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## On the Relevance of Exclamation Mark Motions

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### Abstract

Whether a motion will pass in the vote in a legislative body like a parliament depends on the power the party has that proposes the motion and on the outcome of the discussion between the parliament and the government. A third factor, however, the intention expressed in the motion and also might play a role. The motion might be used as intended. Now, it is in line with the task the parliamentarian has controlling the government. The parliamentarian might ask to adjust policy or might ask for additional information to enable control. Motions in which this is asked are labeled question mark motion. However, one might also distinguish exclamation mark motions. Such motions are often used in the context of agenda setting. It is shown that the intention of the motion has no significant effect on the probability to pass the vote. This is followed by a discussion of possible reasons for this finding.

**Keywords:** Parliamentary Motions; Cognitive Mapping; Social Dilemmas; Collective Decision-making; Negotiations; Text Analysis

### 1. Introduction

In election campaigns, political parties promise a lot of improvements to their voters. Later on, after the elections, these parties have to realize these promises. If a party becomes a member of the governing coalition, many of these promises have to become visible in the coming policy. Realizing all promises at once is not realistic because compromises with other parties are necessary. However, also when a party will become a member of the opposition, she will try to realize her promises. The party might do this by trying to make that what should not happen in her view will not take place or in any way by trying to give policies a move into the direction she desires.

Individual coalition parties also might want to adjust the policy when at some point a party believes more can be realized than is agreed on with the other coalition parties. How much can be realized depends on the space that parties gave each other during negotiations. This space is used in the debate, especially in the use and formulation of motions, expressions of a judgment or a wish, a party tries to find out what is possible and what not.

Here, motions become important. Motions are the most encompassing form of parliamentary activity. The motion is an official statement, in which (one or more members of) a parliament (usually as representative[s] of one or more parties) in general asks some act (usually a change in policy) from the government. The motion is a way to make visible where parties and government stand with respect to an issue under discussion and it also makes clear what the parliament wants from the government.

To get a motion passed one needs the support of other parties, but in the final voting also, the standpoint taken by the government is relevant. Actually, the position taken by parliament and government plays an important role. This position based on interactions during the debate can be made visible using a game-theoretic representation in a cognitive map. This representation shows forms of cooperation or conflict between the parliament and the government (Popping and Wittek, 2015).

Today, it looks as if a culture is growing to use motions also to draw attention to a particular position. The party wants to inform the audience/public about this position in this way. Whether this

position has broad support in the House is less relevant. Proposing a motion has become more important than the outcome of the vote regarding that motion; participating is more important than winning. The goal of this paper is to investigate whether this tendency is true. Are such motions used in a specific field, do they pass the vote, who proposes them?

The structure of the paper is as follows: First, motions are introduced and arguments to propose them are presented. In the next sections, the outcome of the voting on the motion, and especially, the factors, on which this is dependent, get attention. The information about arguments to propose a motion is added to a model that explains the outcome of the voting. In the section, that follows the data are introduced, and after that, the results of the analyses are presented, and finally, conclusions are drawn on the role of the intention of the motion.

## 2. Arguments for Proposing Motions

In performing, their task members of parliament have various recourses at their disposal to supervise the government. The motion is one of these. Originally, this instrument was intended for members of the House of Representatives to allow this supervisory role. For this, of course, in the first place, the debate with the government is used. After such a debate a motion can be used to pass judgment in a dispute with the responsible secretary. When a motion passes, a clear signal is given to the government.

In the Netherlands, motions proposed in parliament have to pass the vote. In case, this does not happen the government does not have to take them into account. When they passed the vote, however, the government is not obliged to do what is asked for, but usually, the government does.

The probability of getting a motion passed in the voting is most of all determined by whom proposed it, a member of a coalition or an opposition party and by the fact whether before the vote takes place parliament and government share their feeling about the motion or not. The debate itself generally does not make these positions that clear.

One argument to propose a motion is that one wants to adapt the government's policy as was indicated above. Sometimes, the motion is used to record the conclusion of debate. Another purpose is to ask the government to make some information available. Remember, one task of the parliament is controlling the government, to be able to do so relevant information is necessary. The motion might also be used to find out where the government stands. These are the arguments that occur most and that are intended in the law.

