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Party Policy and Cabinet Portfolios in the Netherlands, 1998: Results from an Expert Survey

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Abstract

This research report gives the results of an expert survey conducted among Dutch political scientists around the time of the 1998 election in the Netherlands. It extends and updates a series of expert surveys on party policy positions and the relative importance of cabinet portfolios in the Netherlands. Building on earlier work by Morgan (1976) and Castles and Mair (1984) this present series began in 1989, when Laver and Hunt conducted expert surveys in 24 countries including the Netherlands (Laver and Hunt 1992). The Dutch expert survey was repeated after the 1994 election. Other updates have taken place in Britain (Laver 1998a), Ireland (Laver 1993, 1998b), and Japan (Laver and Kato 1998). Since the first work by Morgan, and Castle and Mair, data reporting expert locations of political parties have been used in a wide range of applications, including studies of coalition behaviour, of the impact of parties on public policy, and of coherence and congruence within party families and transnational party alliances. The ongoing series of national expert surveys, of which this report forms a part, is therefore intended to both add to and update the resources available to scholars engaged in cross-national analyses in these and other fields.

1 Introduction

Although expert surveys have obvious limitations (Budge forthcoming; Mair 1999), they are seen to enjoy three advantages over alternative approaches to estimating party positions. First, precisely because they reflect the judgements of experts, they acquire a certain weight and legitimacy. In particular, they avoid the danger of popular misconceptions, which is a problem with mass surveys, and that of bias, which is a problem with surveys of political elites. Second, they have the advantage of being 'of the moment'; that is, they allow for a judgement of party position based on what the party is currently doing or saying, rather than being based exclusively on assumptions derived from

past party behaviour. Third, expert judgements are relatively accessible to the analyst, and reasonably comprehensive. For example, they avoid the need to pore over party programmes and the need to subject these to various data reduction techniques. Moreover, the analysis of a party programme and the translation of its contents into a specific party location within a given policy space clearly risks much more slippage and uncertainty than simply taking a policy dimension and asking a well-read jury to locate a party along it. In this sense, expert judgements permit the collection of highly *comparable* and *standardized* data across a very wide variety of party systems, and for this reason alone they have proved popular in a variety of different cross-national analyses.

2 The 1998 Dutch expert survey

The 1998 Dutch expert survey precisely replicated the methodology of the 1994 Dutch study, dropping three of the ten scales used in 1994 and adding three new ones. Expert respondents were asked to place each of the nine Dutch parties that won legislative seats in the 1998 election on each of ten policy scales.¹ They were also asked to rate the importance of each scale for each party, and to rank all Dutch cabinet portfolios in order of importance.²

Five of the original eight Laver-Hunt scales were used again in 1998. These were: tax cuts versus public services; policy on abortion and homosexuality; environmental policy; pro-versus anti-clericalism; and decentralization of decision-making. (The latter scale had been dropped in 1994 and was restored in 1998). The foreign policy scale was redefined to reflect attitudes towards the NATO and the WEU, in the light of the disintegration of the former USSR and the end of the Cold War. Two of the four new scales added in 1994 were retained. These dealt with policy on the European Union and immigration.³ In addition, two new scales were added in 1998. The first dealt with public access to information and the second was a general left-right scale, locating parties taking all aspects of policy into account. This latter scale replicates the general left-right scale used by Castles and Mair in 1984. More precise scale definitions can be seen in Table 1, which reports basic results for each scale.⁴ (All tables are gathered together in the appendix to this article.)

The expert survey was sent to a list of 62 political scientists, mainly based in the Netherlands, who were deemed to be working in one way or another on Dutch politics.⁵ There were 32 replies from the original list, a response rate of 51.6 percent. This compares with a total of 27 (79.4%) responses to the 1994 survey, and 16 (26.7%) Dutch responses in the 1989 Laver-Hunt survey; there were nine Dutch responses recorded in the 1984 Castles-Mair survey and ten in that of Huber-Ingelhart.

3 The results

Detailed estimates of party positions on, and saliency weightings of each policy dimension are given in Table 1 in the Appendix. For each dimension for each party, estimates are based on the mean of the scores given by all respondents. Table 1 also gives the number of respondents for each party for each scale, and the standard error of the mean score. For those scales used in the 1989 and 1994 expert surveys, estimates of party positions at these time points are also given. The explicit – and limited – intention of this brief article is to make these new data publicly available, and hence we will deliberately refrain from entering into any extended analysis of the implications of the patterning, and from discussing how these particular findings might relate to those derived from alternative estimating techniques. Nevertheless, if only to get a little bit away from a very dull presentation of tabular data, it is perhaps worthwhile to summarize the principal findings in a short commentary.

