This article analyzes coalition formation within the European Parliament (EP) under the cooperation procedure through the analysis of a random sample of 100 roll call votes. The authors find that generally, coalitions form on the basis of ideology, not nationality, although they are able to identify some national groups that occasionally vote against the majority of their party group. More interestingly, they find that the political initiative within the EP belongs to the Left and that the majorities required at different stages affect not only the outcomes of votes but also the coalitions that will form. Finally, a slight variation is found in coalition building depending on the subject matter. On the basis of these findings, the authors suggest an alternative interpretation of the conflicts between the Council and EP based on an ideological conflict about more (EP) or less (Council) regulation, as opposed to more or less integration.

COALITION FORMATION IN THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

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The purpose of this article is to analyze coalition formation in the European Parliament (EP) for the adoption of legislation under the cooperation procedure. In the course of the article, we will address the following questions: Is coalition formation more likely to be determined by the cleavages generated by the 12 different nationalities of the members of the EP or by the 10 ideological groups participating in it? Do coalitions follow frequently discussed divisions such as north versus south (country based) or

1. We cover the third legislature (1989-1994), during which Austria, Sweden, and Finland had not yet joined the European Union (EU), so there were only 12 member states.

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Left versus Right (ideology based), or have other cleavages (such as centrist vs. extremist) emerged? Is coalition formation affected by the subject matter (environment, social, economic issues, etc.), by the required majorities (simple or absolute), or by other strategic considerations (adoption of the proposed legislation by the Commission and the Council)? Answers to these questions will improve the current incomplete understanding of the role and functions of the European Parliament. A more thorough understanding of the EP is critical given its expanding legislative role and increased political powers.

More generally, the diversity of nationalities (12), ideologies (at least 10), languages (9), institutional structures (simple or absolute majority), strategic constraints (sometimes the parliament votes its own proposals, sometimes it responds to proposals made by other institutions), as well as the diversity and instability of coalitions (each one of them lasting for only one floor vote) make the EP an ideal laboratory for the study of coalition formation. The diversity of outcomes as well as circumstances under which these outcomes were obtained enables us to study the conditions under which members of the EP prefer one combination of nationalities and ideologies over another.

Despite these ideal conditions, studies of the EP from the point of view of coalition formation are very rare. We were able to find three (Attiná, 1990; Brzinski, 1995; Quanjel & Wolters, 1993), only two of which are published. The reason for this paucity is that the majority of studies of the EP focus on understanding its changing institutional role and interactions with the other two major institutions of the European Union—the Commission and the Council. Because this interaction has been volatile (changing with the adoption of different procedures) and misunderstood, investigation of coalition formation has remained at the elementary level, focusing on the extent to which the political groups are internally cohesive and whether nationality or ideology matters most.

Recent research has demonstrated that the role of the EP in decision making varies according to the decision-making procedure, which itself varies by the subject matter of deliberation. In subjects covered by the consultation procedure, EP votes are merely statements of position. In subjects covered by the cooperation procedure, EP decisions are the basis for decision making by the other two actors. In subjects covered by the initial codecision procedure (adopted in Maastricht), coalition formation may not be endogenous because the EP might have to accept or reject a proposal originating from the Council. In subjects adopted by codecision II (the procedure adopted in Amsterdam), the most interesting action is transferred to a joint committee in which the Council and the EP elaborate a compromise. In addition, the majority required for EP action varies between procedures and sometimes even varies within the same procedure. All of these factors have been ignored by the
existing literature on EP coalitions, which focuses primarily on internal political group cohesion, not interparty coalition formation. Existing studies frequently do not discriminate between procedures and ignore institutions like majority requirements.

The article is organized in three parts. In the first, we review the literature and explain in detail what is incorrect and/or incomplete regarding the depiction of coalition formation in the EP. In the second, we explain the data set we constructed and the method used to analyze it. In the third, we analyze the results. In the conclusions, we summarize our findings and consider their implications for the interpretation of EU conflicts.

**COALITION FORMATION IN THE LITERATURE**

Most general studies of the European Union introduce and discuss the economic and political structures of the union. The complex balance of power between the supranational Commission, the representative Parliament, and the more nationally oriented Council of Ministers is often of central importance to these studies (Crombez, 1996; Garrett, 1992; Garrett & Tsebelis, 1996; Moser, 1996; Schneider, 1995; Steunenberg, 1994; Tsebelis, 1994, 1995, 1996, 1997). Other general studies compare the EP to either international organizations (Fitzmaurice, 1975; Van Oudenhove, 1965) or national political systems of the member states (Bogdanor, 1989; Henig, 1980; Herman & Lodge, 1978).

The EP suffers in particular from this type of comparison for two related reasons. The first is that the impact that the EP can have on legislation varies with the type of legislative procedure being applied. With respect to the cooperation procedure, the EP’s role is quite different from the one played by parliaments in parliamentary systems. The latter are the principals of the corresponding governments, and they can vote down the entire government or particular ministers in the case of a serious political disagreement. No such relationship exists between the EP and the Council or even the Commission (although formally the EP can ask that the whole Commission be removed). In fact, the EP has a variable role to play in European policy making. In the consultation procedure, it offers a nonbinding opinion. In the cooperation procedure, the EP can make a proposal that, if accepted by the Commission, is easier for the Council to accept (by qualified majority) than to modify (by unanimity). In the codecision I procedure, the EP loses its conditional

2. Tsebelis (1994) has called this power of the European Parliament (EP) “conditional agenda setting” and has demonstrated its limits and its potential influence on the speed of European integration.
agenda-setting power but may exercise absolute veto power (Tsebelis, 1997), whereas in codecision II, the final compromise between the Council and EP is elaborated in a joint committee (Tsebelis & Garrett, in press).

The second is that the EP does not have a permanent government-opposition cleavage to organize the voting behavior of its members. Instead, in the cooperation procedure, different coalitions compete in an attempt to have their points of view adopted by the whole Parliament and, subsequently, by the Commission and the Council. In this respect, under the cooperation procedure, the role of the Parliament and the behavior of its members resemble the legislature in a presidential system more than in a parliamentary one. In a presidential system, multiple possible coalitions compete with each other to make a proposal that will satisfy the majority of the legislature as well as the president.

In the American presidential system, the coalitions that prevail are variable. Under divided government (whenever the majorities in the House, the Senate, and the president come from different parties), the only possible coalitions are bipartisan. Under unified government (when the three institutions have the same political makeup), winning majorities can be either partisan or bipartisan. For example, in the first 2 years of the Clinton administration, the budget was adopted by a slim majority composed exclusively of Democrats, whereas the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) was supported by a bipartisan coalition with a majority of Republicans. The American system demonstrates the variability of coalitions. However, the logic behind these possibilities is extremely simple: Due to the two-party system, majorities can be either partisan or bipartisan. As we will see, the multinational and multi-ideological environment of the EP generates many more winning and losing coalitions.

