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ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PARTY AND GOVERNMENT

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ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PARTY AND GOVERNMENT¹

by Maurizio Cotta

1. Conceptualising party and government

An examination of the relationship between government and party implies that the meaning of the two concepts and the two phenomena is made clear. It also means that we must have the instruments enabling us to discover variations across countries and over time with respect to these phenomena. We are still far from having reached this point. Most discussions which take place in this respect are based on oversimplifications. There is a strong temptation to use holistic interpretations for instance: both phenomena are commonly analysed as if they were unitary actors; values, perceptions, goals, actions are ascribed to them. While this view may be close to reality in some cases, though probably for only one of the two phenomena at a time, this is not true in most cases: party and government are more likely to be either arenas where a variety of actors compete or co-operate among themselves or systems, that is to say composite entities which result from interactions among their components. Which view fits best reality cannot be decided in advance: it is rather an empirical matter.

Moreover, the viewpoint adopted in the discussion of the relationship between party and government tends to be tilted in favour of one of the two terms: there is indeed a pendulum movement over time in the choice of the dominant viewpoint. In the past the focal point was generally the government, though exactly how far back depends to some extent on cultural differences among countries, as well as on differences in disciplinary traditions within the same country (for instance between the tradition of constitutional law and of political science). In this perspective the government was conceived as a part of the state, in fact as the top institution of the state, its 'head': the main (normative) preoccupation was often the defence of the autonomy of the leading organ of the state from external influences and in particular from parties. The long anti-party bias which counted so much in analyses of political life relates to this point. The dominant question was then how to 'save' the government from the 'evil' influence of parties aiming at conquering the allegedly

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impartial and nation-minded institution of the government and at subordinating it to their allegedly factional and particularistic goals.

The other point of view is exactly the opposite, the starting point being the party viewed as a crucial element of the representative process. Normative and empirical points reinforce each other in this respect as well. On the empirical plane a long tradition of studies on elections under the conditions of mass participation showed to what extent parties with a well-defined identity and a strong organization came to control the representative process. On the normative plane democracy became the predominant political value and it was interpreted as a process centred on competitive representation. Thus parties gained, both in theory and in practice, the status of crucial 'transmission belts' of the democratic will. The 'normal' expectation was therefore that parties should gain an upper hand on the government and use the government to implement the popular will. The dominance of party over government - party government - far from being an 'evil' became a critical condition of true democracy (Ranney 1962). In such a perspective there was obviously little point in studying government per se, except to determine the conditions under which parties could control the instruments of governance. Thus, as it was noticed once (King 1975), for a long time little attention was paid to cabinets in political science studies. More recently, however, the rise of anti-party feelings and the signs of a decline of organised parties has shifted the attention again in the direction of governments.

These two rather crude interpretations of the party-government relationship are not altogether unrealistic, but their relevance is greater at some specific stages of the evolution of democracies: the first interpretation has tended to correspond to early parliamentary government, the second to coincide with the apex of the mass ideological party. The situation is often more complex, however: at present, the notion of the state as a unitary actor with a single 'will' of its own simply cannot be sustained; at the same time changes within parties may not have always reduced the political role of these bodies but have certainly eroded the rigid mould of the membership party and increased differences among various components of the party itself, for instance between the group in power and the membership at large (Mair 1995). One must therefore go beyond the simplified views of party and government and of their relationships: this requires a more detailed analysis of what is party and of what is government. In the first section of this paper I will therefore concentrate on the party and in the second I shall examine the government.

2. What is party?

The simplest view of party is one that pictures it as a unitary actor with a well-defined set of political goals and policy preferences. If matters were as simple, the problem of party-government relations would be relatively easy to solve: it would entirely depend on whether the government can be taken over by party men and party women and be guided by the preferences of the party or vice-versa.

Things are normally not as simple. Parties are internally articulated and complex dynamics take place within them. The single actor image is perhaps more the conclusion of the process than its starting point, an exception rather than the norm. We must therefore 'unpack' the party as we shall have later to do with government, although we can already assume that there will be differences, as the organizational format of parties varies more than that of governments, not just across countries and within countries, but even more over time if we adopt a long term view.

First, parties are sets of individuals with common interests, values, ideals, programmes; they are also sets of individuals with personal ambitions (Burke 1770, Sartori 1976, Ware 1996). Yet a party is more than a set of individuals: it is an organization which transcends these individuals. For most of these, the party existed before they became associated with it and it will remain in existence long after they will have left it. The organisation constitutes a resource for all those who belong to it: because and as long as it exists these can achieve results which they could not achieve otherwise. The party has also a collective identity: it evokes a tradition, an ethos, a 'we-feeling' which comes to be valued in itself and must be preserved (Panebianco 1988). In this sense the party is a source of both instrumental and expressive benefits for those who belong to it. As a result, it is permissible to say that the party is a tool of those who are associated to it but that these are also to an extent the tools of the party. There are enormous variations, of course, from loosely-organised parties which come to be the prey of the instrumental strategies of those who work within them to totalitarian parties in which members are wholly expendable. Yet both aspects probably co-exist in almost every party.

Second, parties adapt to the different arenas and settings in which they operate: as a result they cut across and link the various institutions of the political system. This has two consequences. On the one hand, parties are a unifying factor within the pluralism of institutions typical of liberal democracy; for instance they can bring closely together parliament and government, whatever views there may have been about the separation of powers. On the other hand, they are involved in different political games and they operate at the same time under different sets of constraints and opportunities. This results inevitably in an internal differentiation of components of the party and creates tensions among these components, which may even come to be viewed, to an extent, as different 'parties':

thus one refers commonly to the parliamentary party, the membership party, the party in government and even the party in the electorate; one could even go further and speak of the party in local government, in the bureaucracy, etc. Let us therefore first analyse in some detail the nature and the meaning of the most important of these components before returning to the overall picture, discussing the relationship between the various components and attempting to answer the question: ‘who is (or who owns) the party?’.

3. The party as a parliamentary organ

The party in parliament, made of the representatives sharing the same partisan identity, was often historically the earliest component, as it grew from the need for collective action within parliament. An obviously important aspect is to support the government if and when its very existence depends on such a support in parliament; but when this is not the case, as in presidential systems, there is a need to reduce conflicts and to organise the competition for leadership positions within the legislature, from those of speaker to the chairmanships of committees. The parliamentary component of the party is obviously the one most directly subjected to electoral influence. On the one hand, this is constraint, as the party depends on electoral results for its strength; questions of re-election become a dominant preoccupation for members individually and for the parliamentary party as a body. On the other hand, the electoral connection is obviously also a resource: elections provide the members of the parliamentary party with a democratic legitimacy and an authority that other components of the party do not have as clearly. The extent to which that electoral resource is ‘owned’ by members individually or by the parliamentary group as a whole, or by another entity such as the membership party, does vary markedly, however: the electoral system and the whole election process, from the selection of candidates to the campaign, are important factors influencing this relationship and thus increasing or decreasing the autonomy of the parliamentarians. A combination of single member constituencies, primaries for the selection of candidates, the absence of membership parties, an open and rich market for campaign resources and weak ideological cleavages has rendered American congressmen both very strong and very independent. On the other hand, multi-member constituencies, closed list systems, strong membership party organizations, relatively limited markets for campaign resources and strong ideological cleavages have resulted in members being markedly dependent on the party organisation in many European countries, in the past especially in the parliamentary parties of the working class left.

In general we can expect a significant degree of internal pluralism in a parliamentary party given the strong contacts its members have with the many interests of the electorate. The more individual members 'own' the electoral resources the more the parliamentary party as a body will be relatively independent from the other components of the party. However, if MPs are too independent, the parliamentary party as a whole comes to be at risk and can become a loose confederation of powerful and independent barons, thus being little more than a tool in the hands of the parliamentarians. In the age of the notables, who indeed owned individually the electoral resources, parliamentary parties were indeed rather weak. A similar development has occurred in America where the Congress is based upon what can be described as 'neo-notables': congressional parties are weak in relation to individual members. Indeed a strong parliamentary party (as a collective body) can probably be found only where neither the other components of the party nor individual parliamentarians are very strong.

The position of the parliamentary party vis-a-vis the government is significantly affected by the institutional structure. In the separation of powers model the fact that the executive does not depend for its survival on a parliamentary majority deprives the parliamentary party of a direct influence on the government but it also frees the party from obligations of loyalty. Government and parliamentary party (except for the existence of coattails) have thus two rather independent 'utility functions'. The parliamentary party will try to extract from the government the maximum possible resources that can be used in the parliamentary election campaigns by exerting its influence on bills, on the distribution of funds, on appointments. The government will do the same. The combination of the two strategies will determine the outputs of this form of government. In a parliamentary system the utility functions of the two are much more interconnected. The government is dependent on the parliamentary party(ies) for its survival and it is linked to the same electoral process for its democratic legitimation: as a result the parliamentary party is at the same time more powerful (it can make the government fall) and more constrained because the success or failure of the government will have a greater impact on the election from which the parliamentary party derives its own strength and legitimacy.

There are important variations among parliamentary systems, however, and these have significant consequences for the relationship between parliamentary party and government. In particular the 'proximity' of the government to the electoral result varies: it is at its maximum when the election determines which government will be set up and when the end of the government coincides with a new election; it is at its minimum both when the electoral result leaves space for various solutions, which result in bargaining after the electoral outcome and when the end of the government does not necessarily entail a new election. The

position of the parliamentary party vis-a-vis the government varies accordingly: when the electoral 'proximity' of the government is at its maximum the position of the parliamentary party tends to coincide with that of the government. Only when the government seems bound to lose the ensuing election can the parliamentary party regain some autonomy; otherwise loyalty is the rational strategy for the parliamentary party, as by supporting the government and enabling it to pursue efficiently its goals the parliamentary party ensures the electoral success of both. When the electoral 'proximity' is lower, the parliamentary party becomes less dependent: for instance, if most cabinets do not survive until the election, the interest of the parliamentary party in electoral success will not coincide with the interest of the government which might be more preoccupied by other short-term problems: the incentives for members of the parliamentary party to fight on their own for their political survival become consequently greater. Moreover, since the cabinet must be formed in parliament and can be unseated in parliament the parliamentary party has at its disposal a powerful instrument for exercising influence. Yet a paradoxical effect occurs: when the link between government and parliamentary party becomes too loose the cohesion of the parliamentary party is also undermined, because one of the strongest motives for unity disappears.

