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The 2010 Coalition Government at Westminster

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Summary

Following negotiations between the political parties, the Conservative and Liberal Democrat parties formed a coalition government in May 2010. The Programme for Government contained a list of agreed policies, and included areas where the governing parties could disagree. The [Coalition Agreement for Stability and Reform](#) set out the conventions to be adopted on collective responsibility. The [Fixed-term Parliaments Act 2011](#) established 7 May 2015 as the date of the next general election unless an early general election was triggered under the Act.

In January 2013 the Prime Minister, David Cameron, and the Deputy Prime Minister, Nick Clegg, issued a [Mid Term Review](#) taking stock of the progress made in implementing the coalition agreement and reflecting on the Government's progress.

There have been a number of occasions where the two parties in the Coalition have adopted different positions. These include:

- The Liberal Democrats prevented the implementation of boundary changes, following inability of the Government to press forward with reform of the House of Lords;
- Separate statements by the Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister on proposals to implement the Leveson report into the regulation of the media;
- Proposals for a referendum on the UK's continued membership of the EU;
- In March 2015 the Liberal Democrat Financial Secretary to the Treasury set out an "alternative economic plan".

This Standard Note sets out details of the operation of the 2010 Coalition Government and includes information about the various agreements to differ between the two governing parties. The Standard Note SN/PC/4951 [Hung Parliaments in the twentieth century](#) sets out details of previous coalition and minority administrations.

1. Coalitions in the 20th Century: an overview

Coalitions in the UK Parliament are relatively rare, since the development of mass political parties at the end of the 19th century. The First Past the Post electoral system tends to result in single party government, although recent electoral trends have illustrated how the two party dominance in British politics has been eroded. See Research Paper 12/43 [UK Election Statistics 1918-2012](#). However, there are some examples of coalitions in the 20th century:

- A coalition was formed during the First World War between Asquith for the Liberals, Bonar Law for the Conservatives, and Arthur Henderson as the spokesman for the Labour members who supported the War.
- In 1918 as the First World War came to an end, the Conservatives and Liberals formed an electoral pact for the so called 'coupon' election and governed together in coalition until 1922
- The 1931-40 National Government included at various points both 'National Liberal' and 'Liberal' members, along with National Labour and Conservatives
- The wartime coalition government of 1940-45 was led by Winston Churchill and included Conservative, Labour and a Liberal Cabinet Minister.

Further detail is available in David Butler's *Governing Without a Majority* published in 1986 and in Vernon Bogdanor's *The Coalition and the Constitution* published in 2011. See also the Library Standard Note, SN/PC/4951, [Hung Parliaments in the twentieth century](#).

Professor Bogdanor has made the point that, in contrast to earlier coalitions, the 2010 coalition was the first to owe its existence to the lack of a parliamentary majority. In 1916, 1931 and 1940, the coalitions were formed in order to deal with national emergencies, rather than because the largest party lacked an electoral majority. These coalition arrangements were then put to the test in a subsequent general election (apart from 1940).¹ His argument is that the formation of a coalition after the election puts pressure on the traditional concepts of parliamentary democracy in the UK.

¹ Vernon Bogdanor, *The Coalition and the Constitution*, 2011

2. The Coalition in May 2010

Following the death of a candidate, the election in the Thirsk and Malton constituency was delayed until 27 May. By the time the 649 results, from the election contested on 6 May, were all declared the results were:

2010 General Election result

Party	seats	Party	seats
Conservatives	305	Plaid Cymru	3
Labour	258	Social Democratic and Labour Party	3
Liberal Democrats	57	Alliance	1
Democratic Unionists	8	Green	1
Scottish National Party	6	Independent	1
Sinn Fein	5	Speaker	1

Before the coalition agreement was reached talks took place between the Liberal Democrats and Conservative Party, and the Liberal Democrats and the Labour Party. The process and outcome of these talks has been discussed in a number of publications.²

An initial coalition agreement was reached on 11 May 2010.³ A fuller agreement, *The Coalition: Our programme for Government*, was published on 20 May 2010.⁴ A Liberal Democrat Special Conference approved the Coalition Agreement at a meeting in Birmingham on 16 May 2010.⁵ The Conservatives did not hold a special conference.

The practical and operational arrangements for how the two Parties would work together in coalition were set out in the document [Coalition Agreement for Stability and Reform](#) which was published in May 2012. The document covered how policy would be commissioned and agreed, how appointments would be made, and how the principles of collective responsibility would be carried out. On collective responsibility, it stated:

2.1 The principle of collective responsibility, save where it is explicitly set aside, continues to apply to all Government Ministers. This requires:

(a) an appropriate degree of consultation and discussion among Ministers to provide the opportunity for them to express their views frankly as decisions are reached, and to ensure the support of all Ministers;

(b) the opinions expressed and advice offered within Government to remain private;

² See David Laws *22 Days in May 2010*; "The formation of the coalition" Mark Stuart in *Cameron-Clegg Government 2011*; Robert. Wilson, *Five Days to Power: The Journey to Coalition Britain*; Lord Adonis "Reflections on the formation of a Coalition Government" in *The Coalition: Parties, Voters and Institutions* Institute of Government 2012

³ *Conservative Liberal Democrat coalition negotiations – Agreements reached*, 11 May 2010

⁴ HM Government, [The Coalition: Our Programme for Government](#), 20 May 2010, p27

⁵ Liberal Democrats press release, *Liberal Democrat Conference approves Coalition Agreement*, 16 May 2010,

(c) decisions of the Cabinet to be binding on and supported by all Ministers;

(d) full use being made of the Cabinet Committee system and application of the mechanisms for sharing information and resolving disputes set out in this document.⁶

The Deputy Prime Minister, Nick Clegg, was appointed with responsibility for delivering the commitments on constitutional reform. International observers expressed surprise at the Liberal Democrats holding none of the major spending departments such as health, education, justice, work and pensions, and Home Office.⁷ There were 18 Conservatives to five Liberal Democrats in Cabinet and of 59 to 12 junior ministers respectively. There have been no major reshuffles since May 2010, (apart from a minor reshuffle in September 2012).⁸ Commentators have also noted the lack of machinery of government changes since the general election. However, the office of the Deputy Prime Minister was subsequently strengthened since 2010 and more special advisers have been appointed.⁹

There have been several articles and books exploring the coalition negotiations. The most prominent are:

- Andrew Adonis *Five days in May: the Coalition and Beyond* 2013;¹⁰
- Vernon Bogdanor *The Coalition and the Constitution* 2011;¹¹
- Matthew D'Ancona *In it together: the inside story of the Coalition Government*; 2013;
- Robert Hazell and Ben Yong *The Politics of Coalition*; 2012;
- Bill Jones "The Road not Taken and the 'Bad Faith' Thesis" *Political Quarterly* Oct-Dec 2013;
- David Laws *22 Days in May: The Birth of the Lib Dem-Conservative Coalition* 2011;
- Simon Lee and Matt Beech *The Cameron-Clegg Government: Coalition Politics in an age of austerity* 2011;
- Thomas Quinn et al "[The UK Coalition Agreement of 2010: Who Won?](#)" *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion and Parties* May 2011;¹²
- Rob Wilson *5 Days to Power* 2010.