From this discussion of the institutional role of the EP, two conclusions follow. First, coalitions should not be stable inside the EP because of the lack of a steady government-opposition cleavage and because of the multiple roles that the EP plays in European policy making. Second, the only procedure in which EP decisions matter and coalition making is endogenous (determined by the EP itself) is the cooperation procedure. Indeed, in the

3. Keith Poole and Howard Rosenthal (1991) have analyzed voting in the U.S. Congress through a maximum-likelihood algorithm and came to the conclusion that American politics can be described either in one or at the most in two dimensions (except for a very short period in the 18th century). Our analysis comes to different results first because of the complexity of the European parliamentary environment and second because of the difference in algorithm. Correspondence analysis calculated the eigenvalues of a matrix, and consequently each axis explains a higher percentage of information than the next (monotonicity), and all axes explain a positive amount. Neither is true in the Poole and Rosenthal algorithm (Poole & Rosenthal, 1991, p. 242).
consultation procedure, the EP’s opinion matters very little, whereas in the codecision procedures (both I and II), agenda setting reverts to the Council or a joint committee. Consequently, voting should vary with the type of procedure. Because the EP determines which majority will prevail in the cooperation procedure, coalition building is most critical when the cooperation procedure is applied.

The EP, almost since its inception, has been organized around political groups. The importance of political parties in the EP was, initially, quite unexpected because of the failure of parties to establish themselves in previous international assemblies (Fitzmaurice, 1975; Van Oudenhove, 1965; Westlake, 1994). The early rise of political groups in the EP led many to believe optimistically in the future development of mass-based transitional parties (Fitzmaurice, 1975, 1978; Pinder & Henig, 1969; Van Oudenhove, 1965). These initial high hopes were swiftly transformed into widespread disillusionment. Even after direct elections were introduced, Euro parties failed to develop both the mass base and disciplined internal organization associated with European political parties (Kirchner, 1984; Kohler & Myrzik, 1982; Lodge & Herman, 1982). These failures have led to the dismissal of Euro parties and EP political groups as ineffective and often inconsequential in terms of legislative outcomes (prior to 1987) (Bogdanor, 1989; Robinson & Bray, 1986). However, these studies have suffered from the implicit expectation that European actors behave in a fashion similar to their national counterparts. The point of reference is crucial in this respect. If, instead of the highly disciplined parties in West European parliamentary systems, Euro parties had been compared with the fluid parties of the American presidential system, the conclusions would have been significantly different.

The EP is the only clear outlet for party activity in the European Union. Ideological differences that do not reflect national interests can be represented only by the political groups of the EP (Niedermayer, 1984). The common perception of Euro parties as little more than loose confederations of like-minded national parties fails to understand the specific and important role that they play not only in the internal organization of the EP but also in the policy-making process of the European Union as a whole. The political groups are essential because of their ability to organize interests and serve as the ideological foundations of both the EP and the European Union.

4. We showed above that, from an institutional interaction point of view, this comparison is much more appropriate. In fact, institutional analyses on the other side of the Atlantic are significantly constrained by this fundamentally misconstrued comparison (see Coultrap, 1996; Tsebelis, 1997).

5. Both Robinson and Bray (1986) and Attiná (1990) note this popular perception of the EP.
The internal organization of the EP has been the study of two articles, both of which have called for more research on the issue. Shaun Bowler and David Farrell (1995) study the organization of committees and party control inside the EP and have argued that it is too often the case that the EP is considered as a unified actor without paying attention to its ability (or lack thereof) to behave strategically. Tsebelis (1995) echoes their concerns and develops a model in which decision making inside the EP is made through enforceable agreements. The presence of parties as well as strong committees with rapporteurs indicates that agreements inside the EP indeed may be enforceable. Tsebelis’s conclusions are that strategic rapporteurs (under complete information) can select proposals that will both survive within the EP and pass successfully through the nexus of European institutions (the Commission and the Council) if such amendments exist. Tsebelis’s model considers committee rapporteurs as the locus of strategic rationality within the EP and, from this assumption, derives results that are qualitatively similar to the results of models that consider the EP as a unified actor.

However, little has been done about opening the black box of Parliament in terms of the voting behavior of its members. Recently, there have been a few attempts to understand political group cohesion in the EP through analyses of roll call votes (Attiná, 1990; Brzinski, 1995; Quanjel & Wolters, 1993). These studies have begun to demonstrate that there are definite ideological cleavages in the EP. In addition, they identify an increase in the cohesion of the political groups. However, they largely ignore the broader question of interparty coalition formation. Furthermore, they suffer from two closely related misconceptions. The first is the implicit belief that the coalitions are stable. There is no need for stable coalitions in the EP because there is no government to support or to overthrow. It is precisely the potential for variable coalitions formed to influence the content of legislation that makes the EP such an interesting and important subject. The second is the general oversimplification of the legislative process in these analyses, as all votes under all procedures are treated equally. Few attempts were made to disagregate the data by year or to account for the different legislative procedures. Also, the case selection in these studies leads to conclusions that are not generalizable.

Attiná (1990) recognizes explicitly the absence of a government-opposition dichotomy (p. 558) and the possibility for variable coalitions that this absence creates. The division he creates between the parliamentary functions of “suggestion” and “control” approaches a disaggregation by procedure. However, he limits the applicability of his analysis due to his restrictive assumptions and the criteria used to select the data set. Attiná asserts that recourse to roll call voting “has a predominantly symbolic value” (p. 566). Yet, he concludes, on the basis of his data, that roll call votes on legislative
“control” issues (cooperation procedure and budget) are more contentious than those on “suggestion” (resolutions). This is explained by the assertion that roll call votes are called in these areas only when negotiations have failed to reach a consensus (pp. 567-568). But if this is true, the general conclusion—that the political groups are less cohesive when deciding issues of control—is undermined. In addition, Attiná examines only those roll call votes in which at least one third of members of the European Parliament (MEPs) participated (i.e., 173 votes) and in which the minority was equal to at least 1/10 of the total number of MEPs (i.e., 52 votes). This selection criterion biases his data in favor of procedures and topics that inspire high attendance. Finally, by selecting only final votes, he assumes that there is no difference between coalitions formed for amendments and those formed for the final vote. However, it is generally only during a final vote that the Parliament must consider the importance of presenting a united image to the public and the other EU institutions.

In contrast to Attiná, who examines votes occurring in at least two types of legislative procedures (albeit only final votes), Marcel Quanjel and Menno Wolters (1993) limit their analysis to parliamentary resolutions (both amendments and final votes) in which the EP is limited to a consultative role. Quanjel and Wolters fail to distinguish between the process of coalition formation in the EP (which varies from vote to vote) and that which occurs at the national level (and is stable). Specifically, they attempt to fit the EP into the national mold (Quanjel & Wolters, 1993, p. 1).

In the most recent attempt to analyze voting behavior of political groups in the EP, Joanne Bay Brzinski (1995) corrects only some of the methodological problems of the previous studies. Brzinski analyzes 73 votes occurring in the parliaments of the third legislative period. These were selected randomly and, as a result, include votes from all legislative procedures (resolutions, consultation, cooperation, as well as technical). However, Brzinski (1995) ignores the varying roles of the EP under the different procedures, claiming that “the European Parliament is not a legislative body but a consultative one” (p. 142). The actual analysis of political group cohesion includes only 55 votes because of several restrictions placed on the data. Like Attiná, Brzinski requires a minimum level of attendance and at least a 10% minority vote (Brzinski, 1995, p. 137). Finally, her study focuses on internal group cohesion but ignores coalitions.