Over time, however, motions did get a different function. The signal that is issued with a motion increasingly focuses on the world outside the House of Representatives (Schutte, 2009). Today, motions are also used to draw attention to a particular position. Whether this position has broad support in the House is less important. Proposing a motion has become more important than the outcome of the vote regarding that motion; participating is more important than winning. This is shown when we consider that the number of motions proposed in the last 20 years in the Netherlands is multiplied by a factor of five. Adjusting the policy did get a subordinate role. Therefore, motions have lost relevance as a means of control. In spite of this, altered function motions still contain information on the way parties not only try to exploit their space to negotiate but also how motions due to a lack of space to negotiate are used for other purposes.

Parliamentarians from coalition parties have other considerations when proposing and voting on motions than parliamentarians of opposition parties. They want to see their policies realized, and they want the coalition government to continue. Dutch coalition partners do not accept another coalition partner supporting or favoring motions that go against the coalition agreement (Holzhacker, 2002. p. 472). However, governing parties are interested in protecting their party's interest in the government agreement and less in protecting the government as a whole. If a governing party in the coalition is discontented with a government agreement, the party may try to find partners in the opposition who support their position to change government policy (Holzhacker, 2002. p. 473).

The fact that proposing a motion might be more relevant than getting it passed might be viewed from the perspective of agenda setting and building. An Agenda is a "set of issues that are communicated

in a hierarchy of importance at a point in time” (Rogers and Dearing, 1988). An issue is a social problem, which is often contradictory. Agenda setting is the creation of public awareness and concern of salient issues by the news media. A motion might serve in this context. It is used to get the issue on the agenda, or the proposer wants to claim that the issue has his or her attention. He or she is the one working on the problem. Within the European Union, this is quite common. With respect to this, union’s policy Princen (2011) distinguishes two challenges in putting issues on the agenda: Gaining attention and building credibility. Gaining attention for an issue implies that one tries to get (potential) supporters to pay attention to the issue. In our situation, these supporters might be not only the other members of the House but also the government, and even the audience, the voters. Building sufficient credibility means that these others have to become convinced that the proposing party is well placed to deal with the issue.

Research on agenda-formation processes suggests that the relative salience of an issue on the media agenda determines how the public agenda is formed. A politician can show that an issue has the attention, and as it is already in the media, it can be entered into the discussion in parliament now. The parliamentarian can also have an own issue, but this can be brought to the public for support via the media. Introducing it at once in parliament is not excluded, but has risks; the other parliamentarians should be prepared.

This leads to the following research question: Is it possible to trace such motions that are actually only meant to make a statement and, if so, do they have any effect on the outcome of the voting?

### 3. Known Factors Affecting the Voting

Popping and Wittek (2015) investigated factors that affect the outcome of the voting on the motions. Three groups of variables have been distinguished that play a role: (1) The fact whether the proposer of the motion is a member of a coalition or an opposition party, (2) potential voting power the proposing party of parties have themselves, and (3) the potential power the government has. Hereafter, the three groups are discussed.

#### 3.1. Proposer is from coalition or opposition party

Since the introduction of dualism (i.e., the separation of powers between parliament and cabinet) into Dutch politics, one of the functions of parliament is to control the government. As a consequence, the initiative for motions does not only come from the opposition but also from parties of the governing coalition. The opposition usually wants to follow some other policy than the governing parties. Therefore, they will use all opportunities they have at their disposal to realize as much as possible of their wishes. Holzhaecker (2002, p. 471) showed that Dutch governing parties tend to protect their party’s interests rather than the interests of the government as a whole (Holzhaecker, 2002, p. 473). So, if a governing party in the coalition is not satisfied with a government agreement or some plan should be realized earlier or faster, the party tries to find partners in the opposition who support their position to change government policy. Hence, the number of proposing parties allows inferring the so-called voting potential of motion, i.e., the number of favorable votes a motion might elicit.

#### 3.2. Power parties have

Parties propose motions. In general, there are two reasons to do so. Usually, the party wants to change a policy or additional information to be able to perform her control task before it was already mentioned that today parties might also ask attention for some policy or want to make a statement.