Some comparative material on coalitions and their termination methods is contained in Petra Schleiter and Sukriti Issar "[Fixed-Term Parliaments and the Challenges for Governments and the Civil Service: A Comparative Perspective](#)" in *Political Quarterly* April to June 2014.

⁶ [Coalition Agreement for Stability and Reform May 2012](#)

⁷ Cited in Institute of Government [A Game of Two Halves: How coalition governments renew in mid-term and last the full term](#).2012 p49

⁸ See Parliamentary Information List, [Ministers in the Coalition Government](#)

⁹ See Chapter 2 of [One Year On](#) Institute of Government 2011 for details

¹⁰ See [Institute of Government seminar 5 days in May](#) 22 May 2013

¹¹ See Gresham College lecture 14 April 2011 [The Coalition and the Constitution](#)

¹² See also Tom Quinn [Mandates, Manifestos and Coalitions: UK Party Politics after 2010](#) 18 July 2014 *UK Constitutional Law Blog*

3. The Coalition in Government

The House of Lords Library Note [Constitutional and Parliamentary Effect of Coalition Government](#) describes the controversy over the process of coalition negotiations. There was media concern that if a government was not formed immediately, there might be pressure on the financial markets. There was also concern about the process of forming the coalition, and the Cabinet Office subsequently published a note clarifying the support it had given to the negotiations.¹³

The Cabinet Office previously published a draft chapter on elections and government for the Cabinet Manual in February 2010. This was revised in light of the experience gained in May 2010, and a new version of the entire Cabinet Manual was published in December 2010.¹⁴ An updated version was published in October 2011.

In May 2011 the Government published a document entitled [The Coalition Government: One Year on](#). This noted that much of the coalition agreement programme was being completed:

One year on, the Government has completed a quarter of the commitments made in its five-year Coalition Agreement and is well on the way to completing two-thirds of the total.¹⁵

The Institute of Government's 2012 publication [A Game of Two Halves: How coalition governments renew in mid-term and last the full term](#) recommended that the Programme for Government process should be renewed:

The Coalition should re-emphasise the importance of the programme for government by creating a transparent mechanism for monitoring progress. This should be based on existing systems for tracking business plans, with the link between the programme for government and business plans made clearer.

- The Coalition should publish a mid-term progress report, as occurs in Ireland, in which it demonstrates what progress has been made in delivering programme for government commitments so far.
- The mid-term review should be clearer than the original programme about prioritisation, outlining an action plan and timeline for implementing remaining and new pledges.
- Prioritisation would also be strengthened by a clearer link between policy and budget planning as in Germany and the Netherlands. Spending targets and economic forecasts underpinning commitments in the renewed policy programmes should be spelt out.¹⁶

The Institute also warned that failure to engage with backbenchers and activists would undermine the Coalition's stability as well as shutting off an important source of policy ideas.

¹³ Cabinet Office, [Civil Service support to coalition negotiations](#), AO2010/1.

¹⁴ Cabinet Office, [Cabinet Manual](#)

¹⁵ <http://www.number10.gov.uk/news/the-coalition-government-one-year-on/>

¹⁶ [A Game of Two Halves: How coalition governments renew in mid-term and last the full term](#). 2012

[*The Politics of Coalition: How the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition works*](#), the product of a project at the Constitution Unit, University College London, studied how the coalition was established and operated until the end of 2011. The book found that processes and negotiations in government had worked efficiently but that coalition was placing strains on the two political parties. It asked how coalition government could reconcile unity in government with the need for the parties to project distinct identities.¹⁷

On 7 January 2013 the Government published the [*Mid Term Review: The Coalition: together in the national interest*](#).¹⁸ Following media interest, an audit of progress so far was published on 9 January [*Programme for Government update*](#).¹⁹ Neither document was specific about the expected length of the coalition, but there were references to a longer term programme, which prompted speculation of the continuance of the coalition beyond a 2015 election.²⁰

The question of civil service support to coalition parties towards the end of a coalition is of relevance. It is a convention for the civil service to offer briefings to opposition parties in the months before a general election. For further details see Standard Note 3318 [*Pre-election contacts between civil servants and opposition parties*](#).

In April 2014, it became known that the current Prime Minister had written to the Leader of the Opposition to inform him that pre-election contacts between the opposition and the Civil Service would be authorised from October 2014, 6 months prior to the May 2015 general election. In Scotland, either coalition party was able to request confidential advice from the Civil Service to assist in their preparation of policy plans for the post-election period.²¹ An Institute for Government report argued in May 2014 that in future the process of initiating the pre-election contacts should be an automatic process in a fixed-term parliament occurring a year or 10 months before the general election and overseen by the Cabinet Secretary.²²

The House of Lords Constitution Committee inquiry into the constitutional implications of coalition government was announced in July 2013 and the final report published in February 2014. In relation to collective responsibility, it concluded:

79. Where it is clear that no collective position can be reached on an issue, a proper process should be in place to govern any setting aside of collective responsibility. Such setting aside should be agreed by the Cabinet as a whole and be in respect of a specific issue. Ordinarily it would be for a specified period of time; rules should be set out by the Prime Minister governing how ministers may express their differing views. This process should be drawn

¹⁷ Ed Robert Hazell and Ben Yong June 2012

¹⁸ http://assets.cabinetoffice.gov.uk.s3-external-3.amazonaws.com/midtermreview/HMG_MidTermReview.pdf

¹⁹ See "[Coalition misses 70 coalition pledge](#)" 9 January 2013 *Daily Telegraph*,

²⁰ "Awkward couple set on painting over all talk of political romance" 8 January 2013 *Financial Times*

²¹ See *Northern Exposure* John Elvidge 2011

²² Institute for Government, [*Pre-election contact between the civil service and the parties: lessons from 2010*](#)

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up by the Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister for the remainder of this Parliament, and should be set out in future coalition agreements.²³

The Committee took oral evidence from a range of witnesses, and its written and oral evidence is available [here](#).²⁴

The Lords Committee also recommended new procedures for pre-election contacts where there was a minority party in coalition:

109. We recommend that ministers should be able to commission confidential briefings from officials within their departments for the purpose of developing policy for the next Parliament without those briefings being disclosed to ministers from their coalition partners. Arrangements should be put in place in those departments where one party has no ministers to allow for briefing to that party.²⁵

The Government response, published in November 2014, did not accept the recommendation:

