

# **How Intra-Party Power Relations Affect Coalition Behaviour of Political Parties**

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Paper to be presented at the ECPR Conference in Pisa, Italy, 6<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> September 2007

## ***Abstract***

*Coalition theory assumes that political parties can be analysed as unitary actors. However, this assumption is disputed. Kaare Strom (1990) argues that parties in which the leaders are unconstrained by their party organization are more efficient in coalition negotiations. On the other hand, Moshe Maor (1998) argues the exact opposite that parties in which the party organization is included in decisions have an advantage. This theoretical dispute can only be settled by empirical tests. This paper examines the impact of power relations within Danish opposition parties on their legislative coalition behaviour. The analysis shows that intra-party power relations have a significant impact on the coalition behaviour of Danish opposition parties and parties with comparatively unconstrained negotiators tend to participate more frequently in legislative accommodations than parties with strong organization. The paper suggests how intra-party politics might be included more systematically in studies of coalition formation and party behaviour.*

## **1. Introduction**

The balance of power in a political party is usually treated as a matter of democracy. Much attention has been paid on whether influence of the rank-and-file members and activists is a democratic virtue or evil (for an overview see Teorell, 1999). Likewise, many studies have discussed whether the influence of party members and activists increases or decreases and why (Kirscheimer, 1964; Mair, 1997; Katz, 2002; Heidar & Saglie, 2003). However, power relations within political parties are not only of interest regarding democracy; it is also of importance to party efficiency. Therefore, this paper asks whether the balance of power within a party makes it more or less efficient in inter-party negotiations on coalition formation. Thus, this paper treats intra-party politics as a matter of efficiency rather than a matter of democracy.

Coalition theory argues that political parties can be analysed as if they were unitary actors (for a discussion see Laver & Schofield, 1990: 14-35). This means that parties are assumed to have well defined basic preferences like office, policy or votes, which they seek to maximize as units. In this case, intra-party politics should have no significant effect on parties' coalition behaviour.

Though most scholars use the unitary actor assumption, some critiques within the coalition theory have been raised. First, critique has been presented by Kaare Strom (1990a), who argues that the distribution of power within political parties affects their coalition behaviour, because decentralized decision procedures decrease policy flexibility, as activists are assumed to be more ideologically driven than party leaders (for a similar critique see also

Luebbert, 1986; Panebianco, 1988). Lars Bille (2000) presents another version of this critique. He argues that decentralized decision procedures hinder the party's ability to make quick decisions in inter-party bargaining, which might be necessary to join the winning coalition (Ibid: 141).

Second, critique has been presented by Moshe Maor (1998), who argues that decentralized decision procedures improve the capability of a party in coalition negotiations because they make it easier to handle intra-party conflicts within the party instead of in public, which is more damaging to the bargaining position of the party. A similar point was made by Laver and Shepsle (1990), who argue that it will improve the chances of the party to join a coalition if more factions are included in the strategic choices, because it makes the party less dependent on the policy position of the party leader and thereby more flexible on policy.

Hence, the literature presents three different answers to the same question. First, coalition theory claims that intra-party relations have no influence on the coalition behaviour of political parties. Second, Strøm argues that parties which centralize power in a few hands have an advantage in coalition negotiations. Finally, Maor argues that decentralized decision procedures are stronger in coalition negotiations.

Only empirical tests can settle this theoretical dispute. However, most empirical research on the connection between intra- and inter-party politics is based on a few cases (Strøm, 1994; Strøm & Müller, 1999). Maor (1998) includes more cases in his study, but he did not include any competing explanations in his model, which makes it impossible to state whether intra-party politics have a significant effect on coalition behaviour or not. This paper attempts to contribute to the empirical research. It does so by testing the influence of the formal internal balance of power within Danish political parties on their ability to enter winning legislative accommodations, which are strongly morally binding legislative coalitions between governments and opposition parties. The analysis includes nine Danish parties, representing the full ideological scale of Danish politics, and covers almost 50 years (1953-2001). The analysis shows that formal balances of power do have a significant effect on the coalition behaviour of the Danish parties in opposition. It also shows that parties whose parliamentarians operate comparatively independently of the national party organization tend to participate in legislative accommodations more often than parties in which the national party organization has more control.

## 2. Coalition Formation and Intra-Party Constraints

Coalition theory typically treats political parties involved in coalition formation as unconstrained unitary players striving to maximize well-defined goods as office, policy or votes. The parties' chances of participating in winning coalition are determined by the external bargaining power of the parties, which is constituted of their mandatory power and policy position (Maor, 1995: 70). The basic assumptions are that parties prefer coalitions "*that (a) include themselves as members and (b) are close in policy terms*" (Warwick, 2005: 383). However, if party supporters are assumed not only to be interested in policy but also in who is responsible for policy, small policy gains may not always compensate for the cost of being responsible. This was for instance the case when the Danish Socialist Peoples Party (SP) neglected the offer to join the Social Democrats (SD) in government in 1966 even though it would have pulled the policy position of the government slightly closer to the ideal-position of the SP. The literature suggests that intra-party relations might be part of the answer to this puzzle.