The first dimension along which the parties have been located sets the promotion of higher taxes in order to increase public services against the promotion of cuts in public services in order to reduce taxation. This is also the dimension on which there appears to be the largest evidence of party movements between 1994 and 1998, with a general shift towards the more traditional leftwing pole. Indeed, apart from the PVDA and D66, who remain effectively stable, all other parties are seen to have moved discernibly towards the higher taxes option, a movement which echoes what was already evident in 1994 with respect to 1989. The centre of gravity has therefore now shifted towards the left across two consecutive elections. It is also worth noting here that some of the biggest electoral gains in 1998 were also recorded by the left, with the Socialist Party (SP), Green Left and the PVDA recording gains of 2.2, 4.0 and 4.3 per cent respectively.

The second dimension, measuring attitudes to NATO and the WEU, and included for the first time in this form in the 1998 survey, is effectively consensual. Apart from the opposition expressed by the small leftwing parties SP and GL, the other parties are all seen to cluster in a relatively narrow pro-NATO/WEU position. This pattern contrasts quite markedly with that revealed by attitudes towards the European Union (dimension 9), where we can almost speak of two clusters of parties – a more sceptical cluster, on the one hand, which, interestingly, includes all of the small parties, and a more pro-European cluster, which includes the PVDA, CDA and D66. The VVD is seen to adopt a more neutral position. What is also striking here is that with respect to 1994, all of the parties have shifted more or less substantially towards a more Eurosceptic position. The European issue scarcely figures in everyday domestic politics in the Netherlands, so it is therefore interesting to note this apparent shift in position across the entire party spectrum.

Opinion is more sharply divided on the third dimension, which measures attitudes towards permissive social policies. Here there is even sharper evidence of a clustering of two groups – the religious parties (CDA, GPV, RPF and SGP), on the one hand, who are seen to adopt a more or less firm anti-permissive position, and the secular parties, on the other hand, all of whom are more or less strongly in favour of a more permissive approach. Indeed, this divide mirrors almost exactly that along the sixth dimension, which deals with pro-versus anti-clerical attitudes, and which also separates the same two groups of parties. In the case of permissive social policies, however, there is some evidence of a slight centripetal movement in the period since 1994. Those promoting permissive policies have moved away from the more extreme positions, while the religious parties in their turn have shifted slightly towards the centre. In this sense, we can speak of a small decline in the degree of polarization.

The fourth dimension deals with attitudes towards immigration. Although this is a major headline issue in contemporary Dutch politics, there is little evidence to suggest that it has become significantly more salient for any of the individual parties involved (see also Table 2). There is also little party movement involved here, apart from a slight rightward drift on the part of three of the larger parties – D66, PvdA and CDA – as well as SP. Indeed, the only party to soften its attitude in any noticeable way is the RPF, for whom the issue is scarcely salient.

Party positions on the environmental issue (dimension 5) reveal a more striking pattern, with two 'extreme' parties – GL (pro-environment) and VVD (pro-economic growth) – at either end, and with the remaining parties not only clustering around the centre but also being even more firmly in the centre than was the case in 1989. For GL this is also the most salient issue, although here too we can witness a slight softening of their position with respect to 1989.

The two remaining dimensions, involving public access to information (dimension 7) and decentralization of decision-making (dimension 8) fail to generate much conflict. None of the parties is strongly opposed to promoting greater public access to information, and for those most strongly in favour – GL and D66 – this is also a reasonably salient dimension. Nor is any of the parties strongly opposed to the promotion of decentralization, and again this is favoured most strongly by both GL and D66, for whom the dimension is also the most salient.

Table 2 shows the weighted mean importance of each policy dimension for all parties.⁶ The pattern here is remarkably consistent with that revealed in 1994, with the only marginally discernible shifts being the slight downgrading of the environmental and religious policies in 1998, and the slight upgrading of foreign policy, on which party positions appear quite consensual. Neither of the two new dimensions, decentralization and information, rank highly on the overall agenda.