It is important to make clear that the constitutional position of the civil service is to serve the government of the day as provided for in the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010. It is for the Prime Minister to determine the timing and scope of pre-election contacts between the civil service and the opposition, and the Prime Minister has recently authorised contacts in advance of the 2015 General Election from 1 October 2014. A copy of the correspondence between the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Official Opposition is at Annex A. Ministers may commission appropriate briefing from civil servants on a confidential basis, this should be in line with arrangements agreed by the Prime Minister, the Deputy Prime Minister and the Cabinet Secretary.²⁶

²³ Lords Constitution Committee, *Constitutional Implications of Coalition Government* HL 130 2013-14

²⁴ <http://www.parliament.uk/documents/lords-committees/constitution/coalitiongovernment/evidence-volume-coalition-government-as-at-17Dec.pdf>

²⁵ Ibid

²⁶ *Government response to the Lords Constitution Committee report Constitutional Implications of Coalition Government* November 2014

4. The Coalition and Parliament

The formation of a government with a workable majority and an Official Opposition much larger than any other minor party initially led observers to characterise the 2010 Parliament as a reversion to the two party system familiar until the late 1970s. But the creation of the Backbench Business Committee, and the election of select committee chairs has strengthened the power of backbenchers within the House, although control of the legislative process remains with the frontbench.²⁷

Both the House of Lords and the House of Commons have schemes whereby funding is made available to support the parliamentary business of opposition parties (known as Short money in the House of Commons and Cranborne money in the House of Lords). Further information is available in Standard Note 1663 [Short Money](#). Following the formation of the Coalition government, the Liberal Democrats were no longer an opposition party, and were therefore no longer entitled to receive such payments.

There has been debate as to the applicability of the Salisbury/Addison convention in the Lords in the context of a coalition. This convention is that the Lords do not substantially amend or destroy a Government bill if it appeared in the Government's election manifesto. The Lords Constitution Committee report on the Constitutional Implications of Coalition Government discusses this point at paras 93 to 100. The issue is described in the Lords Library Note LLN 2011/002 [Constitutional and Parliamentary Effect of Coalition Governments](#) which also describes parliamentary working practices, such as seating arrangements, questions to ministers following statements, winding up speeches and modes of address.²⁸

²⁷ "Parliament under the Coalition: a response" in [One Year on](#) 2011 Institute of Government

²⁸ See also "The Coalition in Parliament" in *the Politics of Coalition* ed Robert Hazell and Ben Yong 2012

5. Agreements to differ

As described in the Lords Library Note, the [Coalition Agreement for Stability and Reform](#) did allow for areas of disagreement between governing parties. These included the renewal of Trident, the referendum on the Alternative Vote, the construction of nuclear power stations, transferable married tax allowances and the outcome of the Browne review into the funding of higher education. It did not include the proposed boundary changes.²⁹

Agreements to differ are not unprecedented. The agreement to differ on tariff reform in the 1931 National Government coalition is covered in more detail in Research [Paper 04/82](#) *The collective responsibility of Ministers: an outline of the issues* on pp25-27. The agreement to differ on tariff reform was published in the Times on 23 January 1932 and the novel constitutional development was debated in both Houses. On [4 February 1932](#) Liberal members of the Cabinet disagreed with a tariff policy being supported by the Conservatives. The Chancellor, Neville Chamberlain, [introduced the policy](#), and then later the Home Secretary, Sir H.Samuel, [rose to oppose it](#). On 8 February 1932, the [House debated a no confidence motion](#), which the Government won by 438 votes to 39. The position was debated in the Lords on [10 Feb 1932](#) as part of a motion to censure the government for abandoning the doctrine of Cabinet responsibility. The motion was defeated 73-7.

Despite the agreement to differ, tensions within the Government continued over the Ottawa Agreement which set up a series of tariff agreements within the British Empire and the remaining Liberals resigned their ministerial posts, though continued to support the government from the backbenches for another year.

The *Coalition Agreement for Stability and Reform* in 2010 stated that

5.1 The two Parties will aim to ensure support for Government policy and legislation from their two Parliamentary Parties, except where the Coalition Programme for Government specifically provides otherwise. If on any future occasion any other exceptions are required they must be specifically agreed by the Coalition Committee and Cabinet. Ministers will be responsible for developing and maintaining a constructive dialogue with Members of both Parliamentary Parties.

5.2 As a general rule, the same whip will be applied by both parties to their members. This includes legislation agreed as part of the Coalition Agreement. Any exceptions will be explicitly agreed by the parties, including exceptions identified in the Agreement of 11 May. In all circumstances, all members of both parties will be expected to support the Government on all matters of confidence.

5.3 The Chief Whip of the Conservative Party will serve as Government Chief Whip and the Chief Whip of the Liberal Democrats will serve as Deputy Chief Whip.

²⁹ For detail on the boundary changes see Standard Note 5929 [Constituency Boundaries: The sixth general review](#)

The Government Chief Whip and Deputy Chief Whip will consult and co-operate with each other to ensure the delivery of the Government's programme. Parallel arrangements will operate in respect of the Government Chief Whip and Deputy Chief Whip in the House of Lords.

5.4 Each of the Parliamentary Parties will be responsible for their own internal arrangements for ensuring effective Parliamentary support for the Government on all issues covered by this Agreement.

5.5 Neither Parliamentary Party will support proposals brought before Parliament other than by the Government unless considered and agreed by both parties. The two Parties may agree in the Coalition Committee or in the Parliamentary Business Committee occasions on which issues will be subject to a free vote, which will normally be the case for Private Members' Bills

In a Westminster Hall debate on collective responsibility on 13 February 2013, the then Cabinet Office minister Chloe Smith stated:

The current version of the ministerial code makes it clear that collective responsibility can be explicitly set aside on occasion. Even before the inclusion of that provision in the code, there was an established practice of doing so on specific issues. Most notably, it has long been the case that collective responsibility does not apply to issues of individual conscience. Most recently, there was a free vote of that kind on the Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Bill last week.³⁰

The Coalition Agreement did not cover all eventualities, and so unexpected issues were dealt with on a case by case basis. Some selected cases, where disagreements were expressed formally in Parliament are discussed below under a series of headings. The Lords Constitution Committee February 2014 report the [*Constitutional implications of coalition government*](#) also has examples in para 70 to 76.

