed substantially, in at least the following ways.

The greater differentiation, professionalization and bureaucratization of special interest groups massively increased the number of political arenas and sites of decision-making. Decisions in such arenas are largely taken through direct bargaining. As special interests must deal routinely with governments whatever their particular party composition, they have an incentive to keep specific parties at arms' length. 'Party', then, has no longer the instrumental value it once had for special interests, whether in representation or the taking of actual decisions.

Parties on their part have tended to take more 'autonomous' stands, in a combination of choice and necessity. No longer certain of the natural and organized links they once had, they have had to operate in a more open political market. Whilst they might still want to cater to a variety to specialized interests, too close an identification with any one of them has threatened to become a liability.

Internal party life also tended to evolve into the direction of more autonomy. While the aggregative and integrative role of parties in relation to groups went down, the role of self-starting politicians went up. Political recruitment came to be seen more in the light of careers, and less in terms of representation. The need for more active campaigning increased the role of media advisers. To the extent such advisers sought to 'market' parties in terms of personalities, and less as traditional ideological groupings or well thought-out programme parties, the role of leaders and their retinues went up.

This in turn also changed the role of ordinary party members. As long as parties were the instruments of well-articulated subcultures, members were important both for political socialization and as active participants in election campaigns. The professionalization of the latter greatly lessened that role. Membership came to be less a matter of tradition and self-evident civic commitment, and more a matter of temporary choice. Almost all parties began to experience a great loss of votes, and the remaining membership showed a much larger turnover, with members entering and leaving at a much faster rate. This did not mean that members have become less vociferous: although fewer in number, less institutionally anchored and often less persistently active, relatively small groups of party members may still press on behalf of particular goals or personalities. Given the ready, if fleeting, attention the modern media are likely to give to any signs of protest, their influence is often magnified, although not necessarily long-lived.

On the basis of an extensive, comparative review of such developments my successor at Leiden, Professor Peter Mair, has concluded that there is a definite paradox in the relationship between contemporary parties and society. If parties have lost in certain traditional functions of socialization, aggregation and integration, they have tended to become stronger in political recruitment and penetration. Their monopoly in determining the composition of parliament and cabinets has become virtually absolute, notwithstanding a widening gap between party personnel and ordinary voters. He attributes this development largely to the greater organizational resources of parties, which they owe in a large measure to new forms of government financing.[16]

In a comparative perspective the Netherlands does not provide the strongest example of such a development. The degree of government financing is still relatively low, and mainly indirect. The greater part of party income is still derived from membership contributions. The degree of buraucratic organization of the party and its subsidiary organizations is also very modest. The role of party in political recruitment and to some degree also in key administrative appointments has undoubtedly grown stronger. But the control of parties is far from enhaustive and exclusive: if the choice of members of parliament is entirely a matter of within party decisions, this is already less so in the selection of cabinet members (where ministers and junior ministers often arrive on the basis of technical skill rather than partisan activity), let alone in the provision of government services.

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[16] See Peter Mair, *Party Demcoracies and their Difficulties*, inaugural lecture, Leiden, 1994; see also R.S. Katz and P. Mair (eds.) *How Parties Organize. Change and Adaptation in Party Organizations in Western Democracies*. London: Sage, 1994; and Idem, 'Changing Models of Party Organization and Party Democracy. The Emergence of the Cartel Party', *Party Politics*, vol 1, nr. 1 (1995), pp. 5–28..