Each of these articles arrives at a somewhat different understanding of coalition formation in the EP because of the different types of roll call votes being analyzed. Quanjel and Wolters note that there has been an increase in national party cohesion in the EP (i.e., in the national delegations to the political groups) and conclude that the cohesion of the EP as a whole is increasing
Attiná infers that political group cohesion is higher for resolutions (the only type of vote studied by Quanjel and Wolters) than for the other legislative procedures (cooperation and consultation), but political group cohesion is still far less than that of national parties. He blames this lack of development not on internal ideological or national differences but on a dearth of organizational growth (Attiná, 1990, pp. 576-578). Brzinski finds what she considers to be surprisingly high internal political group cohesion and notes that the political groups of the Left are more cohesive in general than those of the Right.

The conclusion from this review is that (a) the existing results in the literature address a very limited set of questions (essentially only one: the extent of internal political group cohesion), (b) they are not sensitive to institutional constraints (majority requirements), and (c) they do not address coalition formation between groups directly. The authors’ conclusions differ with the selection of their samples, none of which is fully representative of a meaningful parent population. This study is aimed at overcoming these problems.

**DATA SELECTION AND METHOD OF ANALYSIS**

**DATA**

We analyze voting behavior, internal group cohesion, and patterns of coalition formation in the EP through an analysis of 100 roll call votes occurring under the cooperation procedure during the third legislative period (1989-1994). We made a serious effort to ensure that our sample is “representative” of all the variables that, a priori, may have some influence on coalition behavior.

We identified three such variables. The first is the round in which the vote was taken, whether it was in the first or second round. Because second-round votes require absolute majorities and, consequently, the set of available majorities is more constrained, coalition formation may differ between the first and second rounds. The second variable is the outcome of the vote.

6. Roll call votes were recorded using the first official membership list (the “gray list”) after the 1989 elections. Because members occasionally leave the EP before the end of the legislative term, our analysis slightly exaggerates absenteeism by counting members no longer in the EP as absent. In particular, this may overestimate the absentee rates for the Greens and the European Democratic Alliance (RDE), which both made attempts to rotate their members midway through the legislative term. It should be noted, however, that despite this we arrive at participation levels similar to those common in the literature (see Brzinski, 1995).
whether it was winning or losing. Even when winning coalitions are stable, losing coalitions may be rotating. Conversely, it is possible that whereas winning coalitions rotate, losing coalitions may be stable (permanent opposition). The third variable is the type of vote, whether the vote was on an amendment or on the final text of a bill. It is possible that coalitions are more volatile at the level of amendments, but in the end MEPs close ranks and support whatever was selected by the Parliament. In this case, final votes would be more inclusive than votes on individual amendments. Alternatively, it is possible that final votes require agreement on more points than individual amendments. In this case, the amendments would have larger majorities than the final votes. No other criteria, such as turnout or parliamentary cohesion (i.e., overwhelming majorities for or against a particular amendment or bill) were considered.

Our sample largely preserves the corresponding joint frequencies of the parent population (+/- 3%). Roughly one third of our data come from votes in the second round (33% of the parent population); 53% of our votes represent passing votes (55% in the parent population). Final votes represent 14% of our sample and 11% of the parent population.

Although our sample is representative of all roll call votes, we cannot claim the same about roll call votes themselves. Roll call votes are a minority of votes taken on the floor of the EP (approximately 15%). Usually, matters are decided either by a show of hands (and hence left unrecorded at an individual level) or by electronic votes (which record only the totals and again offer no information on individual voting behavior). A roll call vote can be called for by any party-group or by 23 individual members. Given that the initiative for this method of voting is left to the MEPs themselves, it is likely that the sample of 15% is selected for strategic reasons. There are at least three potential strategic motivations for a party-group or a group of individuals to call for a roll call vote.

The most common reasons for a group (particularly one of the two larger groups) to call a roll call vote are simply control and information. Although it is true that there are very limited sanctions against defectors, there is still a significant amount of interest in assessing the cohesion of the group as a whole and the influence of regional and/or national deviations.

8. The use and potential expansion of sanctions against members of a group that are consistently absent or vote against the party line on important matters is being considered by both the People’s Party of Europe Group and the Socialist Group. Currently, reduced allocation of speaking time, fewer rapporteurships, and a failure to be assigned to particularly interesting tasks (usually involving travel) are all potential sanctions against members who consistently fail to vote the political group line.

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votes are thus frequently used by the party-group hierarchies to enforce party discipline or at least to measure it.\(^9\) The importance of this use of the roll call vote can be seen in the rapid and extensive development of internal party-group whipping procedures and even special “sessions units” dedicated to ensuring that every MEP in the group has a copy of the group’s positions.\(^10\)

Second, roll call votes are also frequently called by the smaller groups to differentiate themselves clearly from the compromise position of the two largest groups. In these cases, the intention is to make a public statement and to measure or control internal group cohesion. More generally, this type of roll call voting is used to highlight the activities and behavior of other groups rather than to investigate behavior in one’s own group. The goal is to draw public attention to the activities of other groups that are objectionable to those calling for a roll call vote (such as too much compromise).\(^11\)

Finally, a roll call vote may be called to draw attention to actions of the group or individuals calling for the vote (as opposed to the actions of others). For instance, prior to a national election, MEPs of the same member state might request a roll call vote to demonstrate that they are voting in their home state’s interests despite their own group’s stance on an issue. Similarly, a group might wish to use a vote to make a public statement. In such a case, the group might request a roll call vote even though it has no interest in using the vote to monitor the behavior of its members.

Given that there are numerous strategic reasons for calling roll call votes and that, in most cases, it is impossible for us to know why a vote was called (without an in-depth analysis of the circumstances), it is impossible to infer, from the results of an analysis of roll call voting, what occurs outside the venue of roll call votes in terms of voting cohesion and coalition formation. This is an objective limitation of roll call analysis not only inside the EP but in any context when the decision to have a roll call vote is left to strategic calculations of the actors instead of specific rules.

METHOD

The method of analysis is correspondence analysis.\(^12\) We describe the basic philosophy for the reader who may not be familiar with it. The data

9. Here it should be noted that party-group leaders are also interested in knowing who voted and who did not.
10. The use of whips is most developed in the Socialist Party group (PSE), followed closely by the People’s Party (PPE) and the Liberal group (LDR).
11. The Liberal group in particular is interested in this type of roll call vote.
12. This method is now included in standard statistical packages like the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), Statistical Analysis System (SAS), and Systat. For a detailed
consist of a table with 71 rows (the different delegations) and 298 columns. This data set can be considered as a contingency table where some 518 MEPs vote 100 times each, and these 100 \( \times \) 518 votes are distributed across different vote modalities (i.e., yes, no, absent in 100 votes) and different delegations. For example, the number 29 in the intersection of the row called GP (German Christian Democrats) and the column Y1 indicates that 29 members of this group voted “yes” in the first vote under consideration. Correspondence analysis provides a geometric way to interpret affinities between the columns and the rows of this 71 \( \times \) 298 table. It is based on a \( \chi^2 \) (chi-square) distance between the “profiles” of the different columns and rows of the table and the average (or marginal) profile. Consider the totals at the margins of our table. If they are divided by the total number of votes cast (the number close to 100 \( \times \) 518), each one of the margins presents the average profile of parties and vote modalities. The profile of delegations would approximate the size of each delegation (if abstentions had been included, it would have been exactly the size of each delegation). The profile of vote modalities would reflect the relative strength of yes, no, and absences of each delegation on different votes.