Kaare Strom (1990a) argues that party behaviour is not exogenously given but determined by institutional and organizational circumstances. This paper focuses on the organizational circumstances. Strom presents three intra-party relations which affect the behaviour of political parties (Ibid: 577-579): 1) Decentralization of policy decisions, which means that authority is transferred from the party leader or parliamentary party group to the conference or other extra-parliamentary bodies. When activists, who are assumed primarily to be policy-motivated, are included in decision-making, it is more difficult to make policy compromises, and the party will be more constrained in inter-party negotiations. 2) Recruitment procedures which benefit the party members will also make the party more policy-seeking in the long run because only policy-motivated individuals should be able to come up through the activists' ranks. Finally, 3) the easier it is to replace the party leader, the more policy-seeking the party should be since a party leader who find his position attractive will be less willing to disappoint his activists, knowing he might be replaced. Hence, Strom argues that a party with powerful activists will be more policy-seeking, and therefore it should also be less willing to make policy compromises. Similar arguments are presented by Groennings (1968: 454), Panebianco (1988: 219) and Duverger (1959: 134). More recently, Warwick (2006) makes an almost similar argument, saying that parties have policy horizons which define where compromise becomes "*betrayal in the eyes of a party's supporters*" (Warwick, 2000: 39). Even though Warwick is vague about the reason for horizons, he is clear about the fact that horizons

may vary among parties (2000: 41). Some parties are more policy-flexible than others. If this is so, parties in which the supporters are more ideologically driven should have narrower horizons and therefore find it more difficult to join coalitions.

Moshe Maor finds this line of reasoning illogical as illustrated by the following quotation: “*why are centralized parties considered to be effective coalitional actors if they lack structural mechanisms for the diffusion of dissent?*” (1995: 65). According to Maor, centralized parties lack the structure to cope with intra-party conflicts because the unsatisfied party members have no opportunity to utter their complaints within the party. In centralized parties, conflict will manifest itself in public critique or by members leaving the party, which is much more damaging to the bargaining power of the party than internal opposition. Therefore, Maor argues, centralized parties have a disadvantage in inter-party negotiations. A similar argument is presented by Laver and Shepsle (1990). They distinguish between two decision-making regimes: 1) the autocratic leader and 2) the national executive regime (Ibid: 504). They argue that as the choice of party leader is made in “veil of ignorance”, the national executive regime will make parties more efficient in inter-party negotiations because it is much easier for this regime to respond to shocks in the party-system and change strategy. The basic assumption is, that politicians are policy-motivated, which means that a party leader will always defend a certain policy position. In this way, this theory is fundamentally different from the theory of Strom, who found that the party leader should be the least policy-motivated actor in political parties (Strom, 1990: 574).

Thus, three different arguments as to the impact of intra-party politics on coalition formation are found in the literature.

1. *Coalition theory argues that intra-party politics have no impact on coalition formation since political parties can be treated as unconditioned unitary actors.*
2. *Strom argues that in decentralized parties party activists constrain the party leader in coalition bargaining. Hence, decentralized parties are supposed to be less efficient in coalition formation.*
3. *Maor argues that centralized parties lack the organizational structure to handle intra-party conflicts, which should make them less efficient in coalition formation.*

Maor tests his argument, using nine parties in five western countries. Even though Maors analysis has contributed substantially to the understanding and recognition of the internal

bargaining power of political parties, external bargaining power should preferably be included in the analysis. Without controls for the external bargaining power, it is impossible to decide whether the coalition formation was affected by policy distance or intra-party politics. For instance, Maor cites a former Danish Liberal Minister of Interior, Knud Engaard, as to the coalition between the Social Democrats and the Liberals: *"We had double the task and double the influence. We could stop everything that we did not like....That is a problem with a coalition government between two parties of very different principles and if you do not reach a compromise...then such a government would have to stay away from legislation in such areas"* (cite in Maor, 1998: 112). This comment may indicate that the problems of this government with an extremely unusual party composition were caused primarily by policy distance rather than intra-party politics.

Stroms argument is tested in *Policy, Office or Votes?* (1999). Rather than testing party behaviour, the different contributions of the book analyse party motives. Since parties may seek office as well as policy in coalition negotiations, it can be very difficult to decide what the primary motive is. Strom and Müller (1999) conclude that parties in which activists have direct impact on party decisions are more policy-seeking than parties in which the activists only have indirect influence (1999: 291-294). However, Strom and Müller do not conclude anything about the behavioural consequences of this pattern.