Support among members in parliament is measured in two ways. First, there is more support for a motion when more members of other parties than the proposing one subscribe a motion. Second, one might also look at the voting potential. In a lot of countries, among which the Netherlands, parties usually vote as a block. Therefore, the interaction within the parliament can be analyzed in terms of the interaction occurring between the parties not among individual members of parliament (Andeweg, 1992, p. 167; Holzhaecker, 2002, p. 471). It implies that in general when a party subscribes a motion, all members of that party in parliament will vote in favor of the motion. Therefore, it is commonly already

known on beforehand how many votes a motion will get as a minimum. This number is the voting potential. Having the support of a party having many members is more attractive than the support of a small party.

Hypothesis 1 (Voting Power): The likelihood that a motion is accepted increases (a) if it is proposed by a member of a coalition party, (b) the higher the number of parties supporting it, or (c) the higher the voting potential.

### 3.3. Power the government has

Support from the side of the government is also relevant. In case, the government supports the motion or has at least sympathy the probability might increase that the motion will pass the vote. The support becomes visible in the advice the government has (according to the law) to provide with respect to the motion. The advice is positive or negative. Negative arguments that are often used are the following (Popping, 2013):

- The issue is not in the field covered by the secretary;
- The House is not permitted to decide on the issue;
- The government is not permitted to decide on the issue;
- The government cannot force others to do what is asked for;
- The issue can be solved in another way than proposed;
- The information in the motion is not clear or not correct;
- Unwanted consequences are possible;
- Not enough time available (as there is a final date).

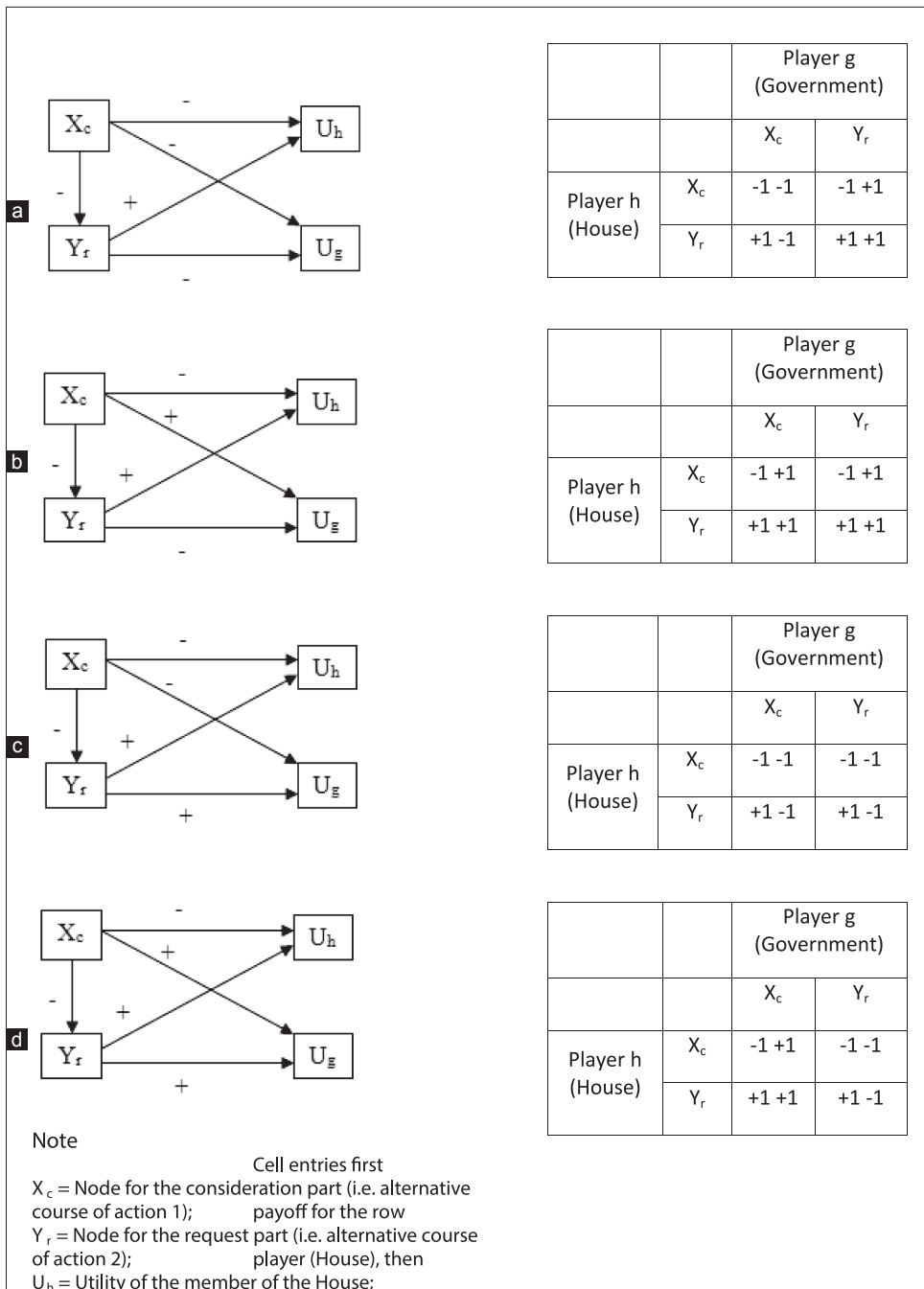
Positive arguments are more difficult to categorize. The government usually states that it is a good argument and she will support it, has sympathy for it, or uses a comparable formulation.