Let us consider the element \( ij \) of the data matrix (\( i \) row and \( j \) column). If the distribution of vote modalities were independent of delegations, the expected frequency (exp) of element \( ij \) would have been the product of the two marginal frequencies (delegation and vote modality) multiplied by the total number of votes cast. Instead of this expected value, we find an observed value (obs) as element \( ij \) of the matrix. Now for each row \( i \) consider the following distance:

\[
\chi^2 = \Sigma_j ((\text{obs}_{ij} - \text{exp}_{ij})^2 / \text{exp}_{ij})
\]  

(1)

The quantity in (1) represents the \( \chi^2 \) distance between the profiles of the \( i \)th delegation and the average (or marginal) delegation. Correspondence analysis constructs these 71 profiles of different parties and represents them as 71 points in a 298-dimensional space. If one could visualize this “cloud” of 71 points in the 298-dimensional space, all the information included in the original table would be readily interpretable. Because such a visualization is

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13. Three columns per vote representing the “yes,” “no,” and “absent” modalities minus two columns with zero participants representing “no” votes in unanimous votes that had to be dropped from the table. Abstentions were not included because they were statistically insignificant.

14. Alternatively, by reversing the role of columns and rows, it constructs 298 points in a 71-dimensional space.
not possible, correspondence analysis makes the best “two-dimensional photos” of the cloud. In technical terms, it applies techniques of singular value decomposition to project these profiles onto optimal subspaces.  

There are two properties of this technique necessary to understand the analysis that follows. The first is that if two columns or two rows are represented close to each other in the graphics, their profiles are similar (have low \( \chi^2 \) distance). Let us explain the point with respect to delegations. If two delegations (rows) fall close to each other, their voting patterns are similar (i.e., their members vote in similar ways, in terms of percentages, across the whole set of bills). With respect to columns, if two of them are close to each other, it means that they have been supported by the same constellation of forces. For example, if the same coalition supported Bill x and opposed Bill y, the projection of “yes” for Bill x will be identical with the projection of “no” for Bill y (in all subspaces).

The second property is termed the “barycentric principle” and permits the researcher to make inferences from the association (correspondence) between columns and rows. Correspondence analysis projects rows into the center of gravity of the columns that produce them. Consequently, rows are projected into the area of columns with which they are associated (the corresponding numbers are high). Correspondence analysis is unique in this respect, because it permits inferences concerning rows to be drawn from the observation of the projections of columns and vice versa. For our table, if some parties are projected close to a cluster of vote modalities, they are the ones casting those particular votes.

The inferences drawn from the distances between two columns or two rows are significantly different from the inferences drawn from the distance between a column and a row. Distances between two columns or two rows are chi-square distances and have a direct substantive interpretation. Distances between the representation of a column and a row cannot be interpreted

15. It can be shown in matrix algebra that every \((I \times J)\) matrix \(A\) can be uniquely decomposed in the form \(A = U D_j V^T\) where \(U^T U = V^T V = I\) is the identity matrix, and \(D_j\) is a diagonal matrix of rank \(K\) (the rank of \(A\)). The left singular vectors (orthonormal vectors of \(U\)) are the eigenvectors of \(AA^T\). The right singular vectors (orthonormal vectors of \(V\)) are the eigenvectors of \(A^T A\). The eigenvalues associated with these matrices are the same. For an extended discussion of the method, see Benzécri (1973). For an application on electoral geography, see Tsebelis (1979).

16. In addition, if two profiles are identical (“distributionally equivalent”), they can be replaced by their sum without affecting the geometric properties of the whole. The distributional equivalence property requires that if two national delegations were voting exactly the same way (which never occurred in our data set), we could have replaced them by a composite group without affecting anything else in the analysis.

17. The reason for this property is that the eigenvalues of the row and the column profile matrices are identical (see previous note).
directly but have an indirect relation. In what follows, we interpret distances between rows as differences in voting patterns of two groups and distances between columns as differences in the composition of coalitions that supported or opposed the legislation. However, we will not associate any particular column with any particular row but with the cluster of columns or rows that surround it.

A brief example will familiarize the reader with the arguments that follow. Table 1 is part of the data set we analyzed. It consists of three delegations: the German Socialists (GS), the Italian Greens (IV), and the Spanish Christian Democrats (SP). We report how each one of these groups voted in the 1st, 31st, and 69th vote as follows: The columns named “Y” report the number of “yes” votes of each group, the columns “N” report the “no” votes, and the columns “B” report the number of members of the European Parliament of each group who were absent during the vote.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Y1</th>
<th>N1</th>
<th>B1</th>
<th>Y31</th>
<th>N31</th>
<th>B31</th>
<th>Y69</th>
<th>N69</th>
<th>B69</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GS</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SP</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: GS = German Socialists, IV = Italian Greens, SP = Spanish Christian Democrats. Columns indicate how each one of these groups voted in the 1st, 31st, and 69th vote. The columns named “Y” report the number of “yes” votes of each group, the columns “N” report the “no” votes, and the columns “B” report the number of members of the European Parliament of each group who were absent during the vote.
vote was almost unanimous, and the 31st and 69th votes had a majority of “yes” in our data set.

Figure 1 presents the results of correspondence analysis of the data in Table 1 (because the table has three rows, a two-dimensional table is sufficient to analyze all the information it contains). Note first that the representations of columns Y1 and N69 appear close to each other on the left side of the figure. Similarly, the columns N1 and Y69 are close together on the right side. The reason for these graphic proximities is the similarity of the corresponding “profiles.” Note also that the Spanish Christian Democrats appear close to their most characteristic votes: Y1 and N69. Similarly, the German Socialists appear close to Y69 and N1, and the Italian Greens close to B1 and B31. All of these “correspondences” are the results of the barycentric principle we discussed above.

Figure 1 can help us organize the information contained in Table 1 more efficiently. The first axis (which represents 84% of “inertia,” the information contained in the data set) divides the parties into two groups: the Greens and the Socialists on one side and the Christian Democrats on the other. In
addition, the successful votes (both N1, Y69 won) are associated with the political Left, whereas the unsuccessful ones (Y1, N69) are associated with the Right. The universal coalition (Y31) is located in the middle. The second axis, which represents the remaining 16% of the inertia (information), distinguishes between the parties that participate in the deliberations of the EP (the Christian Democrats and the Socialists) and the ones that do not (the Greens). In particular, the Greens are associated with votes B1 and B31, indicating that their majority was not present in these votes.