Moreover, Strom and Müller as well as Maor only analyse the impact of intra-party politics on party motives and coalition behaviour under the special circumstance of intra-party conflict. But, following the reasoning of Warwick, intra-party politics should have a more general impact on coalition behaviour. Intra-party politics define the size of policy horizons, which constitutes the bargaining mandate of the party representatives. Thus, in general parties with narrow horizons should be less likely to participate in coalitions unless their external bargaining position makes them close to dictators in the inter-party competition. Hence, the impact of intra-party politics should not be dependent on intra-party politics (conflict or not) but on inter-party politics.

Before the empirical data and analysis is presented, the central distinction between decentralization and centralization must be clarified. According to Duverger, *"centralization and decentralization define the way in which power is distributed amongst the different levels of leadership"* (1959: 52). Domination of the parliamentary representatives of the party gives a very decentralized structure in the sense that no common action or discipline in voting is found in the

parliamentary group (Ibid: 184). Centralization can either be democratic or autocratic. In autocratic centralized parties, decisions are taken at the top and are implemented locally. In democratic centralized parties, discussions take place before decision-making, but subsequently the discipline is very strict (Ibid: 56-57). Janda defines a centralized party as “*one which features the concentration of effective decision-making authority in the national party organs, with a premium placed on a smaller number of individuals participating in the decision*” (1980: 108). However, centralization and decentralization is also conceptualised as the relationship between the parliamentary party groups and the extra-parliamentary party organization. A centralized party concentrates the decision authority in the hands of the parliamentary group, and maybe only a small part of this group. A decentralized party includes the extra-parliamentary party organization in the decision-making (Maor, 1995; Laver & Shepsle, 1990; Strom, 1990). The parliamentary party group is defined as an organised group of members of a representative body who were elected using the same party label (Heidar & Koole, 2000). The extra-parliamentary party organization consists of local as well as national party organs. These different criteria of distinction between decentralization and centralization cause confusion. Maor builds on Duverger but defines a centralized party as one in which the extra-parliamentary wing has no real prerogatives (1995: 68): Party A is centralized when the extra-parliamentary party wings have no real authority and the main decisions are taken by the parliamentary party (Ibid.). Strøm and Müller also define decentralization as authority being transferred from the parliamentary caucus to the party organization (1999: 17). In this paper, decentralization and centralization is defined according to the relationship between the national organs of the extra-parliamentary party (executive committee (forretningsudvalg), governing body (hovedbestyrelse) and congress (kongres/landsmøde)) and the parliamentary party group. A party is centralized when the parliamentary party group enjoys autonomy from the party organization in decision-making. A party is decentralized when the national extra-parliamentary party organization is included in the decision-making and is able to sanction the members of the parliamentary party group. Thus, centralization and decentralization is a question of power-relations between collective actors within the party and not a question of discipline or common action. Moreover, centralization and decentralization is conceptualized as a matter of degrees rather than a matter of categories.

### **3. The model and measurement of variables**

This section presents the main variables in the causal model and how they will be measured. The section is divided into four subsections. The first subsection presents the dependent variable, *legislative accommodations*. The second subsection presents the index of power relations within political parties. The third subsection discusses the two supplementary explanations (policy distance and size) and the conditional variable (government strength). Finally, the fourth subsection outlines the causal model, which will be analysed in the following section

#### **3.1 The dependent variable: legislative accommodations**

Legislative accommodations (forlig) are the most salient feature in Danish politics (Strom, 1990). Because of the many minority governments in Denmark, the government has to negotiate policy compromises with opposition parties in order to reach the necessary majority. Legislative accommodations are informally institutionalised legislative coalitions which morally bind the participating parties. Norms of loyalty, exit procedure and veto make the legislative process under minority governments more predictable and stable. Hence, legislative accommodations allow the hard policy compromises to be reached and in the end it is the more or less varying majorities of the legislative accommodations that keep the government in office. Legislative accommodations differ in expiring period, content and formalization. Some are written down and others are only based on oral agreements. Still, all legislative accommodations oblige parties to certain behaviour. They have the right to veto any policy amendment regarding the accommodation, but in exchange the parties undertake to support the policy in parliament and in public until the agreement is renewed or expires. No matter the form of the accommodation, an agreement cannot normally be broken (Pedersen, 2005: 9-19).