Table 3 reports estimates of the rankings of cabinet portfolios in order of perceived importance. In the past, such data would have proved to be of particular value to students of portfolio allocation within models of coalition formation, since they indicate the extent to which particular positions in cabinet are likely to be prized more strongly than others. The table gives the mean ranking given by each respondent to each portfolio, and the standard errors of these estimates. Again, the pattern is quite consistent with that recorded in earlier expert surveys. Finance remains the most important portfolio, immediately followed, as in 1989, by employment and social security. Home affairs moves from the fifth-ranking position in 1989 and 1994 to the third-ranking position in 1998, a shift which may reflect increasing concern with police and security-related issues. At the same time, planning and environment has moved further down the pecking order, falling from seventh-ranking portfolio in 1989 to eighth in 1994 and now to tenth in 1998.

Finally, Table 4 reports a summary of party positions on the general left-right scale as recorded by the three recent expert surveys – this present survey in 1998 as well as those by Castles and Mair (1984) and Huber and Inglehart (1995). All three sets of scores have been standardized to the 1 (most left) to 10 (most right) scale used by Huber-Inglehart. Once again, it is the sheer consistency over time which is most striking here. This is particularly so with regard to the D66, the CDA and the VVD, each of which holds close to almost precisely the same centre-right score across all three surveys. Two small shifts are worth noting, however: that of the PvdA towards the centre in 1993, now confirmed in 1998; and that of the small GPV and RPF from what had been quite an outlying right position in 1983 and 1993 towards a more moderate right position in 1998. It is also worth emphasizing that although the level of polarization (as measured by the distance from the left-most to the right-most party) remains formally high, the trend over time for the major parties suggests a slightly strengthening tendency to cluster around the centre, with the range here shifting from between 3.3 (PvdA) and 7.7 (VVD) in 1983 to between 4.1 (PvdA) and 7.4 (VVD) in 1998. As of 1998, therefore, and at least within the mainstream, expert judgements of party locations suggest the presence of a modest centripetal drive.

Appendix

Table 1 Party positions and saliency weightings: the Netherlands, 1998

Dimension 1					
Promote raising taxes to increase public services (low) versus					
Promote cutting public services to cut taxes (high)					
	1998	1994	1989	1998	1998
Party	Mean	Mean	Mean	N	SE
<i>Policy position</i>					
SP	2.84	4.29		31	0.32
GL	4.29	5.35		31	0.29
PvdA	8.44	8.53	5.79	32	0.49
D66	10.92	10.59	10.36	32	0.29
CDA	9.50	12.82	13.57	32	0.50
GPV	11.31	13.60	14.83	29	0.57
RPF	10.76	13.87	16.17	29	0.54
SGP	13.31	14.20	16.00	29	0.56
VVD	16.69	17.06	17.36	32	0.34
<i>Saliency</i>					
VVD	17.06	17.76	16.92	32	0.54
SP	16.00	15.53		31	0.90
GL	15.19	13.06		31	0.71
PvdA	14.09	14.88	15.08	32	0.73
CDA	12.83	13.76	13.77	32	0.54
D66	12.03	12.12	12.00	32	0.56
GPV	8.73	9.07	6.91	30	0.65
RPF	8.27	9.00	7.91	30	0.58
SGP	7.77	8.53	7.82	30	0.70

Dimension 2

Oppose close relationship with NATO and WEU (low) versus

Promote close relationship with NATO and WEU (high)

	1998	1998	1998	1998
Party	Mean	N	SE	
<i>Policy position</i>				
SP	6.41	29	0.69	
GL	7.86	29	0.61	
PvdA	14.67	30	0.49	
D66	15.50	30	0.41	
CDA	16.59	29	0.38	
SGP	15.07	27	0.78	
GPV	15.21	28	0.66	
RPF	14.74	27	0.63	
VVD	17.20	30	0.55	
<i>Saliency</i>				
VVD	15.66	29	0.73	
CDA	13.55	29	0.71	
D66	12.00	29	0.70	
PvdA	12.00	29	0.68	
SP	9.16	28	0.90	
RPF	8.17	27	0.81	
GPV	8.02	27	0.82	
SGP	7.69	27	0.87	
GL	4.40	30	0.84	

Dimension 3

Promote permissive policies on abortion and homosexuality (low) *versus*
Oppose permissive policies on abortion and homosexuality (high)