The electoral connection is not the only factor affecting the parliamentary party: the structure of parliament plays also a part. Generally speaking parliaments are among the least hierarchical institutions. There is a leadership constituted by the speaker and the committee chairmen but the bulk of the internal structure is fundamentally egalitarian: each member has equal weight as he or she can cast a vote. Yet the organization of parliament is an important intervening variable: where the parliament has a strong committee structure the members of the parliamentary party operating in each committee, especially those with seniority, acquire autonomy as a result of their specialization or their links with interest groups. On the basis of the power they hold in these positions they have greater opportunities to challenge the government.

The parliamentary party has a leadership of its own when the party is in opposition, a leadership which may be more or less autonomous vis-a-vis the membership party, a point which we shall discuss later: what then happens to that parliamentary party leadership when the party enters the government, however? It may become (part of) the government, as in the British case: to quote Blondel, the parliamentary party, once it has won the elections, is "beheaded" (Blondel 1996): its leaders move in the cabinet and leave the parliamentary party without its head. A different image could be used, however: by winning the election the parliamentary party and its leadership obtain the 'prize' of government. Instead of losing something, it gains a new authority and new resources that are built in the

institution of government and which will benefit the whole party in the electoral competition. The possibility of using two different images for the same situation hints at some of the ambiguities of this relationship.

To some extent, given the strong linkage existing in the parliamentary systems between cabinet and parliament, one can view the (party in the) cabinet as a component of the parliamentary party; yet the new institutional position gained by the party leadership creates a greater gap between backbenchers and leaders than when they all sat in the opposition benches. The party leaders in government have the prestige and also the distance that result from the responsibility of running the country.

There are different arrangements, however. The parliamentary party leadership may stay out of the government and maintain an identity of its own. The leadership of the party in parliament becomes thus to some extent bicephalous: one head is in the government and the other in the parliamentary party. The relative importance of the two heads may also vary: vis-a-vis a strong and durable government one would expect the parliamentary party leadership to be reduced to a rather dependent role of 'agent'; but in the case of unstable cabinets a lasting parliamentary party leadership might gain a much stronger role (and appear rather as the 'principal') . The weaker and the more indirect the linkage between government and election results, the more this second type of situation is likely to arise. If the government does not proceed 'automatically' from the election, but only comes into being after possibly lengthy negotiations (inside and outside the parliament) and/or if the fall of the government does not necessarily entail the dissolution of parliament, the leadership of the parliamentary group is likely to be longer lasting than the government.

4. Party as a membership organization

Parties, particularly in the European experience of the twentieth century, have typically had significant membership organizations. In extreme cases this organization has come close to being a self-contained and self-sufficient world for important sections of the population. The party then constituted not only the focal and rallying point for citizens actively interested in politics but also a 'community' taking care of many needs, ranging from social protection to education, to leisure activities and even to personal relationships. Some European socialist and communist parties are examples of such a development (Roth 1963). In other cases the membership party has been merely an organization of variable strength designed to mobilize the people at and between elections.

A vast literature on parties from Ostrogorski (1903) and Michels (1915) to Duverger (1964), from Kirchheimer (1966) to von Beyme (1985), from Panebianco (1988) to Katz and Mair (1995) and Scarrow (1996) has illustrated the various organizational models adopted by membership parties. A number of key points emerge. First, the membership party itself must be seen as a system within which different actors are at play. Members who subscribe to the party platform and pay dues are the 'population' of the party. As is the case with the population of a country, a large proportion of members is passive; a minority, however, the militants, contributes markedly to the life of the party during and between election campaigns and helps to keep the organization alive. In terms of time and efforts freely given to the distribution of party propaganda, to contacts with potential voters, to the running of the activities of the party, from congresses to banquets, they form a crucial resource. As many studies about parties have shown, militants strongly defend the ideological purity of the party. This is understandable: given that their efforts do not have instrumental goals, they must be sustained by a strong faith. Symbolic incentives, such as the defence of party identity have a large part to play.

National party rulers can differ markedly from the militants, but this is not so of lower level rulers, which are typically recruited among the militants. Of the latter some will move to the top but most will remain confined to the bottom steps of the ladder. At the top of the party, a relatively small group of national leaders holds offices, such as those of secretary or president, while a few more sit on committees and councils without holding a specific office. These represent the membership party vis-a-vis other actors: what they say is the position of the party. They are also the most obvious candidates to occupy positions outside the party, for instance in parliament or in the government. In Europe national party leaders are generally elected on the basis of an internal democratic system: their legitimacy derives more or less directly from party members. As a matter of fact, the role of rank-and-file members is substantially reduced as a result of the presence of strong oligarchical elements within the party organization: the selection of party leaders tends to stem from the ability of these leaders to enlist the support of the relatively small group of middle and top level elites in control of the organization at headquarters and in the provinces.

The goals of leaders differ from those of militants: for these the party is an end in itself; for leaders it is an instrument in their bid for power in the democratic polity. Offices, policies and patronage (in variable combinations) are the stakes in that game. Internal party cohesion, electoral victories and strategic positioning in the coalition-building process are the conditions of success. Party leaders can be assumed to want to maximize their gains, although it is not possible to know the terms of the trade-offs which they make. For them the party organization

(members, militants, staff) is a resource to be used in that game (Scarrow 1996); it is also a constraint: they can use it, but not beyond a given point. In order to preserve their power in the party they must respond to some extent to the demands of members and even more of militants and middle ranking leaders. Finding a balance between the preservation of the identity of the party (as required by the rank-and-file) and adapting it to the needs of the national political game is one of the crucial tasks of the party elite. To put it differently: the party elite will pursue the maximization of its goals to the extent that it does not endanger its position within the party.

Leaders can obviously miscalculate. They may underestimate the dissatisfaction of the rank-and-file vis-a-vis their choices and lose support to competitors (the fall of Margaret Thatcher shows that this is not a theoretical point). On the contrary they may overestimate the needs of the party and become unable to play effectively the part they have to play in the nation. It is sometimes truly difficult to find a balance between the two requirements.

Within the group of national leaders a distinction not to be forgotten is that between the leader and the other members of the top elite. The competition between them for the top position, albeit combined with the necessary amount of co-operation, may be extremely robust.

Variations in party structures are obviously critical for the relationships between the different components of the membership party. From the highly ideological and densely organized mass parties, such as some of the socialist parties of the early part of the twentieth century, to the more pragmatic catch-all parties with a leaner organization as exemplified by some bourgeois parties or by 'reformed' left parties (Kirchheimer 1966), to what have been described as 'cartel' parties by Katz and Mair (1995), organizational transformations are significant and we may expect an equally significant impact upon the relations between the party elite and the other strata of the party.

We can assume a diminishing weight of the rank-and-file and a correspondingly greater freedom of action for the party leadership vis-a-vis the rank-and-file as one goes from the mass party to the 'cartel' party. The action of the leaders is gradually less constrained by the militants. Paradoxically, however, the less constrained the leaders are from within the party the more they are vulnerable to external pressure. If they cannot oppose the wishes of the party base, they will be under greater pressure to adapt to the will of other actors. If the atrophy of the membership party goes beyond a given point we may ask whether it is still relevant to talk about a membership party. One might further ask what happens to the party leadership. Can it still find its basis in the membership party or must it transfer its foundations somewhere else (typically in the party in public office) ? and in that case can the election of the leaders through the party maintain any substantial meaning or rather will it become simply a

ritualistic cover for the real nomination processes that take place behind the scenes?

The relationship between the membership party and the parliamentary party is crucial. These are not two separate parties. They share the same political identity; moreover, with few exceptions, members of the parliamentary party are also (and indeed were beforehand) part of the membership party; vice-versa, the higher ranks of the elite of the membership party tend to sit in parliament. In fact the party leadership often plays under both hats at the same time. Yet the two components of the party are involved in different 'games' each of which is characterised by different opportunities and constraints, in particular the electoral 'game' for the parliamentary party and the organisational 'game' for the membership party. Each segment of the party is therefore to some extent viewed by the other as an instrument to further its particular aims. For the parliamentary party, the dominant goal being re-election, the membership party will be seen as a resource: its help during election campaigns is obviously important. Meanwhile, for the membership party and especially for the militants, the parliamentary party and electoral success are valued as instruments helping to strengthen the organisation and pursue its goals: through a strong parliamentary party the membership party can obtain some of the policies it wants, important positions for its members and the goods that patronage can offer; above all, it can gain access to the government which plays a crucial part with respect to these benefits.

For each component of the party the instrumental use of the other may not be without problems. The membership party may be to some extent a handicap for the parliamentary party in its quest to win the support of sections of the electorate which are more distant from the party core and may be very distant from the party's more dogmatic elements. Conversely, 'true believers' within the membership party may find the parliamentary party lukewarm in its defence of party identity and too open to compromises with party enemies.

There is more than one equilibrium point in this relationship. At one extreme, the parliamentary party dominates and the external party is reduced to an ancillary role, the British Conservative party being an example; at the other, the membership party dominates the parliamentary group, some Communist parties having adopted this model in the past. The resources available to each of the two components and the importance which each has for the other determine the point at which an equilibrium is reached in a particular case. The availability and importance of resources depends in turn on a mix of internal and external factors. Broadly speaking, where the membership party holds the keys of electoral success the parliamentary party tends to be dependent; where the parliamentary party controls the electoral process it will be able to assert its autonomy from the membership party. The resources the

membership party may have under its control are both material and symbolic: it may have the financial means and the manpower to run an electoral campaign; it may also play a crucial part in the production and upkeep of the values and ideals which appeal to the voters and induce them to vote for the party. The party as a membership organization may thus contribute significantly to producing long-term loyalty among voters. It is more doubtful whether to consider the selection of parliamentary candidates as a resource, as it is probably more the consequence of the control exercised over other resources than a resource in itself. Historically the membership party has acquired a voice in deciding who the candidates will be when it showed that it was able to mobilise other resources. But the fact that the party 'produces' as a by-product of its activities skilled politicians (which are ready to become candidates) means that the party controls another specific resource.

