

# Together we Stand United we Aren't: Stable Coalitions LDP and Kōmeitō

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## Introduction

Normally, if no party wins a majority of parliamentary seats in an election, smaller parties that competed against each other in the elections form post-electoral coalitions to govern. However, sometimes parties choose to form coalitions even to contest elections. Pre-electoral coalitions are coalitions that form before elections and compete as teams in those elections (Golder, 2006). However, not all pre-electoral coalitions form for one election. For instance, the LDP-Kōmeitō coalition in Japan has been remarkably stable which has been attributed to the mixed-member electoral system of the country (Maeda and Liff 2019). However, pre-electoral coalition stability is not limited to this type of electoral system. In many parliamentary countries pre-electoral coalitions do not dissolve after an election but parties continue to cooperate with each other in the legislature even when they are in the opposition –however the parties do not merge. For these parties, the benefits of having separate party brand names must exceed the costs of keeping two party organizations, two campaign machines, and satisfying the demands of two sets of activists (extreme policy demanders). The question is why this is so. If we could answer what is the benefit of having several brand names in the electoral competition, we could get closer to understand why multiparty systems exist.

## Stable Coalitions

Stable coalitions:

1. The cooperation between the parties does not cease if the parties find themselves in the opposition.
2. Even when the senior coalition partner could govern alone, it brings the junior coalition partner into the coalition. Thus in some cases, over-sized coalitions are created.

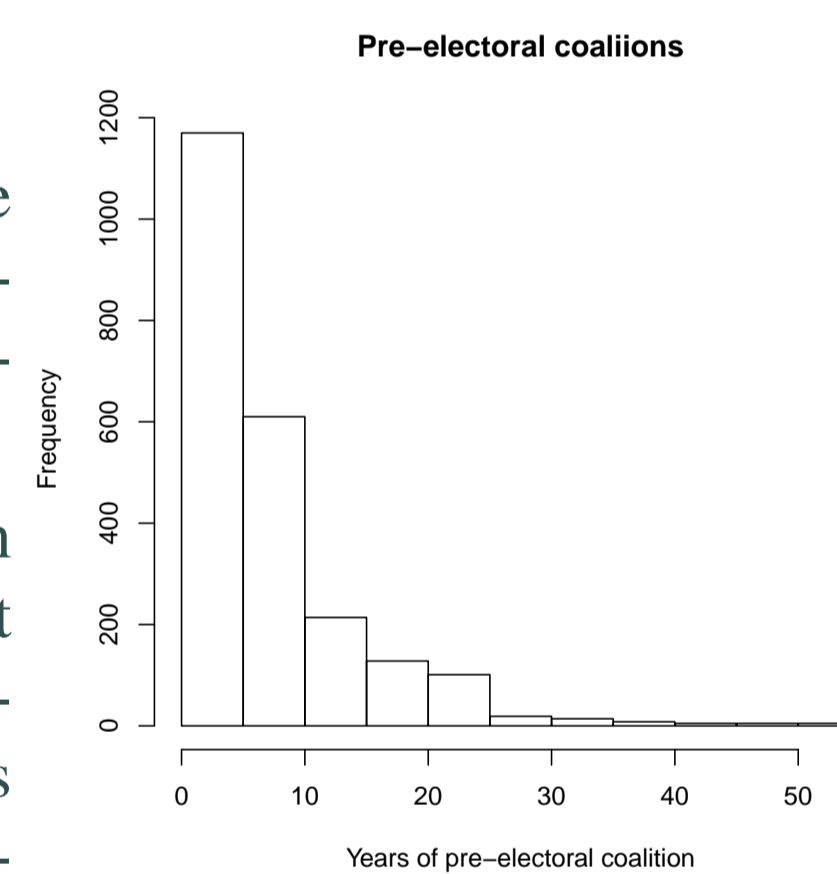


Figure 1: Length of Pre-electoral Coalitions

## Question

Why don't parties merge instead of forming a stable coalition? (if there is an electoral advantage from size...)

## Argument

Parties in a pre-electoral coalition may each have a comparative advantage in the types of resources they can mobilize for campaigns. If the campaign strategies of the two parties complement each other, it may be mutually beneficial for them to trade campaigning effort.

## Hypothesis

- **H1:** Stable Coalitions narrow their ideological distances on the main issue dimension but indicate their distinct policy position on the second issue dimension.
- **H2:** Stable Coalitions form when one of the parties is a niche party and have loyal voters that follow them in the coalition while the other party is a mainstream party.

## Data

I use data for this paper from the replication materials of (Golder, 2006) and from the *Comparative Manifestos Project* Dataset. All party-dyads that ran in elections from 1946 to 2002 in 21 coun-

tries which are all developed OECD countries: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Israel, Japan, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, and the UK. I analyze the data party dyads that had pre-electoral coalition experience and at least once the pre-electoral coalition reformed after a period in the opposition.

