

Party system change and patterns of parliamentary government in Scandinavia

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The paper investigates party system change in the three Scandinavian countries, but, as opposed to the large majority of the literature, party system change will be used not as a “dependent”, but as an “independent” variable in order to account for changing patterns of parliamentary government, more precisely, government formation and stability, and executive-legislative power-relations. It is argued that first the “defreezing” of the “five-party-systems” largely contributed to increased government instability and legislative strength, whereas since the end of the 1980s we can observe a general reverse tendency. While typical institutional characteristics, such as negative parliamentarism still prevail, majority governments have once again appeared, also signalling increasing government stability. Besides fragmentation, a number of other factors related to changes in the party system are considered. The strength and strategies of the once pre-dominant social democrats and the rise and institutionalisation of new radical parties are therefore discussed.