The advice itself does not contain any information regarding the negotiation process that took place in parliament. This information, however, becomes clear in a cognitive map containing a game-theoretic representation of what is going on. Therefore, it is more useful to look at such a representation.

Parties propose motions, the government advises with respect to accepting the motion or not. The interaction can be represented as a game. Will the government follow the proposing party? The party takes the position that the government did nothing (yet) to overcome a problem or has not recognized a problem yet, and therefore, the party (already) offers a good solution. If the government agrees, it is hurried for the party. However, if the government makes clear that she already acted as was asked for, there is a vain parliamentarian. In both situations, however, there is cooperation. The government might disagree with the motion; this might concern not only the procedure but also the content. The government already acted and what is proposed is not in line with this or even opposes it. If the request is in line, however, the government can take the position that the motion was not necessary. Hence, there is a conflict. This also is true when the government did not act (yet), but nevertheless disagrees with that what is proposed. The cognitive maps of game-theoretic representations that are used represent coordination (coordination game, battle of the sexes game) or conflict (social dilemma game, pure competition game). The models are summarized in Figure 1. The proposer of the motion is negative about an issue and proposes some change to make the judgment positive. The government was at first negative or positive about the issue, and at the end of the discussion (so in the advice), she is negative or positive. This means the government can change position. A more detailed elaboration is presented in Popping and Wittek (2015).

Both positions taken by the government might have a consequence for the motion. If the government is willing to do what is asked for the motion might be withdrawn, because it is not necessary anymore. The proposing party, however, might also recognize the motion will not make it, and therefore, withdraws the motion. It also happens quite often that the motion does not come to the vote. The proposer knows what will happen in the vote but still has the possibility to bring the motion to the vote. He or she still has a possibility to explain that what is asked for is important for the party.

**Figure 1:** Graphical representation of different types of social dilemmas and payoff matrices, (a) Coordination game, (b) Battle of the sexes game, (c) Prisoner’s dilemma game, (d) Pure competition game



Hypothesis 2 (Social dilemmas): The likelihood that motion is accepted decreases with the severity of the underlying social dilemma, being highest for motions of the coordination and battle of the sexes type, and lowest for motions of the prisoner’s dilemma and pure competition type.

### 3.4. Power of the intention of the motion

Parliamentarians might have different intentions when they propose a motion. There is a distinction between motions which aim at changing the government's policy position and motions that do not do this but that seem to be designed to make a statement (Goeree and Popping, 2014). This distinction is in line with Schutte (2009), a publication that was already mentioned. The first group of motions always contains a request to adjust policy or to provide information. Therefore, the motion is labeled a question mark motion. The second group always contains a statement about the policy, and therefore, is labeled an exclamation mark motion. The exclamation mark motions are divided into positive and negative exclamation mark motions. Positive exclamation mark motions appreciate the policy in a positive way and will, therefore, rather be proposed by coalition parties than by opposition parties. Such motions are exclusive. For negative exclamation mark motions the opposite applies. Opposition parties use negative exclamation mark motions to react against the government and to ask for attention for this actuality. There are several arguments to do so: (1) the party is rebelling against the government in general, (2) the party wants to get an issue on the agenda as she believes it is important, (3) the party wants to emphasize that (a part of) an issue that is already on the agenda needs still more attention Andeweg, 1992. It is expected that such motions will especially be proposed when the space for negotiation is minimal because it is no use to try to change the government policy position for those files. Publicity is the highest a party can get.