RESULTS OF THE ANALYSIS

We analyze the first two axes that total 50% of inertia (27% for the first and 23% for the second) for the whole data set. As in the example, for the whole data set, the first axis represents the standard Left-Right political spectrum, the second divides political groups and votes on the basis of their levels of participation. Together these two axes describe the primary determinants of coalition formation in the European Parliament. In the following representations, party groups are indicated by two letters: the first indicates the country (B for Belgium, D for Denmark, F for France, G for Germany, H for Greece, I for Italy, J for Ireland, L for Luxembourg, N for the Netherlands, P for Portugal, and S for Spain) and the second the ideological group (A = Rainbow Group/Technical Group of Independent Members, C = Communist Group/Left Unity, E = European Democrats, G = United European Left, L = Liberal and Democratic Group, N = Nonattached, P = People’s Party of Europe/Christian Democrats, R = European Democratic Alliance, S = Socialist Group, V = Green Group). As indicated earlier, votes are coded as Y (for “yes”), N (for “no”), or B (for “absentee”) followed by the number of the vote. The scale in each figure is as small as possible so that the reader can visualize the overall pattern, but still large enough for the labels to be legible. Inconveniences generated from overlapping labels are due to the distribution of the data.

This section is organized in three parts. The first part analyses each one of the axes separately. The second focuses on the plane generated by the first two axes and analyses the different votes (first vs. second round, success vs. failure, yes vs. no). The third section divides the votes by subject matter and suggests further inferences.

18. The level of the next three axes drops off precipitously to 6%, 5%, and 4%, respectively. There is another drop off after the fifth axis to 2%.
THE TWO PRINCIPAL AXES

Axis 1. Our first finding is that voting in the EP is along the lines of political group affiliation, not national identity. This is demonstrated by the clustering of the national delegations according to their group affiliation (second letter) as opposed to their national identity (first letter) along the first axis (see Figure 2). The national delegations that are members of the People’s Party of Europe (PPE/EDG\textsuperscript{19} [European Democratic Group]) fall on the left side of the figure. Those that belong to the Socialist Group (PSE) fall to the right. The delegations belonging to the Liberal and Democratic Reformist group (LDR) fall in between these two extremes. Smaller political groups (the left--

19. During the legislative period being discussed, the British Conservative dominated group, the European Democratic Group (EDG), formed an official alliance with the PPE (without completely joining); we have left these members of the European Parliament (MEPs) as EDG members and will discuss them in association with our discussions of the PPE.
wing Left Unity [LU] and European Left Unity [ELU]) as well as the Greens are primarily to the right of the axis with the Socialists, whereas the Democratic Alliance [RDA], the Technical Group of the Right, and the Rainbow Group are largely to the left, along with the PPE) also follow this pattern of division between left and right. The reader may be surprised by the reversal of the traditional left-right axis (in our graphics the Left appears in the right of the figure). We will offer an interesting political explanation for this in the conclusions of this article.

The clustering of the national delegations into ideological groups suggests that traditional Left-Right voting coalitions occur in the EP, with the centrist Liberal group often playing a decisive role between the two major groups (PSE and PPE). This interpretation is further substantiated by the correlation coefficients of the political groups (Table 2). Whereas the PPE and the Socialists have an extremely low correlation coefficient (.18), the Liberals vote almost as frequently with the Socialists (.46) as they do with the PPE (.58). The higher correlation coefficient of Liberals with the PPE is demonstrated in Figure 1 as the liberal group delegations are slightly closer to those of the PPE. The existence of coalitions of the Left and Right is also evidenced in Table 2. The groups of the Left (PSE, ELU, LU and Greens) all have high correlation coefficients with each other, as do the groups of the moderate Right (PPE, EDG, and to some extent the RDA).

Axis 2. As shown in Figure 2, axis 2 measures the level of group participation in parliamentary activities. All of the absences are closely clustered in the bottom-left quadrant of the graph, and the group delegations clustered in this area have an average participation rate of only 26% (ranging from a low of 0% [Luxembourg Liberals] to a high of 38% [Portuguese Liberals]). The participation rate among these groups is half the average rate for the Parliament as a whole (52%).

The average level of participation of the three principal groups (Socialists, PPE, and Liberals) is at the high end of the spectrum (57%). However, of the three, the Liberals participate the least (only 40%). Among the six smallest political groups, participation is even lower—just under 37%.20 This is also demonstrated in Figure 3 by the predominance of smaller group delegations in the bottom-left quadrant. With respect to nationalities, the clustering of delegations from France, Italy, and Portugal in the same area of the figure indicates high levels of absenteeism among the delegates of these countries. Indeed, these are the three countries with the worst attendance. A similar

20. The “nonaffiliated” members have the lowest rate of participation (11%) but are not counted in either category because they do not belong to an official political group.
Table 2

Correlation Coefficients of Voting

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Arco-baleno</th>
<th>Left Unity</th>
<th>Technical Group of the Right</th>
<th>EDG</th>
<th>GUE</th>
<th>LDR</th>
<th>NI</th>
<th>PPE</th>
<th>RDE</th>
<th>PSE</th>
<th>Verde</th>
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<td></td>
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<td>.04</td>
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<td>.50</td>
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<td>.04</td>
<td>.48</td>
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<tr>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.72</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>.17</td>
<td>.57</td>
<td>.53</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>.17</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.29</td>
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<td>.06</td>
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<td>.02</td>
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<td>.18</td>
<td>.25</td>
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<td>.41</td>
<td>.41</td>
<td>.02</td>
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<td>.16</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td>.01</td>
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<td>1</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: EDG = European Democratic Group; GUE = Gauche Unitaire d’Europe (United European Left); LDR = Liberal and Democratic Reformist Group; NI = non inscrit (nonattached); PPE = People’s Party of Europe; RDE = Rénovateurs et Rassemblement des Democrats Européens (European Renewal and Democratic Alliance); PSE = Socialist Group.
level of variation by nationality can also be seen in Table 3. Italy and France display a remarkably low rate of participation (32%), whereas the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, and Germany display significantly higher rates (71%，68%，and 67%，respectively).

A full understanding of the second axis is critical because the low rate of participation in the European Parliament causes failure of amendments or bills that require absolute majorities (in the second round). On average, nearly 50% of the total membership of the Parliament is absent or fails to participate in each vote. As a result, the required absolute majority resembles a unanimity of MEPs present. Thus, the low level of participation increases the need for internal political group cohesion as well as interpolitical group coalitions, particularly during the second round.

Although ideological, rather than national, identity is the primary factor driving the clustering of different delegations, it is evident that there are also significant differences between national delegations, even when they belong to the same ideological group. The differences are mainly in participation rates. For example, the Christian Democrats from the Netherlands (NP)
Table 3  
Average Participation by Country and Political Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group/Nationality</th>
<th>Belgium</th>
<th>Denmark</th>
<th>France</th>
<th>Germany</th>
<th>Greece</th>
<th>Ireland</th>
<th>Italy</th>
<th>Luxembourg</th>
<th>the Netherlands</th>
<th>Portugal</th>
<th>Spain</th>
<th>United Kingdom</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rainbow Group</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>0.31</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Left Unity</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>0.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical Group of the Right</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>0.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European Democratic Group</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>0.61</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>0.70</td>
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<tr>
<td>European Left Unity</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>0.47</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal and Democratic</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reformist Group</td>
<td>0.47</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>0.64</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>0.33</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nonattached</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>***</td>
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<td>0.05</td>
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<tr>
<td>European People’s Party</td>
<td>0.73</td>
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<td>Socialist Group</td>
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<td>0.68</td>
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<tr>
<td>European Democratic Alliance</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>0.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green Group</td>
<td>0.68</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>0.31</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>0.43</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.51</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td>0.68</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: 0 = no participation, 1 = 100% participation. *** = no members of European Parliament belonging to that group.
vote much more frequently than the British Conservative Party (UP) (located in the bottom-left quadrant). In general, the differences among Christian Democrats are captured by the second axis, indicating differences in participation.