An example of where the Liberal Democrat party did not agree with Government policy was the vote on the question of referring the Culture Secretary, Jeremy Hunt, to the Independent Adviser on Ministerial Interests on 13 June 2012. The Liberal Democrat party abstained. The Liberal Democrat MP Don Foster set out the reasons for this decision:

We believe, as does the Chairman of the Public Administration Committee, that there is an urgent need to review the current procedure. It is probably inappropriate for the Prime Minister alone to be the sole judge of whether an independent investigation should take place. We believe it ought to be possible either for the special adviser to make the decision himself, or for it to be made on the advice of a senior civil servant or the Public Administration Committee. However, this decision was taken under the current rules by the Prime Minister against the advice offered by the Deputy Prime Minister and without consultation with him. It is therefore one that neither the Deputy Prime Minister nor the Liberal Democrats can endorse.³¹

³⁰ HC Deb 13 February 2013 c303W

³¹ HC Deb 13 June 2012 c361

Press comment suggested that the decision to abstain as a group was unusual: "What was unusual about today was the disciplined independence of the unprecedented Lib Dem abstention."³²

5.1 Parliamentary boundary changes

The Coalition Government's constitutional programme was designed to have a major impact on the composition of both Houses of Parliament. The *Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act 2011* was designed to reduce the Commons in number from 650 to 600 in 2015 and the *House of Lords Reform Bill 2012-13* was designed to introduce a much larger elected element into the House of Lords by 2025. Commentators agree that the decision by the Coalition to prioritise changes in both Houses, either in terms of redrawing constituency boundaries, or in removing existing peers from the Lords has generated more intense opposition in Parliament and hostility to the constitutional reform programme agreed in the Programme for Government.³³ On 6 August 2012, in response to reports that the Government would not press ahead with Lords reform, Mr Clegg stated that "a key part of the coalition's contract had been "broken" and his party would oppose proposed changes to boundary changes in the Commons."³⁴ He said:

Lords reform and boundaries are two, separate parliamentary bills but they are both part of a package of overall political reform. Delivering one but not the other would create an imbalance – not just in the Coalition Agreement, but also in our political system. Lords reform leads to a smaller, more legitimate House of Lords. Boundary changes lead to a smaller House of Commons, by cutting the number of MPs. If you cut the number of MPs without enhancing the legitimacy and effectiveness of the Lords all you have done is weaken parliament as a whole, strengthen the executive and its over mighty government that wins.

So, for these reasons, I have decided, reluctantly to push the pause button on these controversial parliamentary reforms."

Mr Clegg said: "I have told the prime minister that when, in due course, parliament votes on boundary changes for the 2015 election I will be instructing my party to oppose them."³⁵

5.2 The Electoral Registration and Administration Bill 2012-13

As noted above, Nick Clegg announced in August 2012 that he would instruct Lib Dem MPs to vote against any orders brought forward to implement parliamentary boundary changes, following the failure to proceed with House of Lords reform. On 14 January an amendment was passed in the Lords to the *Electoral Registration and Administration Bill*

³² "[Will the Jeremy Hunt vote unravel the coalition? Dream on](#)" 13 June 2012 *Guardian*

³³ See Philip Norton "The Con-Lib Agenda for the "New Politics' and Constitutional Reform" in *The Cameron-Clegg Government* ed Simon Lee and Matt Beech

³⁴ "Nick Clegg: Lords reform plans to be abandoned" 6 August 2012 *BBC News*

³⁵ "[House of Lords reform: Nick Clegg's statement in full](#)" 6 August 2012 *BBC News*

2012-13³⁶ supported by Liberal Democrat and Labour peers, with a majority of 69.³⁷ Initial indications from no 10 press office suggested that the Prime Minister would seek to overturn this amendment in the Commons.³⁸ Media reports suggested that this had been the first time that a formal suspension of collective responsibility had been made:

The Prime Minister's official spokesman said Mr Cameron and Mr Clegg had formally agreed to suspend the convention of "collective responsibility" which applies to all Cabinet ministers on government decisions.

No.10 said the decision to suspend ministerial responsibility, agreed before the Lords vote yesterday, was "the first time it has happened under this Coalition".

Sir Jeremy Heywood, the Cabinet Secretary witnessed and recorded the agreement between the Tory and Lib Dem leaders yesterday and ruled that the approach was permissible under current rules governing the ministerial code.³⁹

During the debate on 29 January 2013, the Leader of the House, Andrew Lansley, said:

Mr Lansley: No, I am afraid that my hon. Friend is not correct in that respect. The coalition agreement is clearly a relevant issue, but it is not encapsulated in the ministerial code. The code is very clear—he will no doubt be familiar with it—and makes clear the requirements for Ministers to accept the obligations of ministerial collective responsibility save when it is explicitly set aside. I am simply making it clear that collective ministerial responsibility has been set aside in relation to this debate and for these purposes.⁴⁰

The Government proposed that the Commons disagree with the Lords amendment. The House divided, with the Liberal Democrats voting with Labour and other parties to agree with the Lords by 334 votes to 292 and ensure that the boundary review was postponed.⁴¹

5.3 Statements on Leveson report

On 20 November 2012, it was reported that Nick Clegg had asked the Speaker if he could make a separate statement on the publication of the Leveson report into the regulation of the media. Mr Clegg made a statement,⁴² following the statement of the Prime Minister, David Cameron and an immediate response to the Prime Minister from the Leader of the Opposition, Ed Miliband.⁴³ The Deputy Leader of the Opposition, Harriet Harman, was the first to respond to the statement from Mr Clegg. Peter Bone made a point of order commenting that "We are in a unique situation where it is proposed that there should be two Government statements. A similar occasion occurred in 1932,

³⁶ For background on the boundary review process see Standard Note 5929 [Constituency Boundaries: the sixth general review](#) For background on the Bill see Standard Note 6359 [Progress of the Electoral Registration and Administration Bill 2012-13](#)

³⁷ HL Deb 14 January 2013 c523

³⁸ "Nick Clegg defends boundaries vote stance" 15 January 2013 *Independent*

³⁹ "Coalition formally splits over boundary reform" 15 January 2013 *Daily Telegraph*

⁴⁰ [HC Deb 29 January 2013 c807](#)

⁴¹ [HC Deb 29 January 2013 c840](#)

⁴² [HC Deb 29 November 2012 c470-482](#)

⁴³ [HC Deb 29 November 2012 c446-470](#)

which was followed four days later by a vote of confidence in the Government.” The Speaker did not accept his motion for immediate adjournment.⁴⁴

In response to questions Nick Clegg said:

Mark Reckless (Rochester and Strood) (Con): Does the Deputy Prime Minister speak for the Government, and what are the implications of his statement today for the doctrine of Cabinet collective responsibility?

The Deputy Prime Minister: In a coalition Government there can be no collective position that is not agreed collectively by all parts of that Government. I know people in Westminster get terribly hot under the collar about some of these doctrines, but people out there in the country find it perfectly normal that in a Government with two parties, there are issues on which those parties, because they are two parties, might not have the same view. We have to be relaxed and grown up about explaining that to the House and to the public and then, as has been set out, seek to resolve those issues in the national interest.⁴⁵

In response to an urgent question on Leveson on 13 February 2013, the Culture Secretary Maria Miller indicated a separate Conservative Party approach. She said: “The royal charter reflects a principled way forward, proposed by the Conservative side of the coalition.”⁴⁶ For further information on the substance of Leveson, see Standard Note [The Leveson Report: Implementation](#) and [Leveson Report: reaction](#), HL Library Note LLN 2012/041.