With respect to issues where not everything is already set, the opposition will see an opportunity to realize some of her own goals. In such situations, it may be useful to try to send the government into a particular direction using question mark motions.

With regard to question mark motions also two types are distinguished, namely, motions containing a request for action and motions requesting information. Using this last type of motion might sometimes be a way to postpone a policy decision. Before the intended policy can start the government has to look at something that might have some meaning for the decision. Such motions are not recognized based on the formulation of the text; the information should come from the proposer.

Problematic is the recognition of motions that are intended to make a statement. In fact, the person proposing the motion should classify it as such, but it is highly questionable whether someone is willing to do so as it is not exactly in line with the motivation included in the law. A next possibility is that clear features are available based on which an outsider, i.e., an investigator can decide whether the motion's goal is to make a point. Sometimes, the goal will be obvious, but in most situations, it will not be possible. A third possibility is to use a specific operationalization which can be used as indication for the type of motion that is looked for. In that case, the exclamation mark motion is one such operationalization of a motion that is intended to make a statement. This type of motion is obviously recognized as clear criteria can be formulated as will be shown later.

We can investigate whether exclamation motion or not effects the result of the voting. No matter the outcome, the next point of discussion is whether the operationalization seems a good one or not.

Following the reasoning above, a new hypothesis is formulated:

Hypothesis 3 (Making a statement): The likelihood that motion is accepted decreases if the proposer seems to have the intention to propose the motion to make a statement.

To test these hypotheses, we need in part to repeat the analyses performed in Popping and Wittek (2015), the fact whether the proposer seems to want to make a statement is added.

## 4. Data

The data set employed in Goeree and Popping (2014) are used. Here, motions and votes on motions in two fields have been collected for two governments. The Balkenende government was in charge in the Netherlands from February 22, 2007, until October 14, 2010. This is including the caretaker period that began on February 20, 2010. As the caretaker status in the first place means that little new policy is developed and motions do not deal with new policies, there is no reason to keep these motions out of the research. The Rutte government lasted from October 14, 2010, until April 23, 2012, the day the



cabinet stood back because the tolerating party (see here after) did not want to support the government anymore due to measures to be taken.

The motions used in the study cover two fields: Environmental policy (including animal welfare) and migration (especially immigration) policy. Both fields periodically revisit the agenda, which makes that a lot of motions are available. These two fields were necessary because of the study, for which the data were originally collected. The idea was that environmental policy did not get special attention in one of the two governments. The issue was supposed to be both times equally important as with respect to this issue there were no ideological differences between the two governments. This does not hold for the migration policy. The issue had a lot of attention in the Rutte government; the government agreement contained a lot of rules regarding the issue. In part, this was necessary because, to get a majority, the parties participating in the government needed the support of an extra party. This extra party did not participate in the government but tolerated the government in exchange for the extra rules. Migration and also integration constitute a new line of conflict in Dutch parliament since 2002. Andeweg and Irwin, 2005; Kriesi and Frey (2008) showed that this issue of migration and integration is part of the left-right line of conflict. The increased parliamentary attention to migration has not resulted in a new line of conflict: Instead, the left-right line of conflict has been reinforced.

The Rutte government was outgoing until September 12, 2012. During this time, 68 motions have been proposed, 20 on migration policy, and 48 on environmental policy. However, as the agreement in the toleration construction was no longer valid, these motions are not entered in the analyses.

Motions and results of the voting are found using the search engine official publications' on a website provided by the Dutch government ("overheid.nl"). By searching on the period and the code for the field, the necessary data could be found. The motions and the corresponding results of the voting are copied to a text document. Next, with the help of a computer program, all relevant information is exported to a data file. This file contains variables such as date, issue, name, and party of the proposer of the motion and cosignatories and the results of the voting.