However, the differences among Socialist delegations are captured by both axes, indicating that the Socialists sometimes vote against each other. For example, the Italian Socialists (IS) appear to stray the most, in terms of both participation and ideology (i.e., they are more in line ideologically with the PPE (in the bottom-left quadrant). Other delegations, such as the U.K. and German delegations, are clustered near the horizontal axis in the bottom-right quadrant. This implies that the Italian Socialist delegation is not only absent more often than the other delegations but also disagrees politically with the German Socialists. According to the figure, the British delegation tends to agree politically with the German Socialists. If we look at correlation coefficients of voting, we see that the Italians vote much more like the Germans than the British. The correlation between voting patterns (yes, no, and absenteeism) between German and Italian socialists is .85, whereas the correlation between German and British delegations is .75. Closer examination of the votes corroborates the results of the correspondence analysis: A majority of British Socialists voted against the Germans only once, whereas a minority of British Labor voted against the German Socialists on three votes. The disagreements between German and Italian Socialists were more frequent: In one vote the whole Italian delegation opposed the Germans, in two votes a majority of Italian Socialists voted against their German colleagues, and in two additional votes a minority opposed the Germans.

**PLANE 1*2**

We turn now to the analysis of voting patterns on the 1*2 plane. How do different parties vote? The first and most important observation is that “yes” votes are concentrated in the right portion of Figure 3, where the left-wing parties are located. Conversely, most of the “no” votes are located close to the PPE or moderate Right coalition. How can we interpret this observation? As we discussed in the previous section, the close location (correspondence) of left and “yes” votes means that the Left votes “yes” most of the time. If left-wing parties do vote “yes” on the floor of the Parliament, it means that the proposals presented are left-wing proposals. This is a surprising finding, because it means that, in general, committees come to the floor with

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21. Absences are also clearly clustered and will be discussed in the next section.
proposals preferred by the Left, and proposals initiated on the floor have similar ideological content.

The reason that one would not expect committees to make systematically Left-oriented proposals is that committees have the same ideological composition as the whole EP. In addition, “rapporteurs” (an institution unknown to Anglo-Saxon parliaments, but approximating a committee chair for a single bill) are also proportionally distributed to the party groups through a complicated auction mechanism (see Corbett, Jacobs, & Shackleton, 1995; Kreppel, 1998). So, left-wing proposals imply not only that Socialists make proposals to their own membership but also that Christian Democratic rapporteurs try to pitch their amendments to a majority that includes the Left. Nearly half of the 100 votes analyzed here had rapporteurs from the PPE. Yet, the majority of all “yes” vote positions fall either in the area of the “grand coalition” or in the Socialist-dominated area of the Left (bottom-right quadrant). In fact, there were only three “yes” vote positions in the PPE-dominated area (top-left quadrant) that had PPE rapporteurs, and none was successful. Thus, it appears that even when the Center-Right (PPE) has the potential to control the agenda through the manipulation of the rapporteur’s powers, they repeatedly pitch their proposals toward the Center or the Center-Left. It is not possible to tell at this juncture which of the votes considered here are amendments that originated from the committee and which were offered from the floor. Regardless, the political initiative remains exclusively with the Left, even when the agenda could potentially be controlled by the Right (PPE). Further analysis of these findings is necessary. First, one needs to verify whether the finding is restricted to roll call votes. Second, a study of the behavior of rapporteurs (particularly those from the PPE) is necessary.

However surprising it may be that the Left votes “yes” in the EP, the interpretation is straightforward: Whether proposals originate in committees or on the floor, the Left has the political initiative inside the EP (in the cooperation procedure). This finding provides an ideological context for the conflicts between Council and the EP, at least for the period 1989 to 1994 covered by our data set. During that period, right-wing governments dominated most of the 12 member states of the EU.

Initiative, however, does not necessarily mean success. Figure 4 shows the successful “yes” and “no” votes, respectively (“yes” votes that pass and “no” votes that do not pass). All of the successful “yes” votes are located within the area of the Left coalition (i.e., to the right of the vertical axis). These votes are clustered in three distinct groups. The group closest to the vertical axis

22. It is not clear how one would find how MEPs have voted in non-roll-call votes other than through anecdotal evidence.
consists of votes that were supported by the two largest political groups (PSE and PPE)—we call this the “grand coalition.” The grand coalition supports the majority of votes on final proposals (13 out of the 16 in our sample) and nearly half of the votes occurring during the second reading (14 out of the 30 in our sample). In fact, it is only the grand coalition that can successfully pass positive positions (i.e., “yes” votes) during the second reading.

The second cluster of votes represents those supported by the Socialists and the Liberals, but not necessarily by the PPE (which either opposed or split). This coalition is successful in the first reading only. Despite the fact that it consistently obtains a plurality in the second round, this Left-Center coalition is not able to overcome the low level of participation and obtain the absolute majority required.23 Finally, the third cluster (farthest bottom-right) includes votes (first reading only) supported successfully by the Left

23. EP Rules of Procedure 67(2), 71(7), and 71(3).
coalition alone (primarily the PSE, the ELU, and the Greens). What is significant is that the moderate Right does not appear to be able to pass legislation or amendments by itself (it can be successful only as part of the grand coalition).

The situation changes somewhat when we look at successful “no” votes (i.e., “no” votes for legislation and amendments that fail). Once again there are three distinct clusters, only one of which lies within the area of the moderate Right coalition. The political groups voting “no” on the votes included in the cluster in the upper-left quadrant include the PPE, EDG, and LDR. The cluster of votes closest to the vertical axis (upper-right) are those supported by the grand coalition, and, as might be expected, those to the far right represent the Left coalition of the PSE, ELU, and Greens again. Why the moderate Right should be more successful at opposing legislation and amendments than at supporting them is problematic until we examine the votes involved more closely.

All but one of the successful “no” votes to the left of the vertical axis occurred during the second reading. The proximity of these successful “no” votes to the moderate Right coalitions suggests that although the moderate Right is unable to pass legislation and amendments (in either the first or second reading), it is able to form a blocking minority in the second round (due to the absolute majority requirement and low level of participation). In fact, all of the votes in the second round that were not supported by the grand coalition failed to pass because of the opposition of the moderate Right. Some votes were blocked with as few as 50 votes, but frequently even unanimity among members present would not have been enough for passage. So, the low level of overall participation in the EP enables the moderate Right to block legislation in the second round. Including the variations in procedure between the two rounds (minimum majority requirements), there are essentially three distinct winning coalitions: the grand coalition (PPE + PSE + others), which is successful in both rounds for either “yes” or “no” votes; the moderate left-wing coalition (PSE + Greens and others), which is successful primarily in the first round and on either “yes” or “no” votes; and the moderate Right coalition (PPE + ED+ LDR), which is successful almost exclusively in the second round and only on “no” votes (where it is able to create a blocking minority). The pattern of losing coalitions is less distinct because the party groups that oppose a winning coalition may not be actively forming a coalition of their own. In fact, the opposition to the grand coalition is almost exclusively made up of the small extremist party groups of the Left and Right (occasionally with the additional support of the Liberals). To call this a cohesive “coalition,” however, would be a stretch. The moderate Right, led by the
PPE, is obviously a frequent losing coalition in the first round, whereas the moderate Left (PSE) loses in the second round due to the majority requirements of the cooperation procedure.

