

WHAT ABOUT POWER?

Power is the capacity to influence through the vote, and it determines how society works.




Is the amount of seats a good way of measuring power?

SOME EXAMPLES:




In order to answer this question, we just need to consider some very simple examples.

A parliament with 101 seats and three parties:

1 A majority vote needs 51 seats, which means that any two parties are needed to reach an agreement. Therefore, the three parties have the same power.

PARTY	RED	BLUE	GREEN
SEATS	 x 50	 x 50	 x 1
POWER	33,3 %	33,3 %	33,3 %

2 If one of the parties has 51, or more, seats, This Party has all the power, and thus the rest have no influence at all.

PARTY	RED	BLUE	GREEN
SEATS	 x 51	 x 49	 x 1
POWER	100 %	0 %	0 %

Generally, the percentage of seats is not a good way of measuring the power of parties.

EUROPEAN ECONOMIC COMMUNITY (1957)

In 1957, the Treaty of Rome, starting point of the European Union, is signed. Some decisions are taken with a "qualified majority" system. Each country contributes with a fixed number of votes, and 12 out of 17 (about 70 %) are needed to reach a majority.

DISTRIBUTION OF VOTES

		
GERMANY	FRANCE	ITALY
4 votes	4 votes	4 votes
23,5 % votes	23,5 % votes	23,5 % votes
		
BELGIUM	NETHERLANDS	LUXEMBOURG
2 votes	2 votes	1 vote
11,8 % votes	11,8 % votes	5,9 % votes

Warning! Luxembourg is a null player: its vote is always irrelevant (it's never required to form a majority).

In order to calculate a power index, we must count in how many cases the participation of a country is essential for a coalition to win the voting.

To compute the power indices of other parliaments...



COALITIONS

If Germany joins the coalition, the coalition is winning:

4 GERMANY +	min. 12 votes needed to reach the majority
4 FRANCE + 4 ITALY	= 12 votes
4 FRANCE + 4 ITALY + 1 LUXEMBOURG	= 13 votes
4 FRANCE + 4 ITALY + 2 BELGIUM	= 14 votes
4 FRANCE + 4 ITALY + 2 NETHERLANDS	= 14 votes
4 FRANCE + 2 BELGIUM + 2 NETHERLANDS	= 12 votes
4 ITALY + 2 BELGIUM + 2 NETHERLANDS	= 12 votes
4 FRANCE + 4 ITALY + 2 BELGIUM + 1 LUXEMBOURG	= 15 votes
4 FRANCE + 4 ITALY + 2 NETHERLANDS + 1 LUXEMBOURG	= 15 votes
4 FRANCE + 2 BELGIUM + 2 NETHERLANDS + 1 LUXEMBOURG	= 13 votes
4 ITALY + 2 BELGIUM + 2 NETHERLANDS + 1 LUXEMBOURG	= 13 votes

We have a similar case for France and Italy.

In the case of Belgium, we have six winning coalitions:

2 BELGIUM +	min. 12 votes needed to reach the majority
4 GERMANY + 4 FRANCE + 2 NETHERLANDS	= 12 votes
4 GERMANY + 4 ITALY + 2 NETHERLANDS	= 12 votes
4 FRANCE + 4 ITALY + 2 NETHERLANDS	= 12 votes
4 GERMANY + 4 FRANCE + 2 NETHERLANDS + 1 LUXEMBOURG	= 13 votes
4 GERMANY + 4 ITALY + 2 NETHERLANDS + 1 LUXEMBOURG	= 13 votes
4 FRANCE + 4 ITALY + 2 NETHERLANDS + 1 LUXEMBOURG	= 13 votes

The cases of Netherlands and Belgium are similar. Luxembourg is a null player, so they will not have any power.

What relative power does Germany have?

Number of coalitions in which Germany is crucial: **10**
Total number of crucial coalitions: **42**

Germany's power index:
 $10 / 42 = 0,238 \rightarrow 23,8\%$ power

What relative power does Belgium have?

Number of coalitions in which Belgium is crucial: **6**
Total number of crucial coalitions: **42**

Belgium's power index:
 $6 / 42 = 0,143 \rightarrow 14,3\%$ power

Countries' power indices:

	% votes	% power
Germany	23,5	23,8
France	23,5	23,8
Italy	23,5	23,8
Belgium	11,8	14,3
Netherlands	11,8	14,3
Luxembourg	5,9	0

«It's not power that wears you out; it's not having it.»

(Giulio Andreotti)