## Ideological Distance between Pre- and Post-electoral Coalitions

While traditionally we believe that parties that form pre-electoral coalitions are closer ideologically this is not the case. In fact parties close their ideological gap initially, after they form a pre-electoral coalition. But what happens later? (all party dyads)

	Coalition Type	All Electoral Systems (Distances Mean)	Proportional Representation (Dist. Mean)	Mixed-Electoral Systems (Dist. Mean)
Elections of the Coalition	Pre-Electoral	22.99	26.20	20.83
	Post-Electoral	28.09	29.43	21.54
Previous Elections	Pre-Electoral	25.06	29.40	22.35
	Post-Electoral	28.50	30.01	17.57

To evaluate the differences between the means I use a Welsh two sample t-test. The p-value shows that the probability that we observe a difference between the pre-electoral coalition and the post-electoral coalitions is 0.10 in a given elections. The ideological difference between the same group of parties is not significant in the election before.

## Results

	Dependent variable:				
	EntropyD (C/FE)	PC1diff (C/FE)	PC2diff (C/FE)	RILEd (C/FE)	WelfareD (C/FE)
Precol. Length	-0.009*** (0.002)	-0.268*** (0.064)	-0.141*** (0.039)	-0.257** (0.101)	0.031 (0.033)
Stability (number of reformation)	0.079** (0.032)	0.795 (1.336)	2.183*** (0.820)	2.306 (2.107)	2.351*** (0.685)
Rile Diff	0.008*** (0.001)				
Coal Exp	0.0002 (0.003)	-0.038 (0.121)	0.054 (0.074)	-0.347* (0.191)	0.116* (0.062)
Constant	0.163** (0.064)	24.834*** (2.548)	11.933*** (1.564)	35.645*** (4.019)	4.207*** (1.306)
Observations	612	612	612	612	612
R <sup>2</sup>	0.405	0.237	0.314	0.363	0.360
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.397	0.227	0.305	0.355	0.351
Residual Std. Error	0.252 (df = 602)	10.649 (df = 603)	6.537 (df = 603)	16.795 (df = 603)	5.456 (df = 603)

Note: \*p<0.1; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01

## Stable Coalitions

Here, I define stable coalitions as coalitions in which the participating parties were in the opposition together more than once, but the coalition reformed. I limit the analysis to coalitions that had separate manifestos and where both parties have manifesto data in the *Comparative Manifestos Project* database.

## Measure of Ideological Proximity: Principal Component Analysis

I conducted Principal Component Analysis (PCA) to identify the most important characteristics that differentiate the party systems from each other. PC1 is the main issue dimension. PC2 is the issue dimension that is orthogonal to the main issue dimension. I use the differences of the parties on these issue dimensions.  $|PC1_1 - PC1_2|$  and  $|PC2_1 - PC2_2|$

## Measure of Niche versus Mainstream Parties: Entropy

To numerically define niche and mainstream parties I calculate the entropy of the difference between distribution of topics in the manifestos of the parties. The entropy shows the number of ways how we could rearrange the columns in this histogram while still arriving at the same histogram as we had before. The entropy will be high in case of the mainstream parties and low in case of single issue or niche parties (Greene and Haber, 2016). I use here *Entropy Difference*:  $|E_1 - E_2|$

## Case of the LDP-Kōmeitō coalition

Pre-electoral Coalitions in Japan

Election Year	LDP (Liberal Democratic Party)	DPJ (Democratic Party of Japan)
1999	LDP LP Kōmeitō (post electoral)	
2000	LDP-CP- Kōmeitō	
2001	LDP-NCP- Kōmeitō	
2003	LDP-Kōmeitō	
2005	LDP-Kōmeitō	
2009	LDP-Kōmeitō -KC	DPJ-SDP- PNP (post electoral)
2012	LDP-Kōmeitō	

Notes: Dark shade indicates that the coalition won. LDP (Liberal Democratic Party), DPJ (Democratic Party of Japan), LP (Liberal Party), Kōmeitō (Clean Government Party), NCP (New Conservative Party), KC (Kaikaku Club), SDP (Social Democratic Party), PNP (Peoples New Party).

## Case Study

I conducted Interviews with Kōmeitō and LDP politicians about their coalition between July and August of 2014

- Idea: Kōmeitō supporters would vote for the LDP candidate in the SMD tier, while equal numbers of LDP supporters would vote for Kōmeitō list in each PR district (voter lists are compiled and exchanged). Kōmeitō has 20-30,000 voters in any given district (not just their own), stating that this number could have swung many districts easily. Interview subjects suggested that about 10-20% of LDP supporters voted for Kōmeitō in the PR tier.
- Kōmeitō has extremely loyal and disciplined voters. Since the voters are adherents in a religious organization, they vote in whatever way the sect and the party instructs.
- The coalition lasted through opposition ("There aren't supposed to be coalitions in the opposition") and when the LDP had a majority alone.
- Kōmeitō usually only requests one ministry-they are satisfied with being in the government meeting. The coalition is often described as a marriage by both parties.

## Conclusions

There are pre-electoral coalitions that are stable, which means that the coalition does not dissolve if the parties lose the elections and if one of the partners wins enough to govern alone. First, pre-electoral coalition parties decrease their ideological distances to prepare for their first elections. However, stable coalitions reform after an electoral loss if the parties are complementary electorally.

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