Using legislative accommodations as the dependent variable has at least two advantages. First, it makes it possible to analyse more cases in a single country and subsequently to examine the impact of power relations within parties on coalition behaviour under similar institutional and structural circumstances. Second, while government coalition negotiations concern office pay-offs, parties only bargain over policy pay-offs in the case of legislative accommodations, so the conflict of interests within political parties should be less intense in accommodation formation than in government formation. Hence, the impact of intra-party power relation should be more difficult to detect when accommodations are used as dependent variable rather than governments. If intra-party power relations do have a significant impact on the formation of legislative accommodation, it is plausible that they also matter in the formation of governments.



The legislative accommodations are registered from official counts (Rasmussen & Rüdinger, 1990; Rasmussen, 1998) and from the authors and colleagues' investigations<sup>1</sup> of the registers and reports of the Danish parliament (*Rigsdagstidende* and *Folketingstidende*). The *accommodation behaviour* of the Danish opposition parties is measured as the number of accommodation participated by an opposition party of the total number of accommodations in a government period. A new government period is registered every time an election is held or the party composition of the government changes. There are 22 governments in the period 1953-2001. Only parties in opposition are observed since governing parties participate in accommodations by definition. In all, I have 113 observations.

### **3.2 The independent variable: power relations within political parties**

Power relations are always very difficult to measure. Measuring them over a long time span does not make it any easier. In this paper, I use the formal power relations between the parliamentary party group and the national party organization as they appear in the rules and regulations of the parties. Rank-and-file members are not taken into account because, according to Katz (2001), they are more likely to be motivated by group identification, which means that they tend to follow the policy position given by the party (ibid.: 287-290). In contrast, activists are assumed to choose their party according to their ideological stand, and thereby they may be a greater constraint on the parliamentarians than rank-and-file members. The national party organization is assumed to be a possible channel for activists to be heard and try to influence their representatives in parliament.

*Formal* power relations are not a perfect reflection of the *real* power relations. However, formal and real balances of power are not totally unrelated. Especially in highly institutionalised parties as the Danish ones, a high degree of correspondence between a party's statutory norms and its actual power structure tends to exist (Panebianco, 1988). Moreover, measurement of real balances of power over a long period and of more parties has proven to be next to impossible. Surveys do not make it possible to detect changes over time. The method of expert judgements suffers under the lack of a sufficient number of competent experts, and finally not all Danish parties are willing to open their archives, which make this approach impossible.<sup>2</sup> So for now,

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<sup>1</sup> I am most grateful for all the help and constructive comments Flemming Juul Christiansen has given me on this project.

<sup>2</sup> Some parties have been willing to cooperate, which make it possible to do case studies in order to evaluate the statistical analysis and learn more about how the internal power relations affect the coalition behaviour of political parties.

formal power relations will be studied, as these are a reasonable though not perfect measure of power.

Based on rules and regulations of Danish parties, five items of power are identified:

- 1) To what extent does the national party organization influence the selection of candidates running for parliament?
- 2) To what extent can the national party organization sanction the behaviour of the parliamentarians?
- 3) To what extent is the parliamentary party group obliged to include the national party organization in the parliamentary work of the party?
- 4) To what extent is the parliamentary party group obliged to inform the national party organization about its work in parliament?
- 5) Do the parliamentary party groups or the national party organization choose the primary leader of the party?

The two first items state to what extent the national party organization is able to sanction the behaviour of parliamentarians now or in the future. When the risk of getting sanctioned is high, the parliamentarians are assumed to be more constrained than when the risk is low. The last three items state to what extent the party organization controls the formulation and implementation of party policy. The choice of primary party leaders is reckoned to be important because they are generally the prime negotiator in important inter-party negotiations and are the public “face” of their respective parties. The primary leader of the party could be either the leader of the party organization or the leader of the parliamentary group. In all the parties included except for the Social Liberals and the Conservatives, the leader of the party organization is also the primary leader of the party.

All items are operationalized on scales ranging from one to five except for item number five, which only has two possible answers and two possible values (one and two). High values indicate decentralization - the national party organization is powerful - whereas low values indicate centralization - the parliamentary party group is autonomous in relation to the national party organization. The indicators are combined in a formative index in order to approximate an interval scale, which can be used in regression analyses. The index is called *Powerrel* and ranges between zero and ten.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> I use a formative index because every formal power indicator is considered to be a resource – the more resources, the more powerful. The items *cause* the party organization to be powerful and therefore the formative index is the most correct form (Diamantopoulos & Siguaw, 2006). The validity of a formative index can be tested in two ways.