Part of the reason why the Left is more successful in getting its way on amendments and legislation (at least in the first round) has to do with participation and relative cohesion of the major political groups. The cohesion of the political groups (and thus the strength of the coalitions) is demonstrated graphically by the proximity of the national delegations belonging to the same political group in Figure 2 and numerically in Table 4. The Socialists have the highest participation (64%) and cohesion (96%) of the three major groups. The PPE comes second in both participation (54%) and cohesion (89%). The Liberal group follows at a distance mainly with respect to participation (40%) but also cohesion (80%). The smaller groups have lower levels of participation and cohesion, although the pattern is significantly more pronounced in the right end of the spectrum than in the left.

The PPE suffers from defections more frequently than the Socialist Group, particularly if we consider the British Conservatives (UE in the

\[ c = \frac{Y}{Y+N}, N/(Y+N) \]

Absences were not included, as their political significance could not be determined (see supra) and abstentions were too few to make a difference.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Euro-Party 1989</th>
<th>Average Cohesion</th>
<th>Average Participation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arcobaleno/Rainbow</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td>0.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Left Unity</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>0.25</td>
</tr>
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<td>Technical Group of the Right</td>
<td>0.87</td>
<td>0.36</td>
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<tr>
<td>EDG</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>0.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GUE</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>0.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LDR</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>0.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NI</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>0.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PPE</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>0.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RDE</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>0.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socialist</td>
<td>0.96</td>
<td>0.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verde/Greens</td>
<td>0.96</td>
<td>0.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average of all political groups (weighted)</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>0.52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: EDG = European Democratic Group; GUE = Gauche Unitaire D’Europe (United European Left); LDR = Liberal and Democratic Reformist Group; NI = non inscript (nonattached); PPE = People’s Party of Europe; RDE = Rénovateurs et Rassemblement des Democrats Européens (European Renewal and Democratic Alliance).
figures) as part of the PPE. Often, the near complete defection of the British Conservatives is combined with the partial defection of some of the other national delegations. Among those most likely to join the EDG in defecting from the PPE are members of the German (GP), Dutch (NP), and Belgian (BP) delegations to the PPE (all located at the top of the figures).

The impact of the low rate of overall participation on coalition formation is clearest when we examine votes occurring during the EP’s second reading. In Figure 5, only successful votes in the second round are shown. The blocking power of the Right is demonstrated (upper-left quadrant), and there is a significant reduction in the number of coalitions that can pass amendments or proposals. The number of clusters to the right is reduced to only one: the grand coalition. Because of the low level of participation and the increased majority requirements in the second round, the Left is no longer able to pass legislation on its own. Thus, the low rate of participation forces MEPs to form broad coalitions across ideological lines in the second round when it might not have been necessary were the absolute majority requirement not in place.

Consequently, the absolute majority requirement potentially forces the political moderation of EP amendments. The Left (which controls the agenda) has two choices: either to moderate its position, attract the PPE delegations, and succeed or insist on its ideological purity, vote alone in the second round, and fail. In our sample, we have votes representing both these strategies.

**ANALYSIS BY TOPIC**

After examining the variations among the political groups and the different types of coalitions between them, we analyzed the impact of legislative topics on the types of coalitions formed. Because much of the legislation of the European Union is highly technical and complex, it is often not obvious how to divide bills by topic. As a result, we used the committee of origin as a proxy for legislative topic. In our data set, there were 32 bills from the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Protection Committee (Environment); 14 from the Social Affairs, Employment and the Working Environment Committee (Social); 16 from the Legal Affairs and Citizens’ Rights Committee (Legal); 4 from the Economic and Monetary Affairs and Industrial Policy Committee (Economic); 11 from the Energy, Research, and Technology Committee (Energy); and 2 from the Women’s Rights Committee.

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25. This was made official in 1992, although even after their inclusion in the PPE, the EDG retained some financial and organizational autonomy.
The general patterns of coalition formation discussed above emerged when votes were divided by legislative topic as well. However, there were some interesting variations among topics. For reasons of economy of space, we will present the findings only verbally.

**Environment and Legal Affairs**

The Left coalition is able to pass legislation on its own only in the first round. The bulk of the successful votes fall into the “grand coalition” cluster, which means that both the PPE and the PSE supported these positions. The large number of votes in the grand-coalition area suggests that the PPE and the Socialists are able to find compromise positions in the legal and environmental arenas.

26. The total does not add up to 90 because several of the votes were either read by more than one committee or the committee of origin was not clear.
Social and Energy

The “opposition” coalition of British Conservatives, EDG, PPE, and LDR once again is present, but next to it is a new coalition that includes the standard groups of the moderate Right as well as defectors from the Socialist group. The only successful votes to the left of the vertical axis required some defectors from the Socialist group. The moderate Left (without full support of the PPE) appears to be more successful in the social and energy realms than it was in the environmental arena.

Economic

This area presents significantly different voting patterns from what we have seen elsewhere. On economic issues, the moderate Right is much more cohesive than it appeared previously (no coalitions based on partial moderate-Right defections), and the grand coalition almost disappears. A larger sample of votes from the Economic Committee is necessary to see if the pattern of a more defined split between Left and Right regularly occurs on economic issues.

From our examination of the coalitions formed for votes on legislation of different topics, we can see a general pattern. There are six consistent types of coalitions: the extreme Right, the extreme Left, the moderate Right, the moderate Left, the Left plus defections from the Right, and the grand coalition (both PSE and PPE). Of these six types, only three are able to pass amendments and bills (moderate Left, moderate Left + defectors, and the grand coalition) and another that is able, during the second round only, to block the will of the plurality (moderate Right). Only the grand coalition can get its positions adopted in the second round. The other two coalitions (extreme Left and extreme Right) are always in the minority and always unsuccessful (even at blocking).

There have been some significant variations in coalition formation across legislative topics, however. The division between Right and Left appeared much stronger on issues related to the economy. There were no defectors from either side, and almost no grand coalitions. In addition, whereas defections from the PPE appear to be quite common, the Socialist group rarely suffers from defections. Finally, minority positions taken by the ideological extremes were less apparent when economic issues were under consideration.
All the findings of this study pertain to the cooperation procedure, and our study needs to be applied to other procedures to see whether our results hold true more broadly. In fact, it was one of the premises of this article that coalitions will vary systematically with subject matter, the majority required, and the role of the EP in the legislative process. Here we present our findings in order of importance.