	1998	1994	1989	1998	1998	
	Party	Mean	Mean	Mean	N	SE
<i>Policy position</i>	GL	4.40	2.29		30	0.84
	D66	4.19	3.35	3.93	31	0.76
	PvdA	6.02	3.94	4.00	31	0.64
	VVD	7.61	5.59	6.13	31	0.67
	SP	8.36	6.00		28	0.81
	CDA	13.35	14.06	14.80	31	0.58
	GPV	17.60	18.71	19.15	30	0.81
	RPF	17.37	18.88	19.31	30	0.84
	SGP	18.43	19.06	19.39	30	0.82
<i>Salience</i>	SGP	18.93	18.29	14.00	29	0.41
	GPV	18.69	18.18	14.00	29	0.34
	RPF	18.52	18.24	14.82	29	0.36
	CDA	15.28	15.82	14.69	29	0.52
	D66	15.27	14.65	15.14	30	0.76
	GL	14.59	15.24		29	0.97
	PvdA	12.04	13.29	16.07	28	0.79
	VVD	11.53	12.94	13.00	30	0.86
	SP	7.79	9.27		29	0.84

Dimension 4

Accept immigration and promote policies helping immigrants (low) *versus*
Oppose immigration and oppose any policies helping immigrants (high)

	1998	1994	1998	1998	1998	
	Party	Mean	Mean	N	SE	
<i>Policy position</i>	GL	2.73	2.71	30	0.28	
	D66	7.62	6.88	30	0.44	
	PvdA	7.90	7.00	31	0.43	
	CDA	10.50	10.31	31	0.51	
	SP	12.20	11.07	30	0.76	
	GPV	12.26	12.50	29	0.53	
	RPF	11.88	12.56	29	0.57	
	SGP	12.95	13.00	29	0.61	
	VVD	15.42	15.44	31	0.54	
<i>Salience</i>	GL	16.67	16.00	30	0.66	
	VVD	16.26	16.41	31	0.52	
	PvdA	13.00	13.82	31	0.57	
	D66	12.00	13.44	31	0.60	
	CDA	11.55	13.31	31	0.55	
	SP	11.04	12.87	28	0.77	
	GPV	8.14	9.56	29	0.72	
	RPF	8.07	9.94	28	0.66	
	SGP	7.79	9.06	29	0.72	

Dimension 5

Promote environmental protection, even if this slows economic growth (low) *versus*
 Promote economic growth, even if this damages environment (high)

		1998	1994	1989	1998	1998
	Party	Mean	Mean	Mean	N	SE
<i>Policy position</i>	GL	3.18	2.29		31	0.60
	SP	10.32	5.73		31	0.77
	D66	9.11	7.29	4.54	32	0.65
	PvdA	10.59	8.65	6.07	32	0.55
	GPV	9.37	10.63	10.00	30	0.64
	RPF	8.77	10.94	10.67	30	0.70
	SGP	10.90	11.81	10.62	30	0.60
	CDA	11.88	12.76	10.00	32	0.52
	VVD	16.03	16.12	10.93	32	0.49
<i>Saliency</i>	GL	18.61	18.88		31	0.30
	D66	13.39	15.41	16.21	31	0.69
	PvdA	11.75	13.76	16.00	32	0.66
	CDA	11.03	11.59	13.43	32	0.59
	SP	10.37	12.20		30	0.83
	VVD	10.19	11.82	14.21	31	1.02
	RPF	9.87	10.69	10.38	30	0.92
	GPV	9.73	11.00	10.08	30	0.92
	SGP	7.77	9.50	10.08	30	0.77

Dimension 6

Strongly anti-clerical (low) *versus*
 Strongly pro-clerical (high)

		1998	1994	1989	1998	1998
	Party	Mean	Mean	Mean	N	SE
<i>Policy position</i>	SP	4.63	2.53		27	0.47
	GL	6.07	5.24		29	0.59
	D66	5.53	6.06	6.31	30	0.55
	VVD	7.97	7.00	7.31	30	0.50
	PvdA	7.53	7.71	7.31	30	0.43
	CDA	15.00	16.18	15.39	30	0.39
	GPV	18.76	19.00	20.00	29	0.23
	RPF	17.97	19.06	19.73	29	0.47
	SGP	19.62	19.35	20.00	29	0.15
<i>Saliency</i>	SGP	19.59	19.35	18.91	29	0.14
	GPV	19.07	19.24	17.82	29	0.21
	RPF	18.69	19.29	18.64	29	0.27
	CDA	14.83	16.59	12.69	30	0.42
	D66	8.66	7.18	5.82	29	1.06
	VVD	7.03	6.56	5.62	29	0.80
	GL	6.81	9.31		27	0.61
	PvdA	6.30	6.59	6.00	30	0.63
	SP	4.50	5.94		28	0.64