Nine parties are included in the analysis: the Left Socialist (LS), the Socialist People's Party (SP), the Social Democrats (SD), the Social Liberals (SL), the Centre Democrats (CD), the Christian People's Party (CPP), the Liberals (Lib), the Conservative People's Party (Con) and the Progress Party (PP). These nine parties form approximately the whole ideological spectrum in Danish politics, and they are (or were) all rather well-established in parliament. Besides, these nine parties were the ones included in the Party Change project run by Robert Harmel and Kenneth Janda, who made an alternative measure of power relations between party organization and parliamentary party group (*parl/exparl*). This makes it possible to evaluate the correspondence between the two measures. The values of *Powerrel* rank the Danish parties more or less alike at *parl/exparl*. However, four parties are not ranked identically. These parties are RL, SD, PP and CPP. Janda and Harmel finds RL, PP and CPP more centralized and SD more decentralized. The cause of these differences is Janda and Harmel's two indicators of policy-influence. These are the least convincing indicators of the index. One of these indicators is based on subjective judgements, ranking influence from 0 to 100%. The other indicator deals with who is the primary leader of the party. If it is the leader of the party organization, the extra-parliamentary party organization is strong. However, this indicator ranks CD at the top in terms of organization, even though the choice of the leader of the organization is based on recommendation from the parliamentary party group and it has never recommended more than one candidate. Still, the two different indexes of power produce roughly similar estimations of the intra-party power relation in Danish political parties.

### **3.3 The supplementary variables: policy distance and size**

The impact of intra-party power relations on accommodation behaviour can only be analysed when all the relevant alternative explanations are included. The most important explanatory variables in coalition theory are the relative size and policy position of the party. Both of the variables have been measured through the use of different procedures. In this paper, size is given by the number of mandates. This is the simplest measure, which has the advantage of being very easy to interpret. However, an analysis using the Shapely-Shubik index has also been made to test the argument more thoroughly. Regarding legislative accommodations, policy distance

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First, all of the items should be correlated positively with a “*global item that summarizes the essence of the construct*” (Diamantopoulos & Winklhofer, 2001: 272). Second, the construct validity could be tested. There is no item which can be used as a global one. However, other studies have shown that the party organization is typically more powerful in parties on the left than on the right on a traditional left-and-right policy scale. A binary OLS-regression analysis, using *Powerrel* as dependent variable and policy position (Laver & Hunt, 1992) as independent variable, shows that the unstandardized regression coefficient of policy position is -0.595 ( $R^2 = 0,624$ ).

between the government and an opposition party is the essential information because the government is the main initiator in accommodation formation. To estimate the policy distance, I have measured policy positions. Policy positions are indeed difficult to measure, especially over time and on an interval scale. The measuring of Danish parties requires interval scale measurement, given the many parties crowded together in the middle of the political spectrum. This means that the distance between a wing-party and the next party is greater than between centre parties. Fortunately, many studies have shown that a single policy dimension is sufficient to describe the position of the Danish political parties (Skjaeveland, 2003), which makes the measuring job easier. Again, two analyses were conducted through two different measures. The first measure is a static measure based on the positions estimated by Laver and Hunt (1992). This data refers to policy positions on a certain point. However, the ordering of the parties on the traditional socio-economic dimension fits a number of previous studies rather well (Damgaard, 1973; Damgaard & Rusk, 1976; Damgaard, 1977; Holmstedt & Schou, 1987; and Laver & Schofield, 1998). The only major difference is that Lib and Con have switched positions, which probably happened in the 1980s (Damgaard, 2000). It might also be disputed whether the RL or the CD is closest to SD. Even though the estimate is static, the variable will vary because the governments vary. This has an influence on the policy distance between an opposition party and a government. The second measure is based on the manifesto data, which are dynamic but unfortunately questionable in the case of Denmark (Hansen, 2006). In both analyses, the position of the government is a mandatory weighted mean of the governing parties' policy positions.

