**Learning to cooperate in politics**

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After the recent general elections in several European countries and in Canada, I have written about the fact that political parties have to cooperate and make coalition governments; gone are mostly the days when one or even two parties could form majority governments. I have suggested that when we have many political parties, a consequence of that is also that we end up with coalition governments. I believe it is actually more democratic than just to have a few political parties. Still, though, there will be two, sometimes, three political blocs; one on the left and one on the right, and nowadays, a green party in the centre.

Sometimes new coalitions can see the light of the day; in Germany the two old rivals, the conservative Christian Democrats (CDU and CSU), chaired by Chancellor Angela Merkel, have ruled together with the leftist Social Democrats (SDP). Maybe it took a strong leader like Dr Merkel to keep such a coalition together, yet, without being able to make too many changes that would have been needed. It is said that Germany is still quite old fashioned in the fields of IT and also as for environmental policies.

[Sharjeel century helps Sindh knock Southern Punjab out of National T20](https://nation.com.pk/09-Oct-2021/sharjeel-s-century-helps-sindh-knock-southern-punjab-out-of-national-t20)

The new German government, most likely to be led by SDP as the largest party, in coalition with the Green and the Liberal parties, will have to address the mentioned issues, and other issues related to economic inequality, with CDU/CSU being leaders of the opposition. And this will be as the legendary Angela Merkel steps down later this autumn after sixteen years as Chancellor. Some politicians who have worked closely with her say that she is more bossy than what her nickname, ‘Mutti’ (mother), would indicate; obviously so, otherwise the first woman head of government wouldn’t have made it.

Let me underline that although I believe in coalition governments and cooperation among parties, it is also important to have a clear opposition in parliament to control those in power. True, the opposition must be responsible and not oppose the government just for the sake of it. That is particularly important when there is a minority government, notably when the largest group in parliament forms a government but without having majority. Not all countries allow this, such as Germany, which was the reason for the two largest parties, CDU/CSU forming government with SDP, in spite of the parties being on different sides of the left-right political spectrum.

[Balochistan Corps Commander visits earthquake affected areas of Harnai](https://nation.com.pk/08-Oct-2021/balochistan-corps-commander-visits-earthquake-affected-areas-of-harnai)

Often, it takes a long time for the political parties in a coalition government to agree on their political platform. Currently, it is suggested that the Germans may need many weeks to conclude. Some observers have suggested that Angela Merkel might stay on as Chancellor and even hold the next New Year’s speech.

After the general election in Sweden in 2018, it took four months, or precisely 134 days of discussions and negotiations to form a government after the election, the longest ever in the country’s history; the average has been 19 days since the new Constitutional practices were introduced in 1974. In recent years, it has also taken very long to establish new governments in other countries, such as Belgium and The Netherlands. On the other extreme, there are examples from Greece, where governments must be formed soon after the election according to the Constitution, but that has several times led to short-lived governments. Hence, it can be argued that long negotiations can lead to longer-lived governments. The Swedish government that was established after the 2018 election, in January 2019, is still in power, and it is likely that it will stay in power till the next election in September 2022, although perhaps a bit shaky since the Social Democratic party chair and Prime Minister, Stefan Löfven, is stepping down next month and the likely new leader will be Magdalena Andersson, who has been Finance Minister for long. Interesting to note is that she would be the first woman PM in Sweden—one hundred years since the country became fully democratic and women gained the right to vote.

[US deputy secretary of state calls on COAS](https://nation.com.pk/08-Oct-2021/us-deputy-secretary-of-state-calls-on-coas)

It should be noted that the Swedes prepared a comprehensive written government platform, which the three parties in government signed, under the leadership of the Social Democrats, with informal support from the Socialist Left Party (V) and the Centre (C) and Liberal (L) parties. It should also be noted that the young right-wing part, the Swedish Democrats (SD), with close to twenty percent of the seats in parliament, was, and still is, considered ‘untouchable’ because of its semi-Nazi origin. If they had been considered a mainstream democratic party, the centre-right would have had a majority in parliament, not the social democrats and the green. In future, SD will at one stage be seen as a party like other parties. V on the left is seen as more radical than it really is since some of its history is communist. However, V is seen as more acceptable than SD. Besides, some will argue that V is not much more socialist than the Social Democrats were in the 1970s, which now has turned quite moderate.

[Death toll from Afghanistan's mosque suicide blast rises to 46](https://nation.com.pk/08-Oct-2021/death-toll-from-afghanistan-s-mosque-suicide-blast-rises-to-46)

The Swedish parliamentary history over the last decades as regards cooperation between parties and coalition governments has one more essential lesson to teach us, notably that for eight years, from 2006-2014, the traditional centre-right parties created formal cooperation, called the Alliance, which had a majority government under PM Fredrik Reinfeldt; he was quite successful and mostly uncontroversial. The Alliance parties became a block on the bourgeoisie side as the social democratic and socialist parties had been for on the other side. In that sense, Sweden almost moved to be a two-party state. After 2014, and after the 2018 election, it turned out that the Alliance no longer was a block against the left, and two of the parties supported the S led government.

Let me report quickly that in my home country Norway, the social democratic Labour Party, which became the largest party after the general election on 13 September, is still negotiating to form a minority government with the Centre Party. The Socialist Left Party pulled out of the talks but has said they will support the new government in parliament.

[Pakistan desires sustainable ties with US: FM Qureshi](https://nation.com.pk/08-Oct-2021/pakistan-desires-sustainable-ties-with-us-fm-qureshi)

I have in several articles argued that multi-party states are better and more democratic than single-party states, even two-party states. I have also said that when there are many parties, such as in Norway, where ten parties this year obtained seats in parliament. In these situations, the parties must cooperate and learn from each other, either they are in power or in opposition. I believe we have just begun finding ways and modalities for formal cooperation across party divides. All parties must prioritize clearly what they see as important, and through that they will become more transparent for the politicians and the people. Indeed, it is important that parties and leaders behave in ways that lead to mutual respect and trust as a foundation for cooperation in government and constructive opposition. The voters, too, want more open and honest leaders as we move towards expansion and renewal of our democracies.