Dimension 7Promote policies increasing public access to information *versus*

Oppose policies increasing public access to information

	Party	1998 Mean	1998 N	1998 SE
<i>Policy position</i>	GL	5.35	26	0.90
	D66	5.44	27	0.87
	SP	6.40	25	0.91
	PvdA	7.37	27	0.64
	VVD	9.63	27	0.82
	CDA	10.33	27	0.78
	GPV	10.71	24	0.86
	SGP	11.13	24	1.03
<i>Saliency</i>	RPF	11.21	24	0.87
	GL	12.54	26	1.07
	D66	12.52	27	1.13
	SP	9.96	25	0.99
	PvdA	9.08	26	0.74
	VVD	8.37	27	0.73
	CDA	7.41	27	0.71
	GPV	6.36	25	0.80
RPF	6.20	25	0.79	
SGP	5.80	25	0.86	

Dimension 8Promote decentralization of all decision-making *versus*

Oppose any decentralization of decision-making

	Party	1998 Mean	1989 Mean	1998 N	1998 SE
<i>Policy position</i>	D66	5.68	5.13	28	0.60
	GL	7.14		28	0.79
	CDA	8.40	9.67	29	0.56
	PvdA	10.41	10.89	29	0.61
	VVD	10.69	9.00	29	0.75
	SP	11.02		28	0.80
	RPF	11.39	14.00	27	0.69
	GPV	11.84	14.14	28	0.71
	SGP	12.13	14.00	28	0.78
	<i>Saliency</i>	D66	13.45	9.80	29
GL		11.93		28	0.87
CDA		9.95	7.00	28	0.76
PvdA		9.23	7.80	28	0.66
VVD		9.19	6.80	29	0.84
GPV		8.09	3.88	28	0.84
RPF		8.02	3.88	28	0.82
SGP	7.77	3.88	28	0.87	
SP	7.64		28	0.71	

Dimension 9

Oppose close relationship with European Union (low) versus
Promote close relationship with European Union (high)

		1998	1994	1998	1998
	Party	Mean	Mean	N	SE
Policy position	SP	4.86	6.29	28	0.42
	GL	8.27	9.59	30	0.68
	SGP	5.86	9.76	28	0.65
	RPF	6.93	10.35	28	0.64
	GPV	6.57	10.47	28	0.64
	VVD	10.52	14.71	31	0.72
	PvdA	15.45	15.76	31	0.35
	D66	15.32	16.13	31	0.37
Salience	CDA	15.14	16.65	29	0.46
	CDA	15.61	15.44	31	3.33
	VVD	13.77	14.63	31	0.55
	PvdA	13.00	14.88	32	0.68
	D66	12.80	14.94	30	0.76
	GL	11.90	12.07	30	0.74
	SP	11.24	11.24	29	0.78
	GPV	10.43	10.94	28	1.01
SGP	10.07	10.63	28	1.06	
RPF	10.04	11.06	28	1.00	

Dimension 10

Locate each party on a general left-right dimension, taking all aspects of party policy into account. Most left-wing position (low) versus Most right-wing position (high)

		1998	1998	1998
		Mean	N	SE
Policy position	SP	3.05	31	0.38
	GL	3.77	31	0.29
	PvdA	8.19	31	0.37
	D66	9.71	31	0.38
	CDA	11.39	31	0.33
	VVD	14.81	31	0.33
	RPF	15.47	30	0.63
	GPV	15.63	30	0.63
Salience	SGP	17.83	30	0.31

Table 2 Weighted mean importance of dimensions (all parties)

Dimension	1998	1994
Taxes vs. Services	14.26	14.46
Immigration	13.40	13.40
European Policy	13.38	13.61
Social Policy	13.21	13.11
Foreign Policy	12.34	11.86
Environment	11.69	12.61
Decentralization	9.82	na
Information	9.04	na
Religious Policy	8.97	9.68