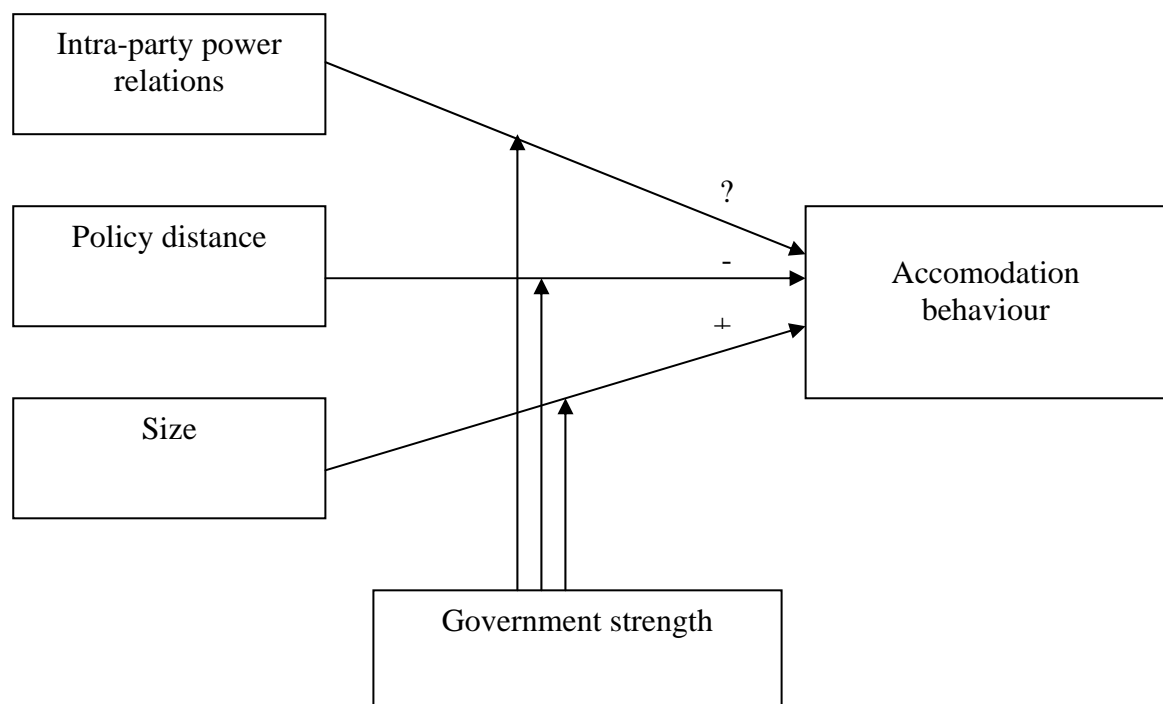
Finally, government strength is used as a conditional variable because the relative usefulness of the different bargaining resources (internal power relations, size and policy distance) might be conditioned by the strength of the government. Especially, mandates and internal power relations are expected to be less useful when the government is strong than when it is weak and more willing to make compromises. Since even a strong government should prefer coalitions with parties closest to the government in policy terms, policy distance is not expected to be conditioned by government strength. The strength of the government is estimated as the certainty that a parliamentary majority will support the government. The rare majority governments (the coalitions formed in 1957, 1968, and 1993) and minority governments with stable support in parliament (the coalitions formed in 1953, 1960, 1966, 1971 and 1978) were coded as strong governments. The minority governments without stable support parties in

parliament (the coalitions formed in 1964, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1979, 1981, 1982, 1984, 1987, 1988, 1990, 1994, 1996, and 1998) were coded as weak governments (Damgaard, 2000: 239).

### 3.4 The causal model

This final subsection combines the variables outlined above in a causal model, shown in Fig. 1.

FIGURE 1 *Illustrating the Impact of External and Internal Bargaining Power on Accommodation Behaviour*



The arrow connecting intra-party power relations and accommodation behaviour is marked with a question mark to indicate that theory is not clear about this causal mechanism. The supplementary variables (size and policy distance) are connected with accommodation behaviour by arrows marked with a plus and a minus. Based on coalition theory, the hypotheses are: 1) the more mandates a party has, the more it participates in legislative accommodations, because more often a larger party is crucial to majority formation, and 2) the smaller the policy distance between government and a opposition party on the socio-economic policy dimension, the more often it participates in legislative accommodations, because the policy costs of accommodating is smaller. Finally, government strength is illustrated as a conditional variable which affects the

causal arrows of the independent variables. The causal model will be tested in the following section.

#### 4. The impact of intra-party power relations on accommodation behaviour

A regular OLS regression is applied in the analysis of the impact of the different independent variables on accommodation behaviour. Since the same parties are observed in several government periods, a lagged value of the dependent variable is included in the model to handle multicollinearity. The results are reported in Table 1<sup>4</sup>.

The first model assesses the effect of external bargaining power (size and policy distance) on accommodation behaviour with last period's behaviour (lag) controlled. The results reveal a highly significant impact, which corresponds with the expectations: as the policy distance decreases, the accommodation behaviour increases. And as the size of the party increases, the accommodation behaviour also increases. These findings come as no surprise as they are consistent with the overall consensus in coalition theory.