5.4 Debate on the Address following the Queen’s Speech

An amendment to the Address following the Queen’s Speech was tabled by the Conservative John Baron, which was selected for debate by the Speaker on 15 May 2013. The amendment stated:

“but respectfully regret that an EU referendum bill was not included in the Gracious Speech.” — *(Mr Baron)*⁴⁷

Over the preceding weekend there had been speculation about the position of the Prime Minister with regard to the amendment. The Prime Minister was abroad on official business, but indicated that he would have abstained had he been present for the vote.⁴⁸

130 MPs voted for this amendment, of whom 114 were Conservative.

5.5 Legislative proposals for an EU referendum

The Prime Minister, David Cameron, announced on 23 January 2013 that if his party were to be elected to power following the next election

⁴⁴ Ibid c476

⁴⁵ HC Deb 29 November 2012 c470

⁴⁶ [HC Deb 13 February 2013 c860](#)

⁴⁷ HC Deb 15 May 2013 c749

⁴⁸ “[Tories in revolt over EU referendum bill](#)” 11 May 2013 *Daily Telegraph*; “[David Cameron denies EU referendum plan is panic reaction to Eurosceptics](#)” 14 May 2013 *Guardian*

expected in 2015, it would hold a referendum in the UK on EU membership, framed on an in out question. The wording of the question was not specified. Previously, on 24 October 2011, the Government had defeated a motion for a referendum on leaving the EU, but there had been a significant Conservative rebellion. The motion was defeated 483 votes to 111, with 81 Conservatives voting against the Government. A number of PPS had resigned in order to rebel. A [Lords Library Note \(LLN2013/002\)](#) contains details of the debate.

The Conservative Party subsequently published a draft *European Union (Referendum) Bill* in May 2013. Subsequently in the ballot for Private Members' Bills on 16 May 2013, James Wharton, Conservative MP for Stockton South came first and announced that he would introduce a version of the Bill. According to *BBC News*, the Bill would receive the full support of the Conservative Party, including a three line whip. The Bill passed through its Commons stages and had two days in committee in the Lords, It was not opposed at its Commons Third Reading or at Lords Second Reading. However on the second day of committee on 31 January 2014, a motion to suspend the committee sitting due to the number of amendments not yet debated was successful, The Bill was treated as a Private Member's Bill, and not given Government time. so no more time was made available for its scrutiny before the session ended and the Bill fell.⁴⁹

There was debate as to the potential application of the Parliament Acts to the Bill, if the Bill did not complete its passage in the Lords, discussed in Standard Note 675 [The Parliament Acts](#).⁵⁰

In the current session, the Conservative backbencher Robert Neill introduced an identical bill, the *European Union (Referendum) Bill 2013-14*, after having come third in the Private Members' Bill Ballot. The Bill received a second reading on [17 October 2014](#), but not progressed to a Public Bill Committee.⁵¹ Once again, there is no commitment to treat the Bill as other than a Private Member's Bill.⁵²

5.6 Immigration policy

Standard Note 5829 [Immigration and asylum policy: government plans and progress made](#) sets out the general policy on immigration. In late 2013 tensions emerged about the ending of transitional restrictions for Romanian and Bulgarian workers.⁵³ Leaked Home Office discussions on placing a cap on the number of EU migrants were reportedly blocked by Nick Clegg in December 2013.⁵⁴ The Business Secretary, Vince Cable,

⁴⁹ See [Mark D'Arcy: Who killed the EU Referendum Bill?](#) 4 February 2014 See the Bill page on the parliamentary internet for details

⁵⁰ See [Standard Note 6711 European Union Referendum Bill 2013-14- progress of the Bill](#) for details

⁵¹ HC Deb 17 October 2014 c632

⁵² ["Mark D'Arcy blog Why Andrew George's Benefit Bill may become law](#) 5 September 2014

⁵³ For background, see [Standard Note 6606 Ending of transitional restrictions for Bulgarian and Romanian workers](#)

⁵⁴ ["European Union migrant cap plan illegal says Nick Clegg"](#) 16 December 2013 *BBC News*

also indicated lack of support for the Conservative agenda in a BBC interview.⁵⁵

Nigel Mills, a Conservative backbencher tabled a [new clause](#) 1 for report stage of the *Immigration Bill 2013-14* to restrict free movement for Romanians and Bulgarians, which over 70 Conservative backbenchers signed. The report stage was held on 30 January 2014 but the clause was not debated and the Bill received royal assent on 14 May 2014.

5.7 Amendment to Crime and Courts Bill 2013-14

A backbench amendment tabled by Conservative Nick de Bois was added to this Bill on 17 June 2014 at Commons report stage. The Prisons minister Jeremy Wright said: "Although both coalition parties are fully committed to protecting the public, with regard to these particular new clauses, policy agreement has not been reached so it will be for the whole House to decide upon them." The amendment was added by 404 votes to 53, a majority of 351.⁵⁶ The Bill was carried over to 2014-15 session. The relevant clause remains in the 2014-15 session.

5.8 Affordable Homes Private Members' Bill 5 September 2014

Andrew George, a Liberal Democrat backbencher came first in the Ballot for Private Members' Bills and introduced the *Affordable Homes Bill 2014-15* on Friday 5 September 2014. The Bill is designed to introduce three new exemptions to the application of the under-occupation deduction from Housing Benefit (or the housing element of Universal Credit) for claimants who are deemed to be under-occupying their social rented homes (this provision is frequently referred to as the 'spare room subsidy' or 'the bedroom tax', amongst other provisions.⁵⁷ The Liberal Democrats had in coalition accepted this under-occupation measure. Ed Miliband announced that a Labour Government would abolish the under-occupation deduction during his [speech](#) to the 2013 Labour Party Conference.

In his speech, Mr George noted that collective responsibility had been suspended:

In advancing the Bill in the form in which it now appears on Second Reading, I know that there have been a number of discussions between all parties. I ask the Minister whether he will confirm in responding to the debate that collective responsibility will be suspended on this private Member's Bill.

The Minister of State, Department for Work and Pensions (Mr Mark Harper) *indicated assent.*

Andrew George: I notice that the Minister nods his assent to that question, so I am given to understand that collective responsibility will be suspended on the Bill. That is important, and

⁵⁵ "[Vince Cable compares David Cameron to Enoch Powell](#)" 22 December 2013 *Telegraph*

⁵⁶ [HC Deb 17 June 2014 c1027](#)

⁵⁷ See Standard Note 6968 [The Affordable Homes Bill 2014-15](#)

I am very encouraged that we have an opportunity for a more open debate.⁵⁸

It was reported that Conservative MPs were on a three line whip to oppose the Bill, but 70 were absent.⁵⁹ It was given a second reading by 306 votes to 231. Only 3 Liberal Democrat MPs did not support the Bill. Nick Clegg was attending a NATO summit in Wales.