Studies of parties have shown that not all of them have controlled these resources to the same extent: less ideological parties have not had a monopoly of symbols; some parties have been unable to mobilize a large manpower. Moreover, with the passing of time some of the original resources have been exhausted or have lost their importance: the ideology of a party may have decreased in intensity; the need to mobilise many people to distribute leaflets and posters may have declined. New resources, such as the media, or means coming from other sources, for instance public financing, may have gained in importance making the role of the membership party less crucial (Katz & Mair 1995), though Scarrow takes a somewhat different view on this point (1996). This means that parliamentary parties after a long period of subordination to membership parties may be gaining again greater levels of autonomy.

5. The party in the electorate. Does it really exist?

From time to time a further dimension of the party is mentioned, that of the party in the electorate. The existence of such a 'party' is less clear than that of the parliamentary or membership party. There is here no formal organization nor is there a clear leadership: there are only voters whose preferences may prove more or less stable. The notions of party identification, which was developed in America, and that of a sub-cultural vote based on a strong class, religious or linguistic identity, which is often used in Europe, both referring to a durable link of voters with a party, offer some clues for an understanding of the party in the electorate. By 'party in the electorate' we will indicate that section of the voters that display a stable attachment to a party. The size of this section may vary from country to country and also with time.

The existence of such a stable support for the party is a resource for the other components of the party, the parliamentary party and the

membership party. In this way parties have a support base which can be relied on at every election. Up to a point, the stronger the 'party in the electorate' the greater the freedom of action of the other components; but there are limits to this freedom: like the ballast of a sailboat, the 'party in the electorate' enables the other components to fluctuate according to the wind but eventually pulls them back towards the centre which is determined by the position of the ballast: the 'party in the electorate' is thus also a constraint. There are also linkages between this component and the other two: the 'party in the electorate' has a close connection with the parliamentary party which depends on it for its power; but the strength of the party in the electorate depends in turn to a large extent on the membership party which builds and preserves the identity of the whole party. The 'party in the electorate' is thus different in kind from the other components as it does not produce significant actors in the party-government game, despite the fact that it generates resources and constraints for the other components.

6. The bureaucratic party

A similar conclusion can be drawn about the bureaucratic component of the party. Parties often have a professional, paid staff appointed to run a substantial part of their activities at central and local levels. This bureaucracy may come to be very significant in party life: it then becomes a substantial resource for the component which controls it. The link is usually with the membership party, as the professional bureaucracy has typically been set up to help organise and run the membership. Other solutions are also possible. In the British Conservative party, for instance, the central professional staff has a significant autonomy with respect to the other components of the party and is controlled by the leader. It is then a resource for the party in government. In some cases (Germany is an example) the parliamentary party itself may develop a substantial bureaucratic staff that is separate from that of the membership party. The party bureaucracy is not only a resource for the whole party and, within the party, for that component that controls it, but can also be, as any bureaucracy, a factor of inertia and conservatism: party officials come to have interests of their own which tend towards continuity rather than towards innovation.

7. The party in government

The last component we have to discuss is the 'party in government', which is made of those members of the party that have won a position in the cabinet. Such a component obviously does not exist when the party is

in the opposition, except to the extent that there is a 'shadow cabinet' which might be described as a 'potential party in government'. But as a 'shadow cabinet' is only a pale image of a cabinet, since it does not control the state bureaucracy, a 'potential party in government' is only a distant approximation of a real party in government as it does not control the machine of government.

The 'party in government' is temporary since no party is sure to govern forever: this places it in a position of relative dependence vis-a-vis the other components which are permanent. The 'members' of the 'party in government' come from within the other components of the party and, unless they retire from politics, they have to go back to one of the other components when the party loses power (Blondel, 1991). The duration of the control of the party over the government thus appears crucial in order to assess the strength of the 'party in government'. There are naturally major variations across Europe in this respect: some parties have been in government for very long periods; others had long stints in opposition. In the first case the 'party in government' is likely to be more 'real' than in the second. When a party is in office for many years, the jobs of prime minister, of minister or even of under-secretary become a major political activity for many party politicians and for a further group constitute a realistic goal to strive for. A position in the government may last as long or even longer than a leading position in the parliamentary or membership 'party'. At the other end of the continuum, when the presence of the party in the government is short-lived, a ministerial job is a kind of accident rather than a normal outcome of political activity.

Duration is not the only relevant variable, however: the weight of the party in the cabinet also varies from total control in a one-party government to partial control in coalitions. This leads to different constraints for the party and its agenda. This also contributes to rendering the 'party in government' more or less important vis-a-vis the rest of the party.

Members of the 'party in government' come from either the membership party or from the parliamentary party or from both. Except when they are non-politicians or technicians, cabinet members have generally a parliamentary background (De Winter 1991; Blondel and Thiébault, 1991). Moreover, they may or may not belong to the top leadership stratum of the party: the more attractive cabinet positions are (if the party stays in office for long periods and if the role of the party in that government is strong) the more the leaders of the two other components of the party are likely to want to take over these positions. Attractiveness of government positions is a relative matter, however: it depends also on the attractiveness of other party positions. To be the leader of a party with a strong ideological profile, a massive membership and a large bureaucracy is clearly more meaningful than to be the leader of a party with few inactive members and a weak bureaucracy. When

leaders move into the government they will either concentrate both old and new positions in their hands (though they may have to delegate the more routine tasks to a vice-chairman or a secretary general) or abandon their position in the membership or parliamentary party to new leaders.

The question of the relative position of leaders in and outside government has therefore to be raised. At first leaders in government will have the upper hand as they combine experience and connections gained in the old position with the new institutional role. With the passing of time the distance between government leaders and the various components of the party will tend to increase: a good government performance is, however, likely to strengthen the position of these leaders; on the contrary, they will suffer and come to be challenged if the governmental record is more mixed. Where cabinet positions are less attractive because they are short-lived and/or occur in a coalition context, only lower level leaders or top leaders in decline will be prepared to take them on, particularly if these positions cannot be combined with leading ones in the membership or parliamentary party: the true top party leaders are then those who run the parliamentary or the membership 'party' (or both). In some cases, different leadership positions, in the membership party, in the parliamentary party, in the government may coexist and result in a kind of collegial directorate of the party: this was the case in the SPD in Germany during Schmidt's chancellorship; this occurred rather frequently in the Italian Christian Democratic party before 1992.

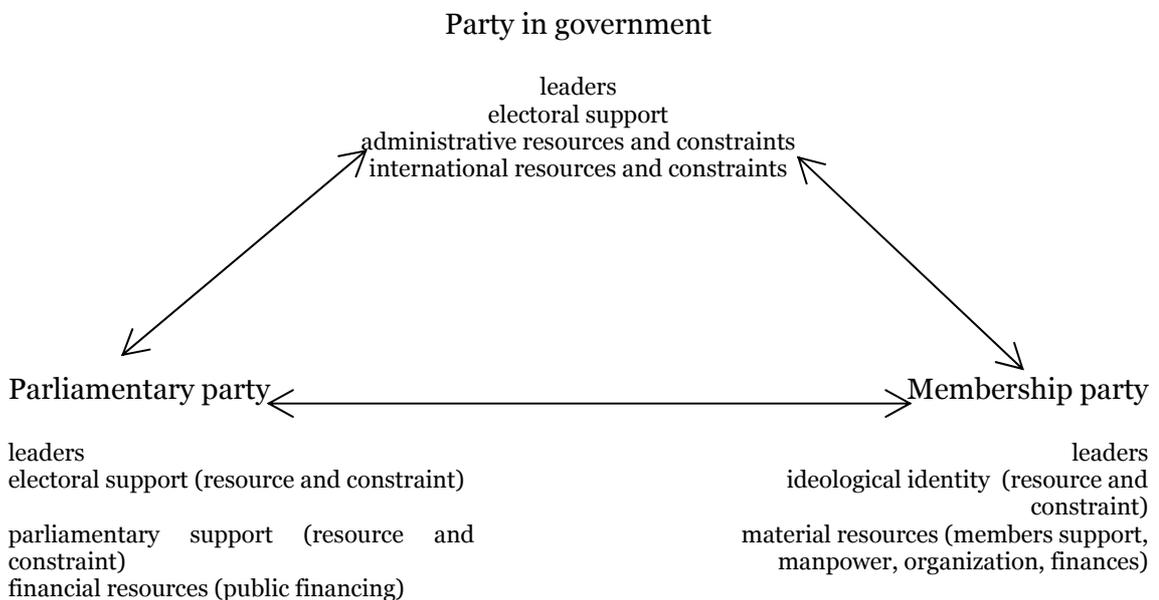
The question of the power to control and eventually dismiss members of the 'party in government' is related to factors discussed earlier. The more the 'party in government' attracts top leaders of the other components of the party, the more these can control their stay in power, whatever the formal rules may say; these leaders will also be able to discard ineffective ministers and coopt new ones: the role of the leaders of the membership or of the parliamentary party will merely be to introduce some limits to this power. When positions in the government are more transient and generally less attractive, the leadership of the other components of the party will exercise more power. Indeed, members of the government, including the prime minister, know that their political future lies more in the other components of the party, where they will eventually have to return, than in the present one.

To understand the nature of the constraints and opportunities under which the party in government operates, we have to adopt two different points of view. In the next section we shall adopt the point of view of the party and discuss how the various party components relate to each other. Then, in the second part of this paper we will adopt the point of view of the government as an institution and take a look at its specific problems.

8. Parties as complex and diverse systems

Parties, as we saw, are better viewed as ‘systems’ than as monolithic actors: the complexity of democratic life leads to their internal differentiation. The external action of a party is thus affected by internal dynamics both within and among its parts. Parties have problems optimizing their strategies, not surprisingly: different components often attempt to maximise different and at least partially conflicting goals, such as victory at the polls, preservation of party identity, success in government.

