

Section 3 – Politica Comparata

Chairs: Gianfranco Baldini, Elisabetta de Giorgi

Panel 3.5 Grand Coalitions and Ideologically-incoherent coalitions in Europe

In the last decade, European voters have become familiar with something that previously was often considered rare if not odd: grand coalitions and ideologically-incoherent majorities. Safire's Political Dictionary defines these government's majority arrangements as 'unholy alliances' and the parties involved as 'strange bed fellows'. A definition which identifies something that in a recent past was clearly considered as an exception – a working arrangement for 'special' times. For instance, just about fifteen years ago it would have been hard to think of Great Britain being governed by an ideologically-uneven coalition in time of peace or of a Spanish centre-right government born because Socialist rivals agreed to abstain. These types of government majorities have considerably proliferated, even in countries that had no previous political experience of this kind. This substantial increase happened in the years of the so-called Great Recession, together with the electoral growth of populist movements and new political parties.

This panel aims to collect contributions shedding light on the reasons behind the formation of grand coalitions and ideologically-incoherent coalitions, possibly offering a wide range of cross-country analyses. The purpose is to stimulate a theoretical reflection as well as empirical investigation. We welcome papers based on fresh quantitative and qualitative datasets, that adopt eclectic conceptual and theoretical approaches able to generate new insights on dimensions such as:

- How the rise of new parties is challenging conventional party systems, exhausting and discrediting many classic coalition formulas, and shrinking the room for manoeuvre of large parties (along with their vote share)?
- Is there a correlation between the surge of grand coalitions and ideologically-incoherent coalitions and the economic situation of each European country?
- What is the relation between the surge of these government majorities arrangements and the 'fragmentation of political culture'?
- If Ralph Dahrendorf believed that grand coalitions were a 'cartel of elites' and, in their assemblage, Arend Lijphart highlighted the "ability to transcend cleavages and to join in a common effort with the elites of rival subcultures", how these government coalitions can be considered within the current debate on populism?

Please note that all submissions should be in English.

Chairs: Marco Morini, Louise Barroso