5.9 Counter-terrorism and Security Bill 2014-15

Plans by the Prime Minister to bring forward provisions to seize passports from suspected jihadists were announced on 1 September 2014, but Nick Clegg indicated opposition to any attempt to breach international and national legal obligations on the Today Programme on 2 September. Further detail is available in Research Paper 14/63 [Counter-Terrorism and Security Bill](#). At Commons report stage on 7 January 2015, media reports indicated that Mr Clegg had asked the Home Secretary to introduce government amendments in the Lords to meet the concerns of David Anderson QC, the independent reviewer of terrorism legislation, about the lack of judicial checks on temporary exclusion orders. The Liberal Democrats did not support a similar amendment put forward by the official Opposition in the Commons, as this would breach the terms of the coalition agreement.⁶⁰

5.10 The Liberal Democrat's "alternative economic plan", March 2015

Although the March 2015 Budget presented to the House of Commons on 18 March was agreed by both coalition parties, on 19 March the Financial Secretary to the Treasury, the Liberal Democrat Danny Alexander, made a statement to the House entitled "Fiscal Responsibility and Fairness".⁶¹ He had previously been photographed on the steps of the Treasury building holding a yellow dispatch box and the Liberal Democrat party press notice referred to the statement as an "alternative economic plan".⁶² Danny Alexander told the House that his "economic plan" had been prepared by the Treasury using data from the Office of Budget Responsibility.

Before the statement, the Speaker made the following statement:

... The content of ministerial statements is, by longstanding practice, not a matter for the Chair, nor is my permission required for such a statement to be made. However, these statements must be ministerial, delivered not in a personal or a party capacity but on behalf of the Government. Although some latitude is of course permitted, there comes a point at which using the privilege

⁵⁸ [HC Deb 5 September 2014 c551](#)

⁵⁹ "[Bedroom tax splits coalition as LibLab pact forces second reading](#)" 5 September 2014 *Guardian*

⁶⁰ "[Nick Clegg threatens government with defeat on counter-terrorism bill](#)" 7 January 2015 *Guardian*

⁶¹ HC Deb 19 March 2015 c906

⁶² Liberal Democrat Party, [Danny Alexander sets out an alternative economic plan for Britain](#), 19 March 2015

accorded to Ministers for purely party purposes would be unfair to the House and would put the Chair in a very difficult position. I know that the Chief Secretary to the Treasury will bear that in mind.⁶³

6. Support for the Government in Parliament

Professor Phil Cowley and Dr Mark Stuart noted that dissent by Government MPs had reached unprecedented levels within the first few months of the Coalition being formed. The issue causing most frequent dissent was the programme of constitutional reform. By the end of October 2011 there had been well over 150 separate revolts in the Commons by Government MPs.⁶⁴ However, there were few Government defeats, and only one direct government defeat on legislation.

The Coalition Government lost very few divisions in the Commons. Excluding all divisions in business selected by the Backbench Business Committee, the Government has suffered four defeats since May 2010 in the House of Commons. One of these defeats was on Government legislation (all four are reported):

- On 6 December 2011, when Labour called a division at the end of a general debate on the economy. The Government lost by 213 votes to 79.⁶⁵ There are not usually divisions on such motions, which are not amendable. The Government Deputy Chief Whip made the following comment after the result of the division was announced:
The Comptroller of Her Majesty's Household (Mr Alistair Carmichael): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. I seek your guidance. Is there any means by which tomorrow's record can record that the sort of meaningless gesture that we have just seen is as good as it gets?⁶⁶
- On 31 October 2012, an amendment to a Government motion on the European Union Multiannual Financial Framework was agreed to by 307 votes to 294. The amended motion was agreed to without a division.⁶⁷
- On 29 August 2013, a Government motion on Syria was defeated by 285 votes to 272,⁶⁸ after an opposition amendment had been defeated by 332 votes to 220.⁶⁹
- On 18 November 2014, the Coalition government suffered its first defeat on a piece of legislation in the House of Commons Chamber when an amendment (adding a new clause) to the *Small Business, Enterprise and Employment Bill 2014-15*, moved by Greg Mulholland, was agreed to by 284 votes to 269.⁷⁰

In addition to these Government defeats there was discussion when the Liberal Democrats voted with the Labour Party on the question of

⁶⁴ "A Coalition with wobbly wings: backbench dissent since May 2010" www.revolts.co.uk

⁶⁵ [HC Deb 6 December 2011 cc269-270](#)

⁶⁶ [HC Deb 6 December 2011 c271](#); see also Philip Cowley and Mark Stuart, "[Ten votes charting the coalition](#)", *Revolts*, 12 November 2013, point 5

⁶⁷ [HC Deb 31 October 2012 cc341-346](#)

⁶⁸ [HC Deb 29 August 2013 cc1551-1554](#)

⁶⁹ [HC Deb 29 August 2013 cc1547-1550](#)

⁷⁰ [HC Deb 18 November 2014 c196](#); Christopher Hope, "[David Cameron suffers first Government defeat in Commons for four years](#)", *Telegraph*, 18 November 2014

boundary reforms and the Conservatives lost.⁷¹ On 29 January 2013, the House of Commons debated Lords amendments to the *Electoral Registration and Administration Bill 2012-13*. The Lords had amended the Bill to prevent the implementation of a boundary review that would reduce the number of Members at the next election. The House of Commons debated a motion to disagree with the Lords amendment. The motion was moved by the Leader of the House Andrew Lansley (Conservative) but the question was negatived by 334 votes to 292.⁷²

Lastly, on 26 March 2015 there was a division on the introduction of elections by secret ballot for the re-election of the Speaker. This vote was not whipped, but the Government motion was defeated.

According to Professor Cowley, the rebellion by 91 Conservative MPs on the second reading of the *House of Lords Reform Bill 2012-13* set new records of dissent in the post-war Commons:

Last night's massive rebellion by 91 Conservative MPs broke four records. It was – as many have pointed out – the largest Commons rebellion to have hit the coalition since 2010, topping the 81 Conservatives who defied the whip in favour of a referendum on the EU in October [last year](#).

It was also the largest rebellion on the issue of Lords reform in the post-war era, almost double the 47 Labour MPs who voted against Richard Crossman's white paper [on the subject in 1968](#).