Fig. 1: Potential relations and exchanges between party in government, membership party and parliamentary party



The different components provide resources of various types for the party as a whole and for each other; they also constrain each other because of their particular goals and interests (Fig. 1). The weight and importance of the different components varies significantly across countries, across party ‘families’ and over time, these variations in turn depending on both societal and political factors. These factors include patterns of social cleavages, forms of social stratification, the availability of alternative resources, especially for the purpose of interests representation and communication, stages of democratization, configurations of political conflict and mobilisation, institutional arrangements. The position of the party vis-a-vis the government also

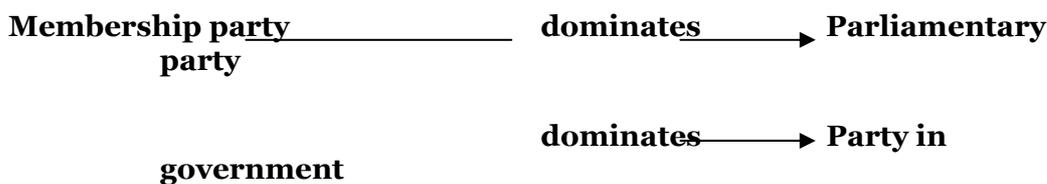
plays a part. As a result, in some cases, one or more components is weak or absent; in other cases, the various components are in equilibrium.

Fig. 2 Types of parties

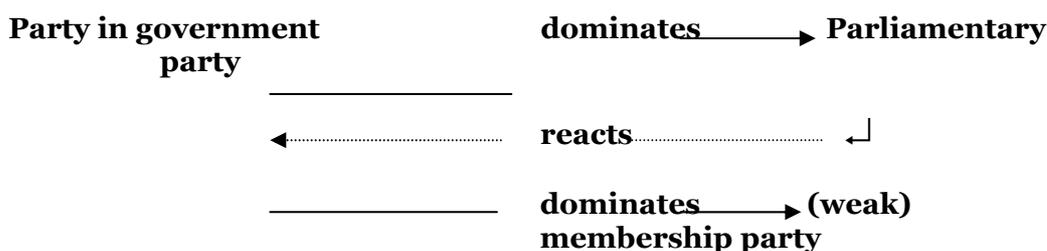
a. Traditional parliamentary party



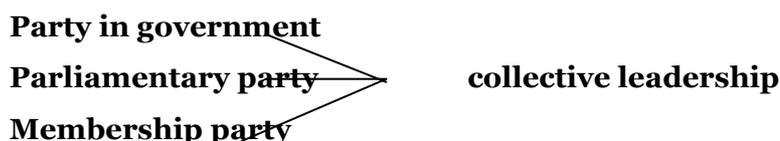
b. Membership party dominance



c. Party in government preeminence



d. Equilibrium



Let us examine some of these situations (Fig. 2). At one extreme, one finds the strong membership party with a clear ideology, a strong bureaucracy under its control and a loyal electorate: the centre of gravity and the top leadership of such a party, which typically comes from a long tradition in opposition, are located rather clearly in the party apparatus. The main resources and constraints derive from there, while the parliamentary component and the representatives in the government are weak and dependent. If we move gradually towards the opposite pole, we find the membership component of the party becoming weaker because members see their affiliation to the party less as a vital engagement and more as a routine linkage, identities are less clear and the ideology is less precise. Meanwhile, the representation of interests is likely to find

autonomous channels by which groups come more directly in contact with the members of parliament and with the government. Moreover, the decline in party identification among the electorate means that elections are less predictable: the electoral connection becomes therefore more important for the party and the popularly elected parliamentary party gains in ascendancy and autonomy. Those party members who are in the government may profit from this situation if they can count on a kind of direct popular legitimation, as it happens not merely in presidential systems but in those parliamentary systems where elections decide who will govern (Fig. 3). In some cases, as in the British Conservative party, the parliamentary party and the party in government never lost their prominent position and the membership component has never been able to go beyond playing an ancillary part; in other cases this is a more recent development due to the decline in importance of a previously strong membership component.

Fig. 3 Factors explaining the strength/autonomy of the party in government vis a vis the parliamentary and the membership party.

	Strength/autonomy of party in government		
	low	_____	high
a . Vis a vis the parliamentary party			
<i>Indipendent control of MPs over electoral resources</i>	high	medium	low
<i>Strength of committee system</i>	high	medium	low
b. Vis a vis the membership party			
<i>Organizational strength of membership party</i>	high	medium	Low
<i>Ideological intensity of party</i>	high	medium	Low
c. Vis a vis both			
<i>Direct electoral mandate of executive</i>	no		Yes
<i>Duration in office of government</i>	low		high
<i>Degree of identification of the party with the government</i>	low		high

When a party has long been in office and the expectation grows that this state of affairs will continue, leaders are likely to cease to view the membership component as an important asset compared to the resources which the control of government offers. The dominance of the party in government may then become overwhelming. However, as in parliamentary systems, the 'party in government' and the parliamentary party are close to each other, the relationship between these two components becomes crucial when the membership party grows weaker: yet the nature of that relationship depends in large part on who controls the electoral resources and thus on the factors already mentioned that affect this control.

Finally, when the structures of the party are weak and personal ties are paramount, we may foresee a more fuzzy situation where a small elite occupies the top positions in the different components of the party and moves from one component to another without ever being closely identified with either, but is able to use all of them in an instrumental manner.

9. What is government ?

After having looked into the first term of the party-government relationship we must now take a closer look at the second. The government, too, has many facets. Different meanings of this concept are often used when one discusses its relationship with supporting parties. These relate to the persons in the government, to the institution as a whole or to parts of that institution. There is therefore the need to 'unpack' this concept as we did with the party.

In order to proceed in this direction we must clarify the part played by governments in contemporary democratic systems and this requires to discuss shortly the relationship between representative democracy and the modern state. Historically and structurally, the government, more than any other institution, is at the crossroads between representative mechanisms and the administration of the state.

On the one hand the government is at the top of the representative 'pillar' which is based on elections, parliaments and parties. As Rokkan pointed out, the apex of the democratization process corresponds to the overcoming of the 'threshold of executive power', that is to say, to the moment when "parliamentary strength could be translated into direct influence on executive decision-making" (Rokkan 1970, 79), or to put it in another way when the government becomes a representative institution. On the other hand, the government is at the top of a huge administrative machinery which the modern state developed to perform the many functions it concentrated in its hands. The government has the

responsibility of steering that apparatus. Hence the use of the expression 'administration' in some countries to refer to the government.

Historically, the institution of government developed as a result of the growing expansion and diversification of the state machine and of the need of monarchs to appoint officials to run the organisation. The cabinet constituted the top group of officials enabling the monarchs to ensure that their will would be applied in the different departments. Since the challenge raised by the process of democratization to the political legitimacy of the monarchy was not accompanied by a similar challenge to the bureaucratic state (Tocqueville 1856), but rather by the requirement that the bureaucratic state should be subordinated to the new democratic legitimacy, the government as an institution survived and prospered, although it lost its original linkage with the monarchy and established a new linkage with the processes of representation. The institutional forms taken by this new linkage vary. In presidential systems the executive, at least the President, is elected by popular suffrage and subject to the oversight of parliament but cannot normally be dismissed by the legislature. In parliamentary systems the cabinet is accountable to parliament and its survival depends on the support of parliament: this resulted in the cabinet being the leading element by way of its control of the parliamentary majority. Thus the government continues to head the state bureaucracy while heading also the representative structure.

The nature and role of government has not been shaped only by the separate developments of state bureaucracy and of democratic representation: it has also been shaped by the strong dynamic interactions between these two aspects of contemporary politics, which have produced the rise of the welfare state (Flora and Heidenheimer, 1981) and the growth of the administration which accompanied this rise (Taylor, 1983; Rose, 1984). These developments have in turn greatly expanded the political role of the executive. Moreover, the secular trend of growth of the intervention of the state in the management, regulation and promotion of the economy has increasingly brought the institutions of government at the centre of a two-way flow of communication and of influence between the executive and economic actors, individual firms, workers' and business associations and international regulatory bodies. The complex nature of many economic decisions enabled also technicians and experts working for the government to acquire a more prominent role.

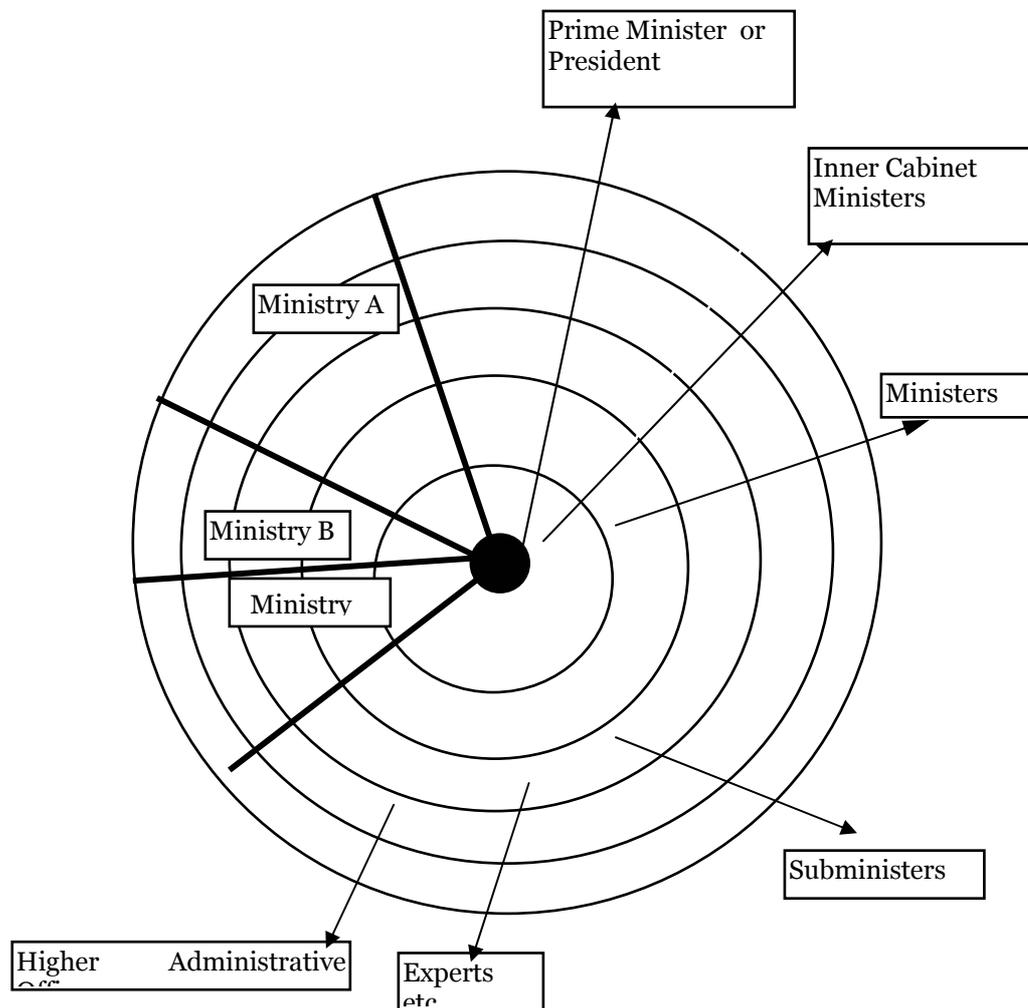
Because of this combination of different traditions, it seems more appropriate to view the government as a 'system' rather than as a unitary actor. We need therefore to go beyond the outside 'shell' and look at persons, resources, constraints and roles. We must also be aware that the different components which to some extent are part of all contemporary governments do not have the same weight and shape in each country: these components vary across countries and over time.

