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Formation of the coalition -- Governing with a coalition -- "England does not love coalitions" -- Electoral reform and the alternative vote -- Fixed-term parliaments -- A new world? : multi-party politics and coalition government

1. The General Election of 2010 and the Formation of the Coalition -- I . Outcome of the Election -- II . A Hung Parliament -- III . A Hung Parliament and the Constitution -- 2. Formation of the Coalition -- I . The Politics of Coalition Formation -- II . The Electoral Geography of Coalition Formation -- 3. Governing with a Coalition -- I . The Structure of the Coalition -- II . Agreements to Differ -- III . The Coalition and the Civil Service -- I V. Types of Coalition -- 4. 'England Does Not Love Coalitions' -- I . Coalitions in Peacetime -- II . Electoral Pacts -- III . Grass-Roots Hostility to Coalitions -- 5. Electoral Reform and the Alternative Vote -- I . Reducing the Number of MPs -- II . More Frequent Boundary Reviews -- III . The Referendum on the Alternative Vote -- I V. The Working of the Alternative Vote -- V. Some Possible Consequences of the Alternative Vote -- 6. Fixed-Term Parliaments -- I . Experience of Fixed-Term Parliaments -- II . Thresholds for Dissolution -- III . The Constructive Vote of No Confidence -- I V. Effects of the Fixed-Term Parliaments Act -- 7. A New World? Multi-Party Politics and Coalition Government -- I . A Series of Hung Parliaments? -- II . Consequences of Hung Parliaments -- III . A Directly Elected Second Chamber -- I V. A Constitution for a Post-Bureaucratic Age

Sommario/riassunto

'England', Benjamin Disraeli famously said, 'does not love coalitions'. But 2010 saw the first peace-time coalition in Britain since the 1930s. The coalition, moreover, may well not be an aberration. For there are signs that, with the rise in strength of third parties, hung parliaments are more likely to recur than in the past. Perhaps, therefore, the era of single-party majority government, to which we have become accustomed since 1945, is coming to an end. But is the British constitution equipped to deal with coalition? Are alterations in the procedures of parliament or government needed to cope with it? The inter-party agreement between the coalition partners proposes a wide ranging series of constitutional reforms, the most important of which are fixed-term parliaments and a referendum on the alternative vote electoral system, to be held in May 2011. The coalition is also proposing measures to reduce the size of the House of Commons, to directly elect the House of Lords and to strengthen localism. These reforms, if implemented, could permanently alter the way we are governed. This book analyses the significance of coalition government for Britain and of the momentous constitutional reforms which the coalition is proposing. In doing so it seeks to penetrate the cloud of polemic and partisanship to provide an objective analysis for the informed citizen