TABLE 1 *Testing Effects of External and Internal Bargaining Power on Accommodation Behaviour of Danish Opposition Parties*

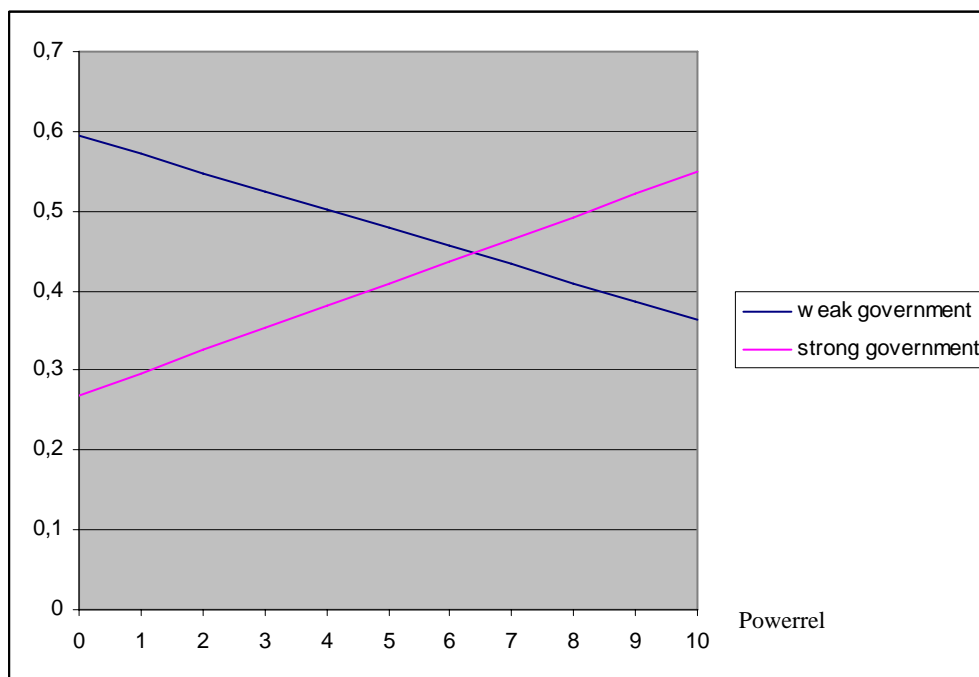
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Constant	0,437*** (0,070)	0,564*** (0,088)	0,612*** (0,096)
Policy distance (Laver & Hunt)	-0,050*** (0,012)	-0,049*** (0,013)	-0,050*** (0,013)
Size (mandatory)	0,049*** (0,014)	0,044*** (0,014)	0,034* (0,016)
Lag <sub>t-1</sub>	0,294*** (0,081)	0,204* (0,087)	0,203* (0,090)
Intra-party power relations		-0,014 (0,009)	-0,023* (0,010)
Strong government			-0,268* (0,150)
Weak government			REF
Interaction Strong*Intra-party			0,048* (0,020)
Interaction Strong*Size			0,052 (0,032)
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0,275	0,254	0,287

Note: The coefficients reported are unstandardized. N=113 (10 missing). Standard errors are given in parentheses.  
\*\*\* p=0,001, \*\*p=0,01, \*p=0,1 in two-tailed test

<sup>4</sup> The model is also analysed through the shapley-shubik index as "size" measurement and manifesto positions as the basis for policy distance. The Shapley-Shubik index gives approximately the same results: the unstandardized coefficient is 0,031 (0,021) and p=0,129. Likewise, manifesto-based policy positions produce almost the same results: the unstandardised coefficient is -0,045 (0,018) and p=0,013.

The second model assesses the impact of internal bargaining power (intra-party power relations). The result shows that the impact is not significant ( $p=0,118$ ). However, the small number of observations and the fact that the analysis is based on population data considered, one should not reject the variable all together based on the significance test. Meanwhile, it is problematic that the adjusted  $R^2$  decreases as intra-party power relations are included in the model. However, these findings might result from the mediating effect of government strength. The third model assesses the effect of government strength on the impact of the independent variables. Only the interactions which are significant in an F-test and contribute to the adjusted  $R^2$  are included in the model. The model shows interesting results. First, as expected, the impact of policy distance on accommodation behaviour is not mediated by government strength. The interaction between policy distance and government strength do not contribute to adjusted  $R^2$ . Second, intra-party power relations have a significant impact on accommodation behaviour when government strength is included ( $p=0,019$ ). Finally, the impact of intra-party power relations on accommodation behaviour varies, depending on the strength of the government. Figure 2 illustrates the interaction effect of intra-party power relations and government strength on accommodation behaviour when all other independent variables are constant.

FIGURE 2 *Illustration of Interaction between Government Strength and Intra-Party Power Relations*



The figure shows that under the rule of weak governments the accommodation behaviour of opposition party decreases as the party organization gets more powerful. But under the rule of strong governments, the accommodation behaviour of a party increases as the party organization gets more powerful. This explains the insignificance of intra-party power relations in model 2, which is caused by these contradicting tendencies. The negative coefficient of intra-party power relations in model 2 is due to a larger number of weak governments than strong ones. Hence, the analysis shows that the impact of intra-party power relations on accommodation behaviour is dependent on the bargaining situation. When the government is weak – is in minority without stable support in parliament – strong party organizations make opposition parties less efficient in coalition bargaining. This supports Strom's argument. But when the government is strong – is in majority or in minority with stable support in parliament – strong party organizations make opposition parties more efficient in coalition bargaining. This supports the argument of Maor.