First, a government is a group of individuals, but the size and composition of this group depends on the definition given. In a more restrictive definition, the government is composed of those, essentially ministers, who attend meetings of the council of ministers or cabinet: this group varies in size, but it is much smaller than a parliament, let alone a party. If the focus is the decision-making process, moreover, there is sometimes a stratification between different bodies, with an inner cabinet taking the most important decisions. Yet the borders of the government are not precise. Below the ministerial stratum, there is typically a junior ministerial level: members of this level are not normally authorised to attend council of ministers' meetings, but they take an active part in government responsibilities in other ways: they share some of the duties of ministers with respect to parliament, for instance by attending committee meetings or steering legislation; they also share some of the administrative business and in particular interact with interest groups. Moreover, each minister is surrounded by a small but important group of advisers and experts. Below these are the top officials of the departments. All of these participate, albeit in different ways, in the activities of government.

Thus what is decided by the government in the narrow sense, i.e. by the ministers, has typically been prepared and 'done' by members of the other strata. There is therefore no clear discontinuity between the 'small' and the 'larger' government. It may be claimed that the administrative apparatus is merely the arm of the ministers and should therefore be kept separate, yet public administration and policy studies have shown that not only does the bureaucracy set clear limits to the freedom of action of the ministers, but it also initiates and can promote its own interests and those of its clients. Ministers are therefore only the top of the iceberg, the most visible but not necessarily the most important part. The government is thus constituted of a series of concentric circles (Fig. 4).

If the study of government consists in studying the individuals of which it is composed, the characteristics of the persons who are part of the government in the narrow sense are only the first step of the analysis: when one moves towards the 'larger' government these characteristics change appreciably. Politicians become administrators; yet there is also some variation in the origins of those who compose the government *stricto sensu*: there are obviously professional politicians, most of whom have a background in electoral politics, some of whom belong to the leadership group of their party while others are less prominent; there are also some top bureaucrats, policy experts, representatives of interest groups (Blondel and Thiébault, 1991). Ministers are therefore likely to have different attitudes, interests and motivations, partly because of their socialisation and partly because of their earlier career. Moreover, what is true of the government in the narrow sense is true to an even greater extent of the members of the government in the larger sense: their origins

vary markedly. It is a good guess therefore that the goals and preferences of those who belong to the same government will also be diverse.

Fig. 4 . The circles of government.

Government members are not simply individuals: they have with few exceptions a well specified institutional role. Those who have a portfolio - the large majority - are in charge of a sector of the state bureaucracy, which is responsible for a defined area of policies. As heads of departments, ministers have major responsibilities; they also acquire in this way important resources for political action. They have at their disposal financial means, expertise and knowledge, although their action is markedly limited by the past policies which they inherit, these being in a sense crystallised in the bureaucracies of the departments and defended by the clients who have mushroomed around them. If one looks at the matter from the point of view of the interests of the departmental bureaucracy, on the other hand, ministers are both a resource and a constraint. They provide democratic legitimacy for the policies of the department; but they may resist these policies. Each department is thus

an arena within which different actors, the minister, the under-secretaries, the bureaucrats, the interest group representatives, cooperate and compete, while there is also competition and co-operation among the different departments.

In order to understand the resources, the constraints and the incentives which affect the different actors of the governmental game we need to pay a more specific attention to the different 'faces' of the government.

10. The representative 'face' of the government

To begin with, there is a representative 'face' which undoubtedly is the most visible: as a matter of fact, in democratic political systems the life of the government in the strict sense wholly depends on the electoral process. Governments begin and end because of the direct or indirect effects of this process; their legitimacy stems from this process. An important part of the constraints and incentives under which the government operates is naturally linked to this representative character. Yet, as the role played by the government in the representative game may change significantly under the effects of institutional rules and other political factors, there is space here for important variations.

Institutional rules are the first factor in defining the political space within which the representative game takes place and the role the executive plays in it. The choice of a presidential or semi-presidential solution (or, as in Israel, of a directly elected premier), with the popular election of the head of the executive brings the government (or more exactly its upper level) directly into the representative game. The head of the government is 'produced' via the electoral process and, insofar as re-election is allowed and the president or elected premier is willing to run again, the government will participate in the next round of elections. In such a situation the electoral mandate is a resource directly controlled by the head of government who can rely on it to legitimise his or her action without having to 'borrow' legitimacy from other political actors. Yet the electoral connection also works as a constraint: the head of the executive may be held accountable at the next election for past promises and will therefore take future accountability into consideration while making decisions.

In such a system, ministers are only indirectly involved in the representative 'face' of the government: they are wholly dependent on the head of the executive. The team is chosen on the basis of a number of considerations. These include a) satisfying the groups and interests which supported the leader, b) ensuring administrative competence to implement electoral promises, c) recruiting personalities with the ability to win support for the leader in the future election. During the first part of

the leader's term, more attention is likely to be paid to the previous election and to fulfilling promises or paying political debts; with the passing of time the forthcoming election is likely to play an increasing part.

In pure presidential systems the separation of powers leads to two distinct representative 'games', that of presidential candidates and that of congressional candidates: in such systems, the government is a representative actor but does not have the monopoly of representation. As a result, whenever the approval of the legislature is required, the government has to confront other representative actors and from this confrontation result various outcomes ranging from stalemate to negotiated agreements.

Government in semi-presidential systems. In semi-presidential systems, the position of the executive in the representation 'game' is less simple. There is a dual executive and there are two parallel lines of democratic legitimation, that of the direct election for the presidency and that of the indirect election by means of the parliamentary confidence for the cabinet (Duverger 1980, Sartori, 1994). There are thus two independent representation games but, contrary to the pure presidential system, here both see a component of the executive involved. In the end either the government manages to re-unify at the top the two games when the president is also the leader of the parliamentary majority and thus dominates the cabinet or is divided by them when president and cabinet are issued from two different political majorities, the situation referred to as 'cohabitation'. The position of the president vis-a-vis the rest of the government changes in a significant way as a result: he or she is either the effective head of the government, at least for strategic decisions, or must retreat to the position of a 'dignified' but less 'efficient' head of state at most concerned with a limited and residual domain. The role of the prime minister correspondingly changes and is either that of an agent or a delegate - even a scapegoat - of the president or that of the real leader of the government. Why in some cases, as in France, such variations in the structure of the government have taken place smoothly while in Portugal or Poland they have been more conflictual is a matter which awaits empirical investigation. One should note, however, that, in France, which has been since the 1980s the example par excellence of the 'alternating' (Duverger 1980) or 'oscillating' (Sartori 1994) semi-presidential system, the president never lost the hope of winning back a stronger role as a result of either a subsequent parliamentary or a subsequent presidential election. In other political systems with similar institutional arrangements such hopes either have never existed (as in Austria) or have ceased to exist (as in Finland and Portugal). In these cases, the presidential election has had a different significance: it is a mechanism of personnel selection rather than the arena of the true representation game.

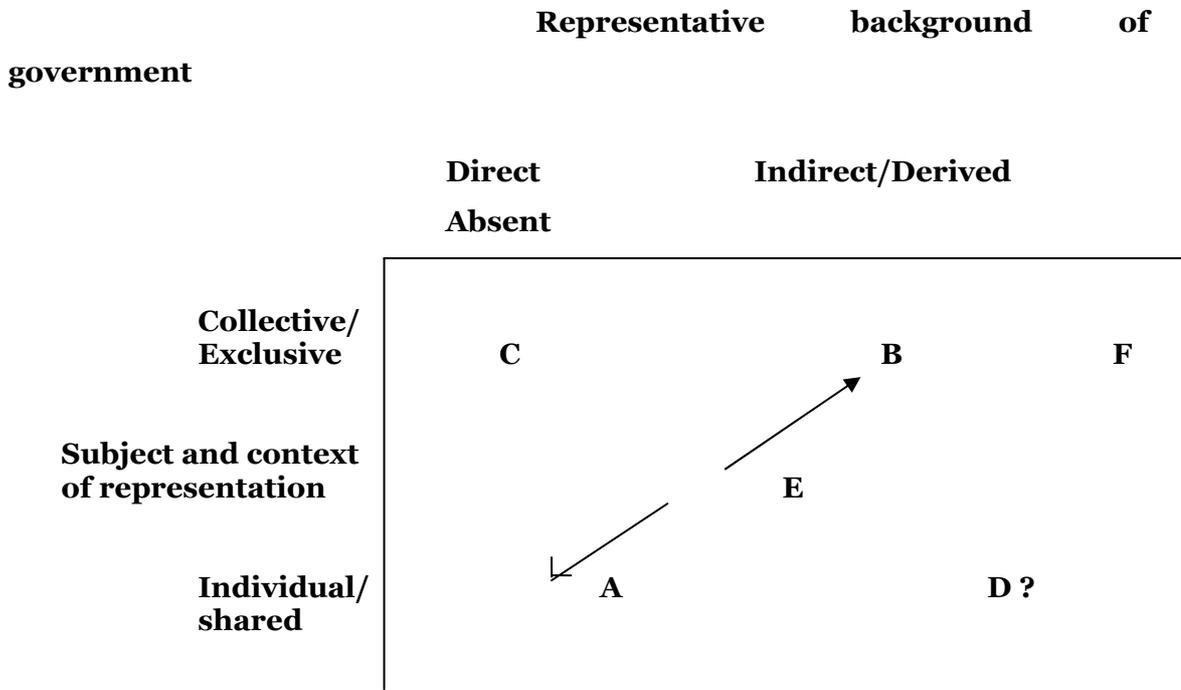
Thus, in semi-presidential systems, the president can be a representative and governmental actor but runs also the risk of losing a significant part of these two roles as a result of other developments in the political system.