With regard to the delimitation of the two fields, a fairly broad definition is used. Issues within the fields received attention during the whole period that is investigated. Only the final version of the motion is included, i.e., motions that have been adapted are not considered. Besides, motions are classified as exclamation mark motions or question mark motions. Details concerning the way, this division was made follow hereafter. The division is based on the formulation of the text in the motion, not on a classification by the proposer of the motion. Details and information on the accuracy of the coding can be found in Goeree and Popping (2014). In total 296 motions have been selected, 49 of these have not come to the vote. Among the ones that did not come to the vote were 9 exclamation mark motions (1 was withdrawn, 4 have expired, and 4 have been replaced). One motion was addressed to the House itself, for that reason, the position taken by the government is not known. Now, 246 motions remain. A total of 51 of these motions (just over 20%) are exclamation mark motions, based on the way of measuring that is explained in the next section. The ratio of motions on environment versus motions on migration that came to the vote does not differ for the two cabinets ( $\chi^2 = 0.47$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $P = 0.47$ ).

## 5. Measures

The dataset consists of one dependent variable (acceptance of motion), eight independent variables, and one control variable.

Acceptance: The dependent variable Acceptance was coded "1" if the majority of the members of the House of Representatives voted in favor of the motion. This information is publicly available on many websites, among which [www.overheid.nl](http://www.overheid.nl).

Proposer: The variable Proposer was coded "1" if the main proposer of the motion was a member of a coalition party and "0" if it was a member of the opposition.

Number of proposing parties: For each motion, the number of parties proposing it was counted.

Voting potential: For each motion, it was determined which parties supported it during the proposal stage. Subsequently, the number of members in the House of Representatives pertaining to these parties was counted. The variable voting potential consists of this count.



Coordination game: The motion was coded “1” if the underlying cognitive map represented a coordination game and “0” otherwise.

Battle of the sexes game: The motion was coded “1” if the underlying cognitive map represented a battle of the sexes game and “0” otherwise.

Prisoner’s dilemma game: The motion was coded “1” if the underlying cognitive map represented a prisoner’s dilemma game and “0” otherwise.

Pure competition game: The motion was coded “1” if the underlying cognitive map represented a pure competition game and “0” otherwise.

Cabinet: In case the motion was proposed during the Balkenende IV government, this variable is coded “1,” and in case it has been proposed during the Rutte I government, the code “0” is used.

Exclamation: The variable exclamation was coded “1” if the motion was considered as an exclamation mark motion and “0” if it was a question mark motion. Exclamation and question mark motions are recognized based on a number of criteria. A category is assigned to a specific motion if at least half of the criteria set for that category are met. An exclamation mark motion contains a reference to existing policy or to an action or decision by a Secretary or by the Government. The motion puts this policy or this action or decision in a positive context using arguments that subscribe the policy or decision or action or in a negative context by the use of argumentation that rejects the policy or decision or action or that suggests a different approach. The motion includes a request or instruction for which it is clear from the beginning how the Secretary will respond. The highly subjective or emotional wording of the motion shows that making a statement is the main purpose of the motion. The question mark motions contain a reference to existing policies or to a situation or event for which the existing policies are not well prepared. In the motion, an undesired development or an undesired effect is observed. The motion contains a realistic request to adapt or to create new policies or take it over from another body. The relatively neutral and not offensive wording of the motion shows that achieving change is the main purpose of the motion. It might also be that the motion includes a request for information so that later a more careful assessment can take place (Bara et al., 2007).

## 6. Results

The first to be looked at is whether the exclamation mark motions have any impact on the probability of the vote being in favor or not. This is shown in Table 1.

Logistic regression is applied, the outcome of the vote is the dependent variable (reference category is rejection of the motion). Six models were estimated. In each model, one or more independent variables are entered in line with the theory: First, the control variable (the cabinet), next whether the main proposer is member of a coalition party or not, as third the variables related to the voting power, after that the game-theoretic representations, and finally, the type of motion (exclamation mark or not). The outcomes of the logistic regression analysis as presented in the first four models in this table are not different from the ones in Popping and Wittek (2015); from model 5, on the type of motion comes in, Hypothesis 1 is confirmed. The probability to pass the vote is far greater when the proposing parliamentarian is a member of one of the coalition parties. This also is true for Hypothesis 2. The probability that the motion will not pass the vote increases when the discussion about the motion between parliament and government can be represented as a conflict game (pure competition or prisoner’s dilemma). Hypothesis 3, the type of motion (exclamation mark or not) shows a significant impact on whether the motion will pass the vote or not, is rejected.

To learn how it is possible that no confirmation is found for the third hypothesis, one has to look at the distribution of the question mark and exclamation mark motions. This distribution is highly skewed Baumgartner and Mahoney (2008). Already for that reason alone the variable is a difficult one to be used in predictions.