But perhaps most impressively, it was also the largest rebellion by Government MPs on the Second Reading of any Bill in the post-war period, easily outstripping the 72 Conservative MPs who voted against the Shops Bill in 1986 or the 72 Labour MPs who voted against the Higher Education Bill in 2004.⁷³

Cowley and Stuart's research on the 2012-13 parliamentary session was summarised as follows:

[Cambo Chained or Dissension Amongst the Coalition's Parliamentary Parties, 2012-2013: A Data Handbook](#) finds that while David Cameron has faced fewer rebellions in 2012-13 than last year — when the Government Whips were defied more often than in any session since 1945 – this Parliament remains on course to be the most rebellious for almost 70 years.⁷⁴

Research on the 2013-14 session found:

As a percentage of divisions, the 88 rebellions in the 2013-14 session constitute a rebellion by coalition MPs in 31% of divisions. Again, whilst a clear drop from the 44% witnessed in the first session of this Parliament, this is marginally up on the last session (27%); and seen in a longer historical perspective a figure of 31% is relatively high for the post-war period. It tops the comparable figure for all but five post-war sessions. The session of 2010-12 aside, only one Conservative Prime Minister has experienced a session with a higher level of dissent (that is, Edward Heath), and

⁷¹ see for example, Philip Cowley and Mark Stuart, "[Electoral boundaries: the vote that will be forever asterisked](#)", *Ballots and Bullets* [University of Nottingham politics blog], 30 January 2013

⁷² [HC Deb 29 January 2013 cc840-844](#)

⁷³ [Four records down, a fifth avoided](#) 11 July 2012 *Ballots and Bullets* website University of Nottingham

⁷⁴ [Cambo Chained: Coalition's Backbench MPs set for rebellion record](#) 14 May 2013 University of Nottingham press release

he only experienced it for one session (between 1971-72). David Cameron and his whips have now experienced roughly this level of dissent or worse for four years.

If we break down the overall figure of 31% into its two component parts, Conservative MPs have broken ranks in 24% of divisions (up from 19% in the last session, but still lower than the 28% in the 2010-12 session), Lib Dem MPs have done so in 17% (marginally up from 15% in the last session, and still down from 24% in the 2010-12 session). These two figures sum to more than 31%, because of some votes in which both parties have seen dissent.⁷⁵

In the Lords, Professor Meg Russell from the Constitution Unit has produced a list of Government defeats in the Lords which includes cases where the coalition partners whipped their parties to vote in opposite lobbies. These have been rare, but there have been several Government defeats since 2010 due to other factors.⁷⁶

⁷⁵ [*The Four Year Itch*](#) Phil Cowley and Mark Stuart June 2014:

⁷⁶ <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/constitution-unit/research/parliament/house-of-lords/lords-defeats>

7. Ending Coalitions

Coalitions can end at a predetermined time according to the electoral cycle or collapse due to unexpected circumstances. *Coalition Governments in Western Europe* includes standard information about every parliamentary government in thirteen countries in the period 1945-1999 and looks at the circumstances under which coalitions end.⁷⁷ They are rarely brought down in parliament. Instead policy differences, tactical decisions of party advantage and intra-party dissension are the major factors in the collapse of a coalition.

Tim Bale from the University of Sussex noted how research on coalitions “suggests that the risk of a coalition breaking up before its time and thus precipitating an early election rises rather than falls as time passes”.⁷⁸ Professor Bogdanor also noted that “historically, coalitions have come under pressure from below, not from the top”.⁷⁹ On the other hand, recent coalitions in Scotland since devolution in 1998 have lasted the course and have not dissolved early. Internationally, evidence is that coalitions become less effective at introducing new policies towards the end of a parliamentary term, as parties seek to differentiate themselves before the next election.

There was speculation as to whether parties in this Coalition would want to differentiate themselves in the final year before the general election in May 2015. The Liberal Democrat Secretary of State for Business, Vince Cable, suggested in May 2012 that the party might want to withdraw from the coalition at some point before May 2015 to establish a separate identity.⁸⁰ The suggestion also came from Conservative backbenchers.⁸¹ One option would have been for the Liberal Democrats to withdraw from the government and support the Government on a confidence or supply basis.⁸² The most recent precedent at Westminster is the ending of the Lib Lab pact in May 1978. However, this took place before the passage of the *Fixed -terms Parliament Act 2011*.

On 13 May 1978 David Steel, leader of the Liberal Party, declared that minority government was not only tolerable, but desirable, and on 25 May he announced the end of the Lib-Lab pact at the end of the session as it had achieved its main objective of providing political stability.⁸³ In his autobiography Steel explained that early in 1978 he had begun to discuss election prospects with the Prime Minister, Jim Callaghan, and

⁷⁷ Eds Wolfgang C. Müller & Kaare Strøm

⁷⁸ “The Black Widow Effect: Why Britain’s Conservative – Liberal Democrat Coalition might have an unhappy ending” April 2012 *Parliamentary Affairs* p325

⁷⁹ *The Coalition and the Constitution* 2011 p79

⁸⁰ “The Coalition could break up before May 2015 says Cable” 27 May 2012 *Daily Telegraph*

⁸¹ See for example Graham Brady, Chair of the Conservative 1922 committee “Graham Brady warns coalition” BBC 22 July 2012

⁸² See comments from Nick Clegg’s former strategy adviser “Nick Clegg could begin break up of coalition next year” 17 December 2012 *Telegraph* See also [Paul Goodman “Cameron should end the Coalition in 2014”](#) 3 April 2013 “ Conservative Home

⁸³ Geoffrey Foote, *A chronology of post-war British politics*, 1988.

had told him that the Liberals needed a quarantine period between the formal ending of the pact and the general election. At the time, it was still undecided whether the election would be called for the autumn, or if Labour would hold on until 1979. In March Steel told Callaghan that he would probably seek to end the agreement in July.⁸⁴ Further description is available in Mark Oaten's *Coalition: the politics and personalities of coalition from 1850*.⁸⁵

The Lords Constitution Committee report noted that in Scotland and Wales, coalitions had remained in power until the date of the election:

The experience in these elections was that it tended to be coalition backbenchers, rather than ministers, who attacked the policies of coalition partners. Lord McConnell and Rhodri Morgan both contrasted their coalitions with the more party-political Government in Westminster, particularly the tendency of each party to claim individual ownership of specific policies rather than collective authorship. This suggests that the problems of maintaining collective ministerial responsibility might be greater for the UK Government than in previous Scottish and Welsh coalitions.⁸⁶

The report suggested that guidance should be issued to civil servants before an election when a coalition is in power on how to support ministers of different parties (para 118). John Elvidge discussed the Scottish experience in *Northern Exposure: lessons from the first 12 years of devolved government in Scotland* (2011).

Party differentiation was a feature of the party conference season in 2014. The Liberal Democrats, for example, launched their 2015 '[pre-manifesto](#)' on 8 September 2014.⁸⁷ In January 2015 all major parties began their election campaigning.