Government in parliamentary systems. In parliamentary systems the representative role of the government is in principle less direct. The parliament not the government is elected. The government comes into being only after the representation game has been played and once a majority in parliament has emerged. Moreover its end comes before the new round of the game which begins when parliament dissolves and new elections are called. Other actors, typically the parties which endorse parliamentary candidates but also more rarely independents, participate more directly in the process. From an institutional point of view, the government derives its democratic legitimacy from these actors; in practice, however, as a result of the format of the party system, the government may in fact be elected 'directly' and indeed even run its own re-election campaign. This is particularly the case in two-party systems, but it may also occur in multi-party systems when one party is large enough to win alone or when a coalition of parties fights the election jointly with the aim of forming the government together and facing subsequent elections as a team. In such cases differences with presidential systems have not so much to do with the fact that the representative link is direct or indirect but with the consequences of other institutional arrangements. In parliamentary systems there is one election only: since there is only one representation game the government may be an even stronger representative actor than it is in presidential systems, where the president has to take an independently elected legislature into account. At the same time however in parliamentary systems the election is in a sense collective: the prime minister wins together with the parliamentary party (Rose, 1980a and 1980b; King, 1975). Only together with it he or she can achieve the parliamentary majority which ensures the survival of the government.

The representative role of the executive in different types of governments is indicated in Fig. 5. Type A is a government with a direct representative role in which only the head of the government, the president, is elected directly; the other members of the government derive their representative character from the president. The government shares however this representative character with the legislature. In type B the representative character of the government is not direct, but it derives from parliament. In type C, because of a special combination of institutional and political conditions, the government is, in practice, though not formally, directly elected: its representative character however is not separate from that of parliament but on the contrary is acquired in association with the parliament itself. No empirical example of type D can be found: such a type is indeed difficult to conceive even in theory. The

mixed type E corresponds to semi-presidential systems in which elements of A and B (or even of C if the prime minister can count upon de facto direct electoral support) are combined. Finally, type F corresponds to governments which are not representative and whose legitimacy has a different base: this is the case for instance of technical governments.

Fig. 5. The “representative” face of government. Dimensions of variation.



These types indicate that governments may have a rather different part in the representation game and thus also in winning the political resources produced in that context. Some governments have a more direct electoral base than others. They have campaigned in a straightforward manner and stood in front of the voters, who in turn have been in a position to anticipate clearly what the consequences of their vote would be. Other governments on the contrary are dissolved before the election takes place and voters may not be able to have any idea in advance of what will be the consequences of their vote and the new government will be like. In such cases the government will not have a clear electoral mandate. Yet even when the electoral process leads directly to the formation of a government, the recipient of the electoral mandate may vary : it could be the head of the government alone, all the government as a collective body or the parliamentary majority. In the case of a presidential election, popular investiture goes without any doubt to the head of the executive. In a parliamentary system when there is a ‘direct’ election the prime minister is obviously a beneficiary of the electoral mandate. But he or she may have to share it with other ministers who are influential in his/her party or who are the leaders of the other parties of

the coalition. And the parliamentary majority that supports the government is obviously another recipient of the same electoral mandate. One could refer in a similar way to incentives and constraints. A government which has to win re-election through direct participation in an electoral contest is likely to be under the influence of different incentives and constraints from those influencing a government which knows that it will last or fall because of other factors.

The nature of the representative character of the government may sometimes change with the passing of time. Even when the government did not have a direct mandate from the people but came to power indirectly as a result of negotiations among the parties which jointly form a majority, the government might remain in power up to the next election and then try to win a direct investiture on the basis of its popularity. Such a strategy may or may not be successful; it is almost sure however that it will arouse the antagonism of other political actors and of party leaders in particular, as these expect to be the main players. On the other hand, in parliamentary systems in which the government normally receives a 'direct' support from the people, the parliamentary party(ies) may reassert its (their) right vis-a-vis the government by challenging the autonomy of prime minister and ministers. The government may then come to have the characteristics of a 'B type' executive at least until it is able to win a new popular mandate.

What difference does it make for party-government relationships whether the government does or does not have a direct representative character? We shall look at the matter in greater detail at the end of this paper, but it can already be noted that when the government is able to combine the resources stemming from the representation game with those deriving from its administrative role its authority in front of the supporting party(ies) will increase. The 'party in government' will consequently be in a particularly strong position vis-a-vis the other components of the party and will probably attract the top party leaders. At the same time thanks to its democratic legitimation it will be able to exert substantial power over the bureaucratic apparatus.

11. The state 'face' of the government

The government, in first place the ministers, also has a state 'face' as it heads the central bureaucracy. That bureaucracy, is composed of a series of organised structures - the ministries - which enjoy a significant degree of autonomy and have grown as a result of decades and in some cases centuries of development. These bureaucratic structures can be said to embody the answers given over the years to the changing and typically expanding responsibilities of the state in different fields (Rose 1984). The government reflects this increase of the state machinery by its changing

composition. In the middle of the nineteenth century there were few ministers and these led the classical departments of the 'minimal state', foreign affairs, justice, war, interior, finance, religious affairs, while the much larger governments of the late twentieth century include the new functions gradually assumed by the state in the economic sector, such as public works, agriculture, transports, industry, and in the social sector, such as education, health, social security, labour, family (Rose, 1984). Some of these state functions and the bureaucratic organizations that preside over them were created well before (democratic) representative politics developed, while others as well as the extensions of the original ones were the result of the dynamics of democratic politics (Alber, 1981, Flora & Heidenheimer, 1981).

Whatever the factors behind state growth, that process entailed that, on becoming more democratic, political systems also became significantly more bureaucratic: the government became more closely linked to the representative process and at the same time more heavily influenced by the needs of a huge bureaucratic machine. Once translated into new bureaucracies, into new programs or into extensions of pre-existing bureaucracies, the political inputs coming from democratic politics gained their own independent momentum. The vested interests of strong state bureaucracies ask for representation as any other societal interest: they do so not only by acting through the normal representative processes, but by intervening directly on the ministers. Hence the well known question: do the (political) ministers lead the ministries or are they their captives (Rose, 1986; Strom, 1994)?

The vested interests of state bureaucracies are an obviously important part of the picture: yet bureaucracies may also defend what they view as the public interest. The two elements sometimes reinforce each other: while serving their private interests bureaucracies may well feel that they are promoting the public interest and vice-versa. For example a move to resist reductions in the number of school teachers coincides with the private interests of the education bureaucracy, but such a policy can also be presented as a battle for the preservation of the strength and quality of public education. Studies have shown that bureaucrats can often enlist the support of their clients to strengthen their demands. When defending an administrative programme the bureaucracy can mobilize the individuals and groups that have profited from it. The government as a whole and individual ministers in particular consequently face a large stream of demands, proposals and pressures from inside their own departments.

More generally, as it runs the public administration, the government collectively and ministers individually, as well as the other 'parts' of the government lower down the hierarchy, are constantly confronted with the responsibilities stemming from the fact that in a given country and at a given point in time some activities are expected to be fulfilled by the state and fall therefore under the purview of the central government. These

include the responsibilities traditionally associated with the principle of sovereignty, such as taking care of external relations or of law and order, but also the newer responsibilities of the interventionist and social state, such as ensuring economic development and social protection, as well as a whole range of diverse and often petty responsibilities (from providing support for opera theatres to protecting the national movie industry) which have often fallen upon the shoulders of the state by chance and coincidence. The range of such responsibilities varies in a significant way from country to country and over time, but within each country and in the short run it can be considered to a large extent a given.

These responsibilities entail that the government as such is constantly confronted with decisions to be taken. Obviously the government has some leeway in its decision-making process, and it can to an extent delay its response and manipulate the agenda, but in the end it is generally less able than other actors, whether parties or parliament, to choose the battles it has to fight. A party may prefer to keep a low profile on budgetary matters when tough and unpopular decisions have to be taken, but finance ministers and governments must present their budget. When an international crisis requires a decision, a party and even the parliament may or may not take a position but the government has to.

Besides being confronted with sectional inputs from within the departments and having to take decisions relating to the life of each department, governments also have overall responsibilities stemming from interconnections among departmental activities, the budget being the clearest example of such an overall responsibility. The government because of its role as the head of all the state bureaucratic structures must produce a budget (sound or unsound, balanced or unbalanced) that takes into account all incomes and expenditures. While the minister of finance is more specifically involved in the preparation of that budget, the prime minister and the whole cabinet have in the end to be involved in its approval. The importance of this responsibility (and the pressures and constraints deriving from it) is obviously increased by the size that state budgets have nowadays acquired. The budget is no longer merely an internal matter for the central government but affects the inflation rate, the level of growth, employment, etc., thus the government when managing the public sector plays also a major role in steering the whole economy.