In the final model (model 6), 87.80% of the outcomes of the vote is predicted correctly. This implies that 30 out of the 246 outcomes are not predicted correctly; 10 motions are rejected while according to the model, they should have been accepted, 2 of these are exclamation mark motions. On the other hand, 20 motions have been accepted while this should not have been the case, 3 of these are exclamation

**Table 1: Results logistic regression (B-values)**

Variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Cabinet	-0.450	-0.602	-0.569	0.571	0.594	
Main proposer from coalition party		3.532*	2.057*	1.425	1.446	1.850*
Number of proposing parties <sup>#</sup>			-0.224	-0.299	-0.259	
Voting potential			0.048*	0.051*	0.046*	0.033*
Prisoner's dilemma game				-2.422*	-491*	-2.946*
Pure competition game				-2.601*	-2.661*	-2.956*
Battle of sexes game				1.183	1.098	
Type of motion					-1.032	-1.143
R <sup>2</sup>	0.02	0.35	0.43	0.60	0.61	0.60

Dependent variable: Result voting (reference: Not passed). \*Significant at the 0.05 level, n=246

mark motions. There is no difference in distribution between these characteristics. 4 motions were on migration (2 of which passed the vote, all were question mark motions) and 26 on the environment (here, 15 out of the 21 question mark motions passed the vote and 3 out of the 5 exclamation mark motions). The 21 motions for which a conflict model was found in the discussion between parliament and the government passed the vote except for 2 and only 1 out of 9 motions that gave rise to cooperation passed. This implies that in 8 situations, the government was willing to follow the motion, but the House decided that this was not necessary. This concerns for example motion 21501-08, nr. 361, where the government is asked to adapt existing plans concerning the environment as the EU is preparing a new plan that contains more restrictions and the government is also asked to perform a national cost-benefit analysis using the plans the EU is talking about.

Most wrongly predicted were question mark motions on the environment: 15 conflict motions passed and 5 coordination motions have been rejected. Most of these motions were about animals in a national park that had problems in surviving in winter due to the cold weather. Parliamentarians wanted the government to intervene in the policy of those responsible by demanding measures for the animals. Questionable was whether the government should honor the layman parliamentarian's feelings of pity or the expert's policy according to which the animals had to survive by themselves. This all informs on why the results of voting are not predicted correctly; it does not inform on the impact of the type of motion on the voting.

To find some more background concerning situations, in which exclamation mark motions have been proposed Table 2 is presented. The ratio between question mark and exclamation mark motions increases when one looks at the number of motions in each group that passes the vote. 37.5% of the question mark motions passed the vote, and this is so for only 10% of the exclamation motions. This is a much lower percentage. These 10% were all motions about the environment; exclamation mark motions about migration never passed the vote. This indicates that the majority of the members in the parliament did not need the statement expressed in the motion. The government also did not need these motions. The distribution of the four game-theoretical representations among these motions is different from the distribution found among the question mark motions ( $\chi^2 = 9.49$ ,  $df = 3$ ,  $P = 0.023$ ). For a relatively greater part of the exclamation mark motions, a conflict representation is found. One might argue that considering the tolerating party as a coalition party is not correct. Considering this party as a separate group does not affect the results of the log-linear regression.

It is still open now whether this is a general idea or whether this is based on what is agreed on by the parties supporting the government. During the Rutte government, 9 exclamation mark motions have been proposed, during the Balkenende government, these were 41 exclamation motions. Even if we take the length of the period of government for each cabinet in mind, it looks as if under Balkenende it was worth for the parties to make a point under Rutte they learned it is meaningless.

Before it was mentioned that in case a party only wants to make a statement support of other parties is not relevant. For that reason, the number of proposing parties has to be at least less when

**Table 2: Motions that passed the vote or not**

Type motion	Issue	Government	Vote reject	Pass	Total
Question mark	Environment	Rutte	28 (32.9)	22 (36.7)	50
		Balkenende	57 (67.1)	37 (62.7)	94
	Migration	Rutte	13 (34.2)	3 (23.1)	16
		Balkenende	25 (65.8)	10 (76.9)	35
Exclamation mark	Environment	Rutte	5 (15.2)	4 (80.0)	9
		Balkenende	28 (84.8)	1 (20.0)	29
	Migration	Rutte	1 (7.7)	-	1
		Balkenende	12 (92.3)	-	12
Total			169	77	246

this is going on. The mean number of proposing parties for a question mark motion is 1.80, and for an exclamation mark motion, it is 1.30. The difference is significant ( $t = 2.87$ ,  $df = 244$ ,  $P = 0.00$ ).