7.1 Fixed-term Parliaments Act 2011

Under the *Fixed-term Parliaments Act 2011*, early elections can be held only:

- if a motion for an early general election is agreed either by at least two-thirds of the whole House or without division or;
- if a motion of no confidence is passed on a simple majority of votes and no alternative government is confirmed by the Commons within 14 days.

Commentators continue to debate whether the passage of the *Fixed-term Parliaments Act 2011* has in practice limited options for an early election. It has been pointed out that a Government may resign and a new Government be formed without the Act being engaged, since a confidence vote has not been lost. Another topic of comment is the extent to which the form of the legislation is dependent on the existence of the coalition, in provision for a two thirds majority for an early dissolution, as well as a vote of confidence. Professor Vernon

⁸⁴ David Steel, *Against Goliath: David Steel's story*, 1989, p 144

⁸⁵ Ibid pp181-188

⁸⁶ Lords Constitution Committee [Constitutional Implications of Coalition Governments](#) February 2014

⁸⁷ <http://www.libdems.org.uk/liberal-democrats-launch-2015-pre-manifesto>

Bogdanor argued that the effect of the legislation on the no-confidence convention was marginal.⁸⁸ Lord Norton of Louth also queried whether a defeat on the Queen's Speech would inevitably lead to a dissolution:

The Constitution Committee report notes that a vote on the Queen's Speech is often seen as a traditional means of expressing confidence in the Government. But what happens now if the Government are defeated on the Queen's Speech or on a major issue of public policy? There cannot be an early election under the provisions of the 2011 Act. One presumes that the Opposition would move a Motion of no confidence, but it is not beyond the bounds of possibility that a Government could be defeated on a substantive issue, but that the third party or dissident government Back-Benchers responsible for the defeat do not want an election and are not prepared to vote for a Motion of no confidence. What happens then? The Government could resign—the other option under the old convention. What if they do? No provision of the 2011 Act has been engaged. What does the Palace do?⁸⁹

Various scenarios have been debated on political blogs, such as the possibility of engineering a vote of no-confidence if coalition MPs no longer wish to support the administration. If the Coalition Government lose such a vote, decided on a simple majority of votes in the Commons, the first step is to establish whether a new Government can hold the confidence of the Commons within 14 days. If not, a dissolution is sought from the Crown.⁹⁰ For further details of the legislation, see Standard Note 6111 [Fixed-term Parliaments Act 2011](#).

The Lords Constitution Committee questioned in its report whether the *Fixed-term Parliaments Act* might steer any future post-election negotiations towards a coalition and heard conflicting views. Lord Crickhowell explained the political dilemmas:

I would like to start where Lord Falconer of Thoroton finished, which was with fixed-term Parliaments. I entirely understand why a fixed-term Parliament was introduced with the coalition, but the question was put to him whether, if his party won the next election, they would keep a fixed-term Parliament. His answer was pretty clear: he would want to do away with it because it completely alters the way in which parties are likely to behave in the aftermath of a close election result. You are more likely to go for a coalition in the knowledge that you cannot do what Harold Wilson did on two occasions and form a minority government with the expectation that you might win an early subsequent election.⁹¹

The Political and Constitutional Reform Committee also considered that it would be difficult to separate the impact of the *Fixed-Term*

⁸⁸ *The Coalition and the Constitution* Vernon Bogdanor 2011 pp114-121

⁸⁹ [HL Deb 11June 2014c473](#)

⁹⁰ See for example exchange of views between Mark Pack and Professor Patrick Dunleavy in February 2012 .at <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/politicsandpolicy/2012/02/22/no-election-2014/> and "[David Cameron should start preparing for a general election](#)" 4 February 2012 *Daily Telegraph*

⁹¹ Lords Constitution [Committee Inquiry into the constitutional implications of coalition government :oral and written evidence](#) December 2013

Parliaments Act from the political reality of the coalition.⁹² Speculation has mounted that forming a coalition in 2015 would be more difficult than in 2010, since there is likely to be a wider possible range of coalition partners, if the share of the vote held by the two major parties continues to decline and a more fragmented party system results.⁹³ There has been a resurgence of comment on the manner in which the *Fixed Term Parliaments Act 2011* can be seen as undermining the dominance of the majoritarian two party system of politics in the UK.⁹⁴

The *Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013* lengthens the electoral timetable to 25 working days following a dissolution, bringing it into line with the local government elections timetable.⁹⁵ The longer timetable raises the prospect of a lengthy gap between a no-confidence vote and a subsequent general election, involving some form of caretaker government, for which no conventions have yet been developed. The Political and Constitutional Reform Committee inquiry into [Fixed-term Parliaments: the final year of a Parliament](#), published a report which looked at planning in the last year of a Parliament, and considered what improvements could be made on practices such as wash-up.

Another area of controversy is the prospect of continuing the Coalition through an electoral pact at the next election. The Conservative MP Nick Boles advocated this strategy in a publication in 2010, but there has been no support for this approach from either Mr Cameron or Mr Clegg.⁹⁶

In the 1918 coupon election the Conservatives did not field candidates against coupon Liberal candidates and Liberals did not field candidates against coupon Conservatives. It is now a requirement for parliamentary elections for parties to register and to provide an emblem for the ballot paper. The *Electoral Registration and Administration Act* contains a provision (s20) to allow a combined emblem of two parties as long as the emblem had been registered by one of the political parties. The stated policy intention of the legislation was to assist joint Labour and Co operative Party candidates.⁹⁷ During the 2011 referendum campaign on the proposed introduction of the Alternative Vote (AV), a number of commentators noted that AV would have made electoral alliances simpler for parties, since their voters would have indicated preferences in individual constituencies.⁹⁸

⁹² [Political and Constitutional Reform Committee Fourth Report](#) HC 440 2013-14 *The role and powers of the Prime Minister: The impact of the Fixed term Parliaments Act 2011 on Government*

⁹³ [The next Parliament: Coalition 2.0 or confidence and supply?](#) 19 December 2014 Mark D'Arcy BBC

⁹⁴ See Gavin Kelly "2015 election: the next big ballot box surprise" 12 January 2015 *Guardian* and Petra Schleiter "[Why the Fixed-term Parliaments Act should not be repealed](#)" 23 October 2014 *Our Kingdom*

⁹⁵ See Library Standard Note 6574 [General Election Timetables](#)

⁹⁶ *Which way's up : the future for coalition Britain and how to get there* Nick Boles 2010

⁹⁷ See discussion in Committee of the Whole House HC Deb 27 June 2012 c329

⁹⁸ For background on the referendum, see Standard Note 5317 [AV and Electoral Reform](#); See also Peter Kellner YouGov "[The moment the Tories won the 2015 election](#)"

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