As it is involved in this way, the government comes to be related in a complex manner to a web of economic actors, both internal (trade unions, entrepreneurs, national bank) and external (multinational companies, IMF, WTO, European institutions). These actors are continuously engaged in discussions and deals with the government. Such interactions produce constraints, as the government must take into account the influence and possible reactions of these actors; but the government can derive from them also resources (different forms of support) which can be

used with respect to other domestic political actors. We normally expect the government to have a predominant role in this context; however, other actors, such as the parties, can also play a part, especially if they can show that the government cannot reach without their consent any agreement with these economic actors.

International influences and constraints have become increasingly important in the course of the last decades of the twentieth century in the life of European governments, given the growth in the number of important national policies that have to incorporate consequences of decisions taken at the European level. The implications for national governments are mixed. On the one hand, these governments lose a portion of their autonomy, having to comply with decisions taken in Brussels (Scharpf, 1997); on the other, decisions taken at the European level involve primarily national government representatives as these participate in the various bodies of the European Union - European Council, Councils of Ministers, COREPER, Intergovernmental Conferences: thus national governments participate in the decision-making process at the supranational level while national parties, because of the limited development of their supranational structures (Hix, 1997), are much less able to exert their influence. Since decisions in the European arena are taken under the very special conditions of a cumbersome process involving fifteen countries, national governments are able to point out to domestic dissenters, when it comes to implementing these agreements at the internal level, the enormous difficulties of upsetting agreements painstakingly achieved. The government therefore might well be in a subordinate position on the supranational plane but it is put in a dominant position internally.

In the fields of foreign affairs and security, external constraints limited to a very significant extent the freedom of action of European states during the long period of the cold war: governments and the ministers of foreign affairs and defence were thus in part 'transmission belts' to the national decision-making process of policy decisions taken outside the country.

The state 'face' of government is thus an important source of resources and of constraints: but it is more difficult to assess the variations from one case to another in this respect than it is with respect of the representative dimension, as the dimensions of variation are less obvious (Fig. 6). A first dimension to be taken into account are the strength and professionalisation of the departmental bureaucracies, particularly at the top: some of these bureaucracies are indeed more qualified, more immune to external pressures, more self-confident than others. This is likely to affect the ability of these bodies to 'advise' the government internally and to resist the pressures of the 'representative' elements of the government. Given that the central administration is divided into departments which have a different history (old or new ministries),

different functions (some being primarily regulatory, other extractive or distributive) and a significant degree of autonomy, we should not assume that all departments will occupy the same position along this dimension of variation. Some - the treasury or the ministry of foreign affairs for instance - are more likely than others - as the ministries of labour or of agriculture - to exert independent influence on policy making and to resist political influence.

The strength of the mechanisms of co-ordination and of hierarchy among the various departments and among the ministers constitutes another relevant and partially connected dimension of variation. Presidential or prime ministerial offices and ministries of finance may be more or less involved in screening, prioritizing, delaying, vetoing, altering the policy proposals of the other departments. This is due in part to factors mentioned earlier as well as to the formal and informal structure of the government (Blondel and Müller-Rommel, 1993); this is also due to temporary or even prolonged circumstances which tend to enhance the role of the 'centre of government' or of particular departments, especially foreign affairs, finance or the interior. If the country plays a prominent international part, the role of the head of the government and of the minister of foreign affairs will tend to be large; if budgetary problems are overwhelming and there is a pressing need to comply with international economic requirements, the role of the minister of finance will be dominant.

The strength of the clients who are directly related to specific departments has also to be taken into account. A coherent and compact constellation of interests may capture a department and lead from within battles for favourable policies while strongly opposing any proposals perceived as hostile. A fragmented and divided constellation of interests will tend to be less effective in supporting independent action by a department.

Fig. 6 The “administrative” side of government. Dimensions of variation.

a) Strength of top administration

Strong/High _____ **Weak/**
Low **professionalization** **professionalization**

b) Hierarchical coordination

Strong

Weak

c) Constellation of interests

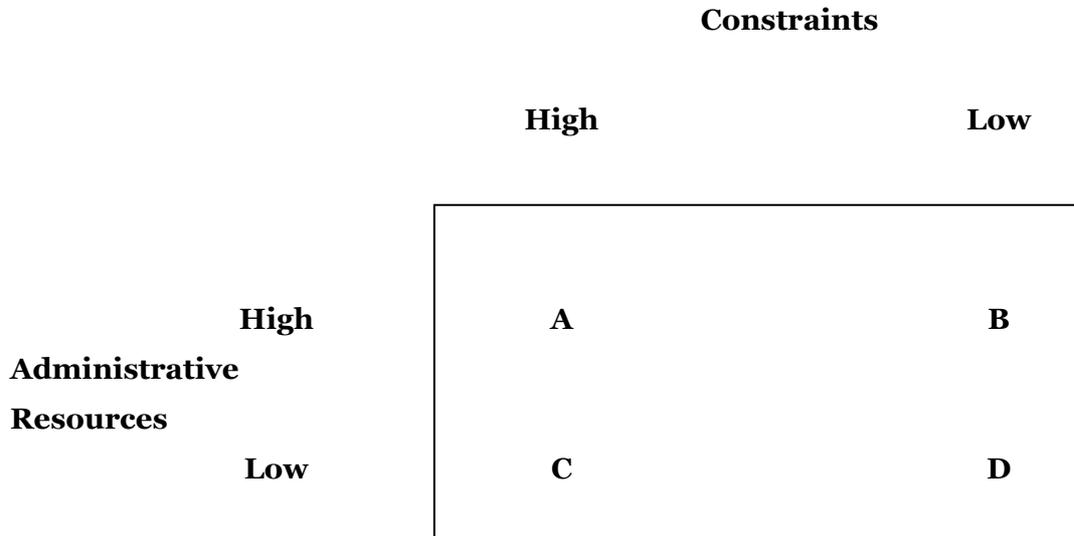
Coherent and compact _____

Fragmented and divided

In order to summarise the points discussed above a resources dimension and a constraints dimension can thus be identified and used to distinguish among four types of governments (Fig. 7). Governments of type A have large administrative resources but are also subjected to strong pressures from their ‘state’ side. The administrative face of the government will have the means and the incentives to challenge its representative face. If administrative constraints are weak but resources are strong, as in type B governments, the state face of the government can become a powerful tool of the representative face. Type C governments are those which have relatively weak administrative resources but which fall under strong external constraints and may even succumb to these constraints. Type D governments operate in conditions in which both administrative resources and administrative constraints are weak: the representative face will therefore dominate but might face difficulties in implementing its political goals. Within this two-dimensional space we can try to place different countries but also different governments of the same country (and perhaps also different components of the same government). If we want to simplify the picture one might just contrast

governments in which the administrative component is strong to those in which it is weak, namely governments of types A and D.

Fig. 7. Types of “administrative” games



- A: Strong administrative government
- B: Administrative government as a “tool”
- C: Government under pressure or captive
- D: Weak administrative government

12. The interactions between the representative and the administrative ‘faces’ of the government.

We can now present a general picture of the political context within which the government operates. As we saw, the government operates at the intersection between two types of political ‘games’, a representative ‘game’ and an administrative ‘game’. The different circles of the government are involved to a varying extent in these ‘games’, but the inner core is directly or indirectly linked to both of them.

Figure 8 indicates the main lines of interaction between the two ‘games’. On the left side of the figure, one can see the role of the government in the representative ‘game’. This role is indirect in the case of the ideal-typical parliamentary system and it is direct, but played jointly with the parliament, in the case of ‘direct’ parliamentarism; it is direct but shared with an autonomous parliament in dualistic (presidential) systems; it is both direct and indirect in ‘alternating dualism’ (semi-presidential systems) where the government is effectively

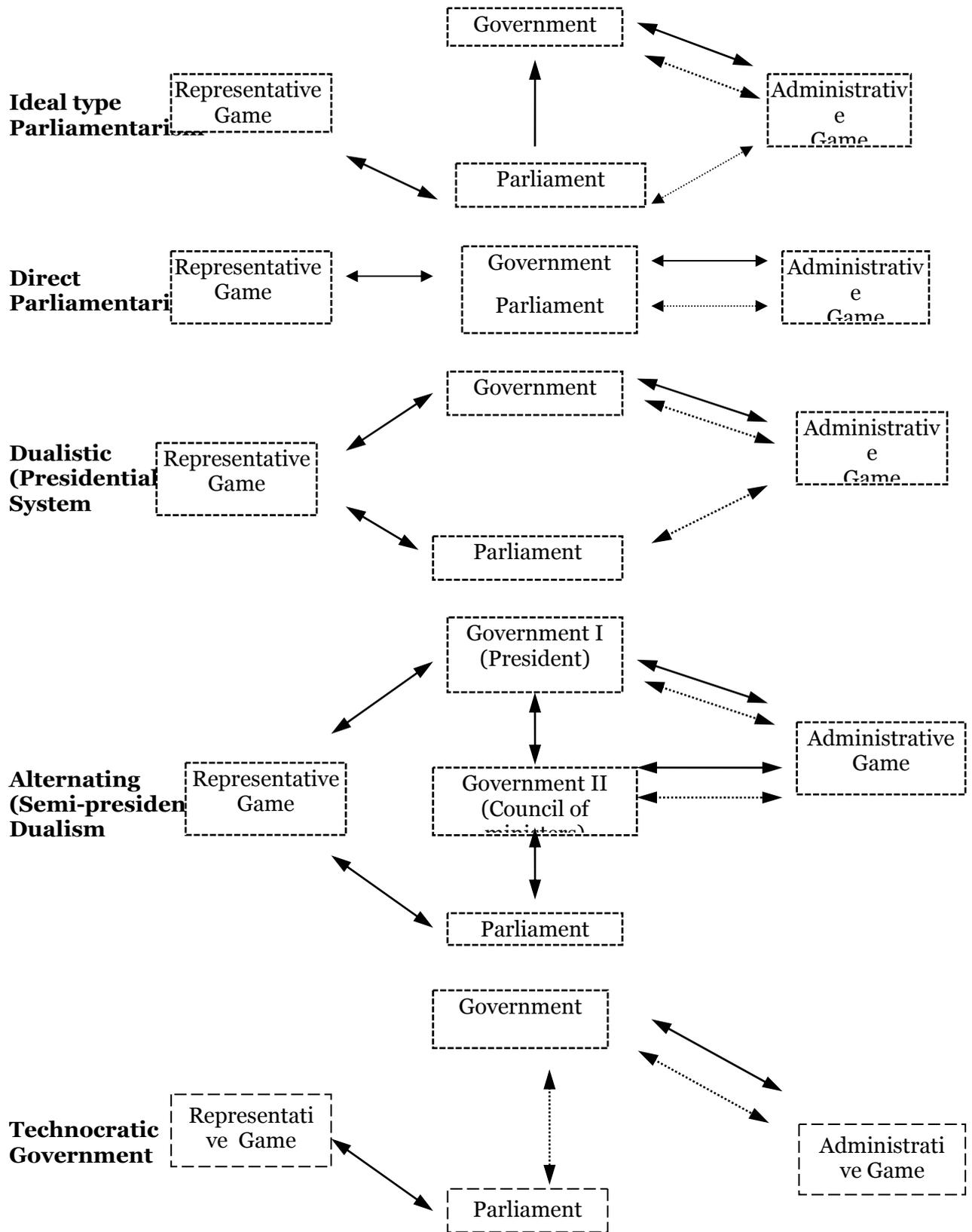
composed of president and council of ministers; finally in technical governments, even the indirect link becomes tenuous. On the right side of the figure one can see the relationship between the government and the administrative 'game'. For the sake of simplicity this relationship is shown either as strong (a continuous line) or as weak (a dotted line) in terms of constraints and resources.