It is also believed that in general exclamation motions should not be used as they do not contribute to the general policy that is needed for a country. For this reason, other parties will not honor such motions, and therefore, will vote against such motions. This is also supported by the data. The number of exclamation mark motions that came to the vote is 51, 49 have been proposed by the opposition, and only 5 passed. 27.2% of the rejected motions were exclamation mark motions, 6.5% of the motions that passed were exclamation mark motions.

We have not been able to show that the fact whether an exclamation mark or a question mark motion is at hand contributes to the outcome of the voting. This result, however, needs more support from other sources. The distinction between the two types of motions is based on characteristics in the wording of the motions. The question whether this is a good method has not been answered.

## 7. Conclusion and Discussion

In this study, it was found that the fact whether the proposer of the motions is a member of a coalition party or not, the voting potential, and the representation of the type of game, as found in the discussion between parliament and government, have an impact on the result of the voting. It was not shown whether the fact that an exclamation mark or a question mark type motion is concerned matters. Exclamation mark motions are not intended according to the law. Therefore, they should not occur, but still, it happens.

It looks like the type of motion does not play a role in the voting process. Further study, however, on the question how to determine whether a motion is only intended to make a statement or not is necessary. In this study, the distinction between exclamation mark and question mark type motions is based on characteristics found in the wording of the motion. Questionable is whether not only the criteria used are sufficiently accurate but also criteria that have not been considered at all might play a role. It even might turn out that it is impossible to make a decision based on the wording. Especially in the wording, it does not always allow an accurate decision one only can obtain the required information from the proposer of the motion. It is not to be expected, however, that parliamentarians will confess in public that making a statement is the reason for proposing a motion. Therefore, another method for deciding on this is necessary. Therefore, a choice based on a decision by raters remains necessary. This requires that the criteria for the decision should at least be considered once more. The same types of problems do rise if one concentrates on slowing down processes.

## 8. Notes

1. Other arguments might also play some role here. A party might make a statement to claim the

ownership of the issue or to remember others (the government, other parties, the audience) to the fact that the issue is hers. In the context of voting especially emphasizing the competence ownership, offering the best solutions (Lachat, 2014), might be relevant. This argument can be seen as part of the arguments listed in the text.

2. The party program of a new group that was formed in 2002 focused on migration and integration and advocated reform of the public sector. The leader, Fortuyn, dominated the following general election campaign. 9 days before, this election Fortuyn was shot (Andeweg and Irwin, 2005. p. 16). In the next election, the party lost her seats again, but another group took over. This new party also shares the focus on integration and migration. The party had the tolerating agreement with the Rutte government.
3. The coding of the two types of motions was performed by two independently operating raters. The amount of interrater agreement found after the coding task was finished is  $\pi = 0.84 = (0.93-0.55)/(1.00-0.55)$ ; standard deviation  $\sigma = 0.00$ ,  $z = 238.54$ ,  $P = 0.00$ ;  $n = 296$  (Scott, 1955; Popping, 2010), which is in general considered as a good result. The coding of the games was already performed in an earlier phase of the project and is reported in Popping (2013). The interrater agreement was computed for two characteristics that are used in the game-theoretic model. The first concerned the part in the motion on the consideration as judged by the government. Here, the coding by two raters, others than the ones coding the types, resulted in  $\pi = 0.85$ . The second step concerned the coding of the judgment of the request part by the government. Here, the result was  $\pi = 0.96$ . With respect to the argument for the motivation of this judgment, the outcome  $\pi = 0.84$  was found.
4. Sometimes, it may be argued that question mark motions, in which the proposer asks for information are in fact exclamation mark motions. Such motions are especially intended to slow down a specific process. The sample contains 7 motions in which information is asked for. In case these motions would have been coded as exclamation mark motions, one would not find different outcomes in the analyses presented in Table 2. The same variables remain showing significant and insignificant effects; also, the explained variance does not change. Therefore, we do not consider this view any further.

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