Table 3 Mean ranking of cabinet portfolios
(In terms of "importance in the process of forming a government")

Portfolio	1998	1994	1989	1998	1998
	Mean	Mean	Mean	N	SE
Finance	1.68	1.29	1.36	31	0.31
Employment and Soc. Security	2.90	3.41	2.55	31	0.25
Home Affairs	4.19	5.24	4.67	31	0.42
Economic Affairs	4.77	3.24	3.15	31	0.50
Justice	5.77	4.44	7.00	31	0.34
Foreign Affairs	5.84	5.53	4.38	31	0.54
Education, Culture and Sciences	6.60	7.41	6.45	31	0.37
Health, Welfare and Sport	7.51	9.29	8.17	31	0.44
Transport and Public Works	8.11	9.06	9.75	31	0.39
Planning and Environment	9.47	8.82	6.75	31	0.39
Defence	10.55	9.76	8.00	31	0.35
Agric., Nature Manag & Fisheries	10.81	10.76	9.13	31	0.31
Development Cooperation	12.00	12.41		31	0.32

Table 4 Expert locations of parties in left-right terms, 1983-98.
Most left wing position (1) versus
Most right wing position (10)*

Party	1983	1993	1998
SP	-	-	1.5
PSP	1.5	-	-
CP	1.7	-	-
GL	-	1.8	1.9
PPR	2.4	-	-
PVDA	3.3	4.2	4.1
D66	5.0	4.8	4.9
CDA	6.1	6.3	5.7
VVD	7.7	7.2	7.4
GPV	9.1	8.9	7.8
RPF	9.3	9.0	7.7
SGP	9.3	9.0	8.9
CD	-	9.5	-

* Note: all three surveys have been converted to the same 1-10 scale, which was also that used in the 1993 expert survey. The 1983 scale has been converted by multiplying the original score on the 0-10 scale by 0.9, and adding 1.0 to the result; the 1998 scale has been converted simply by dividing the scores by 2.

Additional sources: 1983: Castles & Mair (1984: 80); 1993: Huber & Inglehart (1995: 101-2).

Notes

1. Scale positions ranged from 1 to 20
2. A copy of the survey form is available from the authors.
3. In all cases, scales that were dropped either had very low salience for the Netherlands, or were almost perfectly correlated with another scale that was retained.
4. These tables are arranged in the order in which the scales that they deal with appeared in the questionnaire.
5. The survey was mailed on 19 June 1998, with a covering letter and a pre-addressed return envelope. Those who has not replied were sent a reminder on 9 July 1998, with another copy of the survey form.
6. For each dimension this is calculated as $Sipwp$, where ip is the estimated importance attached to the dimension by party p , and wp is the proportion of legislative seats controlled by party p .

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The Netherlands and Coalition Formation in the Council of the European Union¹

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Abstract

Decision-making in the Council of the European Union largely occurs under the rule of (qualified) majority voting. Under the majority rule, the individual member will have a strong incentive to form coalitions to influence the policy results. This article illustrates in what way the increasingly important (qualified) majority rule in the Council has increased the importance of specific bilateral interactions in the building of coalitions. The results from the analyses are that the power – at least in terms of formal assessments – has become more distributed and shared among the EU members. This means that from the perspective of the Netherlands and other middle-sized countries, the relevance of the large countries has diminished. But also that the probability of being part of a winning coalition has decreased for each member of the EU.

1 Introduction

This contribution aims to analyse the role of the Netherlands in the voting procedures of the Council of the EU (previously the 'Council of Ministers'). The more the Council resorts to the principle of (qualified) majority voting and the larger the total number of EU members, the more voting rules in the Council are likely to affect the incentives for individual members – such as the Netherlands – to form coalitions and hence to strengthen bilateral contacts within the EU.

The focus on the Council in this article is deliberate. Of course, the position of the Dutch government in the Council is not the only factor influencing policy results in the EU, as viewed from the perspective of the Netherlands. Increasingly, the European Parliament (EP) plays a crucial role in the EU's decision-making process. Similarly, the important role of the European Commission can hardly be neglected, especially in terms of its agenda-setting power.

Focusing on the Council, however, makes it possible to obtain estimates on the relative influence of the Dutch government in the EU's intergovernmental decision-making process. It helps to assess how 'old' or 'new' patterns of