First, voting inside the EP is done on the basis of ideology, not nationality. Among the different political groups the Socialists have highest participation and highest cohesion; the PPE comes second in both. The smaller groups vary significantly, although the groups of the Left tend to have higher cohesion than those of the Right. Two of the three smaller groups of the Left have higher participation rates than the Liberals, and all three have a higher cohesion rate. The small extreme groups of the Right have uniformly low rates of both cohesion and participation.

However, voting by ideology does not mean that different nationalities within the same ideological group always vote the same way. We showed that within the same ideological group, different nationalities not only have different rates of participation but also sometimes vote against each other. Analysis of voting patterns of Italian, German, and British Socialists indicates that Italian Socialists disagree with the Germans more frequently than do British Labor MEPs. This example corroborates the correspondence analysis and contradicts the impressions generated by a simple comparison of correlation coefficients.

Second, the major division inside the EP is Left-Right. One might have expected that because the EP is dominated by a coalition of the EPP and Socialists, the major division would have been between these two allies and the rest of the small parties (a center vs. extremes pattern). Despite the fact that in the second round of the cooperation procedure most of the successful votes are cast by the grand coalition, this expectation is not supported by the data. In pure numerical terms, the predominant division is between the ideological Left and Right (first axis accounts for 27% of the variance).

A major finding of this study is that the EP during the 1989 to 1994 period and under the cooperation procedure is a parliament in which the Left consistently has the initiative. Proposals for votes on the floor emanate from the Left (either through committees or from the floor itself), and the Left votes "yes" most of the time. This finding is surprising because large proportions of
the rapporteurs are Christian Democrats, yet they pitch their proposals to the Left. This finding provides an ideological context for the conflicts between the EP and the Council. Indeed, the Left appears to have ideological hegemony in the former, whereas the Right has the overwhelming majority of votes in the latter during the period we examine.

Third, the level of participation generates the second most important division between the political groups within the EP. Whereas the groups of the extreme Right participate in less than 30% of the votes, the three largest groups of the Left participate 60% of the time.

Fourth, there are several possible coalitions: The most successful is the grand coalition (PSE and PPE), which can pass its positions in both the first and second round. Next is the moderate-Left coalition with defectors from the Right, and the Left alone, both of which are successful only in the first round. The moderate Right is effective only as a blocking coalition in the second round (never actually achieving plurality). Finally, there are the extreme coalitions of the Right and Left, which are always unsuccessful.

Fifth, rapporteurs seem to act as agents of the whole EP, as opposed to acting as agents of their political group. They propose amendments that tend to make it through Parliament (i.e., are approved by the Socialist coalition and its allies), although we do not yet know the overall success rate of particular amendments. In this sense, Tsebelis’s (1995) intuition that rapporteurs are strategic agents on behalf of the EP is confirmed.

Finally, some of these results have to be slightly altered as a function of the subject matter. Two deviations from the general pattern stand out as particularly interesting and in need of additional analysis. The first is the apparent strength of the Left-Right division on economic issues and the resultant disappearance of a grand coalition. The second is the rare splits within the Socialist group, twice on social issues and once on a bill from the Energy committee.

Let us return to the most important finding that the EP is ideologically dominated by the Left in the period under investigation. This finding has very important consequences for our understanding of conflicts within the EU. The standard interpretation of such conflicts is that they occur along the axis of integration. That is, the pro-integration actors (EP and Commission), located at the high end of the integration axis, enter into conflict with the less integrationist Council. 27 This interpretation generates a puzzle: How is it possible that the popularly elected EP has, on matters of integration, significantly different positions from the people of the EU that elected it? The standard

27. All the spatial models of EU procedures represent the EP to the right of the integration axis and the Council to the left.
The answer to this puzzle is that Europeans do not pay attention to EU elections, and that elections are national referenda to approve or disapprove of their governments’ policies.

Our analysis generates the following interpretation: The conflicts occur along the left-right axis. The differences between EP and Council are ideological. The right-wing Council is against regulation, whereas the left-wing EP is in favor of it. This is the case on issues related to the environment, workers’ health and safety, social policy, and so on. Common regulations are one way to achieve integration, but they are not the only option. Integration can also be achieved through mutual recognition. Take, for example, the issue of process regulation. A series of European directives identify the appropriate procedures to produce or package products, to regulate workers’ rights, health care, and the safety obligations of firms. Although these measures do promote integration, they were not necessary for the creation of a common market. This argument explains why regulation and integration, although correlated, are not necessarily identical. It is possible that the differences between the EP and the Council do not occur along the axis of integration as most of the literature argues but along the axis of regulation, with the Left in Parliament pushing for more common regulations across Europe.

This interpretation also provides a different explanation for the disagreements between the two institutions. The political differences do not occur because the people of Europe do not understand what is going on in Europe, and therefore elect the wrong representatives, but because they consider European elections in the national framework. European elections usually occur between two national elections, when the popularity of the party/coalition in government is low. Consequently, the opposition prevails the same way that the president’s party loses seats in midterm elections in the United States. During the period covered by this analysis, the majority of member states have had right-wing governments in office, which allows the Left to take advantage of a midterm slump during the European elections. In this way, protest votes at the national level resulted in a left-dominated European Parliament during the third legislature.

Although it is true that both interpretations of EU conflicts agree with the facts, the second does not assume that the people of Europe made mistakes in their choices. In addition, our interpretation identifies the correlation between integration and ideology (attitudes toward regulation). During the period we examine, being in favor of Europe after the addition of the cooperation procedure was interpreted as creating common rules as opposed to mutually recognizing existing national rules. This correlation between integration and regulation is the reason why we produced diagrams that located the ideological Left at the right end of the spectrum. We could not possibly satisfy
both conventions (placing the leftist party groups to the left of the graphics and placing pro-integration actors to the right). Is the EP more pro-integration or more pro-regulation? Right now it is difficult to tell. However, the two interpretations produce a nice crucial experiment for the immediate future. Because the Council has shifted to the Left, the second interpretation would expect a shift of the EP to the Right during the next European elections.

There are three major directions for the continuation of this study. The first is replication of the analysis with different procedures (codecision, consultation, budget, etc.). As we said in the introduction, cooperation is the only procedure in which coalition formation is endogenous, and the results matter for legislation. Introducing a variation in procedures would enable us to understand what coalitions other actors are trying to form inside the EP (under the codecision procedure) as well as what coalitions form when there are no significant feasibility constraints imposed on the EP (under the consultation procedure).

The second extension would be an analysis of the voting records of individual MEPs. The unit of analysis of this study was the delegation group (French Socialists, etc.). Although we found out that the Italian Socialists were different from the rest of the group, we do not know whether the difference is due to low cohesion within this delegation or the existence of factions (in which case the identity of the defectors would always be the same). Analysis at the level of individual MEPs would improve our understanding of how each one of the national delegations functions.

Finally, the most important extension would be to correlate coalition formation inside the EP with the success of parliamentary amendments in the other institutions. Is it the case that amendments proposed by the universal coalition have a better chance of being adopted by the Commission and the Council? In the first round of the cooperation procedure, are amendments proposed by the Left more likely to be adopted by the Commission and Council than amendments proposed by the Right? All three such extensions would significantly deepen our understanding of the EP and the working of European institutions.

REFERENCES


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