The result might be caused by the fact that strong governments make fewer accommodations than weak governments (Klemmensen, 2005; Pedersen, 2005). However, the absolute number of accommodations is strongly insignificant and has almost no effect when included in the model. The positive effect of decentralization under the rule of strong governments is mainly caused by the behaviour of the Socialist Peoples Party (SP) in three government periods 1966-1973. In 1966-1968, SP supported the Social Democratic minority government, and though it seems like decentralization has made SP a more powerful coalition negotiator, this decentralization was actually the reason why SP did not join the government, which was otherwise the preferred line of action of the leader of SP (Mader, 1979). The majority government consisting of RL, Lib and Con (1968-1971) only made one accommodation in which both SD and SP participated. SP was also the most significant support of the Social Democratic government 1971-1973. However, the accommodating behaviour of SP can only be understood in the political context of the time. All parties except SP favoured Danish membership of EEC. As membership should be ratified by referendum, it was crucial to accommodate the SP in order to moderate the party's rhetoric against the government. Moreover, RL, Lib and Con were still united as a block which made SP even more crucial for the SD-government (Kaarstad, 1992: 474-479). Hence, the accommodating attitude of SD was the reason why SP could make accommodation agreements that could satisfy the party organization.



The content of accommodations might also explain the varying effect of intra-party power relations, depending on government strength. When the government is weak, controversial policy-decision can only be made in cooperation with the opposition. Hence, opposition parties have to take responsibility for unpopular policy decisions and have to compromise on essential policy preferences. This might cause the ideologically driven activists in the party organization to block coalition negotiations. However, a strong government can make controversial policy decision by itself, and accommodations can be settled on consensus policies, which would cause less opposition in the party organization. In fact, only weak governments made accommodation about taxes and major economic reforms, which are the most salient issues dividing Danish parties.

The analysis shows that the impact of intra-party power relations on accommodation behaviour of Danish opposition parties is mediated by government strength. A closer look at the accommodation behaviour of SP, however, reveals that intra-party power relations was the primary reason why the party did not join the government in 1966 and that the accommodation behaviour of the party in 1971-1973 was primary caused by SD's strategy to make SP silent through cooperation. Hence, the analysis supports the argument that decentralized parties are less efficient in inter-party negotiation. Decentralization prevents the party from fully exploiting its external bargaining power in coalition formation.

## **5. Conclusion**

Three different predictions about the impact of power relations within political parties on their coalition behaviour have been discussed and tested. First, the coalition theory assumes that parties are unitary actors, which means that power relations within parties should have no impact on coalition formation. Second, Strom (1990) has claimed that parties with decentralized decision procedures are less effective in coalition negotiations, because they are constrained by their ideologically motivated activists. Finally, Maor (1998) has suggested that decentralized parties are stronger in coalition negotiations because they are able to handle intra-party conflicts within the party as opposed to in public.

The results show that Danish opposition parties in which the parliamentarians are able to negotiate policy compromises comparatively independently of their national party organization participate in legislative accommodations more often than parties in which the national party organization has control. However, the power relations inside political parties only have a significant impact on the coalition formation when the government is weak, which means that

the government is in minority. The traditional explanations offered by game theory on coalition formation are significant, no matter the strength of the government. Hence, policy distance and mandatory power was found to be important bargaining resources. Still, even though the test was hard, because the operationalization of the dependent variable minimized intra-party conflict and because short term office pay-offs were not negotiated and only successful coalition negotiations were included in the analysis, the analysis showed that internal party relations do contribute to the explanation of coalition formation. Hence, the evidence examined in this paper proves consistent with the claim that decentralized decision procedures make parties less efficient in inter-party negotiations.

However, this paper not only offers a conclusion but also new questions. An important question is whether the coalition behaviour of the parties in which the national party organization was in control really was dependent on internal power relations, or whether the parliamentarians of these parties themselves were less prone to give up policy preferences. This question touches upon the fundamental assumption about the different motives of activists and professional politicians and can only be answered through in-depth case studies. Another important question is whether the same results can be found in other countries or settings. A comparative study would most certainly strengthen the argument.

The research presented in this paper illustrates how intra-party politics might be included in the analysis of coalition formation in a more systematic manner, which would shed light on how intra-party politics have an impact on inter-party politics. The paper reveals that inter-party politics cannot be fully understood in isolation from the organizational circumstances that constrain the behaviour of our politicians.

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