From this graphical presentation we can see that in two cases - 'direct' parliamentarism and presidential systems - the government plays directly both games and thus is able to link them; in two other cases - ideal type parliamentarism and technical government - the two 'games' are played by different actors in turn linked to each other. Finally in the 'alternating dualism' of semi-presidential systems both possibilities exist.

We must now discuss briefly how the two 'games' interact and how this can affect the life and working of the government. We can do this first by looking at the government from the point of view of the persons it is made of, then from the point of view of the actions (decisions in the field of policies and patronage) that these persons undertake and of the resources, incentives and constraints that affect them.

With regards to the first perspective we may start from the persons that compose the government *stricto sensu*, that is to say those who play the role of the president (in presidential and semi-presidential systems), of the prime minister (in parliamentary and semi-presidential systems) and of the ministers (in all systems). In this perspective the government 'is' the persons that cover for the time being these roles. And we can analyse the government by looking at the features and background of its members together with the links these have with other institutions and organisations: we can then determine whether the government is made of 'representatives', of 'state bureaucrats', of 'experts or economic actors'. The predominance of 'representatives', that is to say of politicians who have been deeply involved in electoral politics, at the parliamentary but in some cases also at the local level as well, has been documented in the case of the governments of democratic countries; there are also some examples of the other two types, however (Blondel and Thiébault, 1991, Blondel and Cotta, 1996). The variations are not just across types of systems (parliamentary or presidential) as it might be expected but also among governments of the same type: in some parliamentary systems state bureaucrats or experts of the economy play a substantial part.

Fig. 8 Government between representation and administration



The predominance of ‘representatives’ is obviously linked to the need experienced by the governments of contemporary democracies to have a popular legitimacy. Yet the linkage of the government with representation processes can take different forms, as we saw. In some cases, for example where the head of the executive is linked individually to the electoral process and is not part of a group which is collectively representative, the other members of the government are more likely to have various origins: a directly elected president, who is a representative in the strong sense of the word, will therefore be able to recruit administrators and experts in the government, together with old friends and a small number of representatives, preferably from special groups, as the American example shows. Other factors also play a part: if parties are temporarily weak or ineffective while there is a need to strengthen the economy, there may be a space for (partially) technical governments, as it occurred occasionally in Finland before the 1980s and in Italy in the 1990s. Past practices inherited from a period when the government did not have an electoral base or the need for governments to preserve some neutrality in highly segmented polities may have led to relatively depoliticized governments such as those of the Netherlands before the 1970s and perhaps of Austria. The administrative ‘game’ plays a part here: one might expect more technicians in governments where the administration is stronger either for structural reasons - if it is highly professional - or for circumstantial reasons - if some policy or budgetary goals have priority as a result of internal or external constraints. Yet the choice between representative politicians and technicians may not always be clear-cut: technicians sometimes become representative politicians by standing for election. Their original background may still be important but their new posture results in a mixed profile.

The characteristics of the second circle of government, that of the junior ministers and under-secretaries, do not vary markedly from those of the first, but there are substantial differences when one moves to the third circle, that of the top levels of officials. At that level men and women with a bureaucratic background predominate, although persons with a politico-representative background and allegiances are sometimes given positions even at that level. The clearest example of this possibility is provided by the American spoils system where many top positions in the bureaucracy are held by individuals linked politically to the representative side of the government and primarily to the president. Elsewhere, political influence may simply mean that top bureaucrats are selected on the basis of their political leanings.

Yet the government is not just the persons who are part of it at the different levels: it is also constituted by the activities it undertakes, by the policies it decides and by the patronage it distributes. In this perspective the background and personal features of its components are obviously important, but other aspects too play a role. It is at this point that the

resources, incentives and constraints which derive from the different 'games' the government is playing and which affect its members have to be assessed. The representative game allocates resources of legitimacy, of mandate, of empowerment. The rules of the representative 'game' decide how the government and its members can participate to it and whether they have an exclusive and direct control, have only a share, or are just the indirect recipients of these resources. The government may have to face the competition of other players, such as the leaders of the membership party or parliamentarians, in this game. In order to participate effectively to the representation game the contenders must control in advance some resources. Ideology, political identification, organizational linkages with the voters, on the one hand, and, on the other, charisma, media exposure, policies implemented or promised and patronage distributed to clients are among the resources to be used. With variations, the party as it has been known in the twentieth century, that is to say as a large organisation with a strong political identity, is the place where some of these resources, typically those of the first category, are produced: even if they are not in government, party politicians can control them. Other relevant resources are produced within the government itself via the administration and politicians in government may win more effective control over them. If it is the case that there is a decline in the control that parties have over the first group of resources as a result of the decline of the ideological mass party, the need becomes greater for party politicians to be in government in order to play effectively the representative 'game'. This might explain to an extent why in some European countries - Finland, Netherlands, Italy - the leaders of parties themselves have had an increasing propensity to enter the government (Blondel and Thiébaud, 1991; Blondel and Cotta, 1996).

The role of the government as a key centre of production and allocation of political resources has to do also with the part it plays in what we have called the administrative game. First, the government controls the state administration: this can be used for producing and implementing policies and for producing and distributing patronage. Second the government occupies a central position in a dense web of internal and international actors, especially in the economic field. This strengthens the visibility of politicians in government and gives them substantial bargaining leverage.

There are, however, not only resources at the disposal of the government but also strong constraints to be faced. The budgetary ones are the most obvious, but there are many others. The decision and implementation of policies and programmes inevitably meets with all sorts of resistances, complaints and oppositions. Having to face these constraints is a cost for politicians in government which other politicians - for instance leaders of the membership party or parliamentarians - do not have: these can promise more and insist that the government must stick

more faithfully to its pure political identity. There are however limits to this outbidding: too intransigent party and parliamentary politicians might appear to the majority of the voters as unrealistic doctrinaires fighting for a never attainable utopia. The constraints may also be exploited in a more subtle manner by politicians in the government: being presented as 'facts' that cannot be changed they may be used to sell to voters and party members policies that would have been otherwise difficult to accept. The manipulation of economic and international constraints may thus become a resource for the government, the Maastricht Treaty criteria being an example: budgetary restraint which would not otherwise have been adopted was accepted because it was part of the European agreement (which in fact had been pursued by some governments precisely for this purpose). Not all constraints originate from the administrative side of the government, however: some are produced by the representative side. It is for instance difficult for a government to move against the constellation of interests which was instrumental in mobilising popular support in its favour or to act, when elections are approaching, in a direction which it knows will be unpopular.

The two 'games' in which members of government are involved may be in opposition to each other. Thus the extension of pension benefits may help to win support in the representative 'game', while in the administrative 'game' (perhaps under the pressures from international authorities) the need to tighten the budget might require precisely the opposite move. To the extent that it is involved in the two 'games', the government has to choose or find a middle way. It may use one plane against the other, that is to say the administrative constraints to convince voters or voter demands to keep administrative pressures at bay. Which side will exert the stronger pressure depends on the factors which have been examined in the previous pages.

There may also be reinforcement of one 'game' by the other. Demands originating from the two sides may go in the same direction: by responding to electoral demands the government may also please the bureaucracy and vice-versa. Thus, a broadening of the provisions of the welfare state satisfies voters requests but can also find the support of bureaucrats who will have greater resources at their disposal; thus, too, privatisations may please treasuries which, under the pressure of European authorities, attempt to reduce the public debt but they may also appeal to the voters.

13. The relations between the government and its supporting parties

As we saw, parties and governments are complex realities: they are systems where different 'games' are played. On the party side one 'game' focuses on the preservation of the identity and of the organizational unity of the membership party; another is the electoral 'game' aiming at maintaining and broadening the electoral following of the party; yet a third aims at winning control over decision-making processes and in particular over the government. These 'games' are connected to each other but are also partly autonomous. Meanwhile, governments are involved in both a representative 'game' and an administrative 'game'.

Government and party are two systems with variable degrees of overlap. Within these systems the actors play the political 'game(s)' with the resources available to them and under the constraints typical of each system. The actors of the two systems are to an extent but, to an extent only, identical. Resources are not equally available to the actors of the different systems. The transfer of resources from one system to the other is possible within limits while each system works under specific constraints. Party-government relationships constitute the intersection between the two systems.

If we concentrate on the representative politicians who compose the government, the government-party relationship is a relationship between these politicians and the other representative politicians who do not belong to the government. To this extent the government, if it is not a government of technicians, is simply part a larger group of politicians who play the representative 'game', although different 'sub-games' are also played within it. The role of the government within this larger group depends on the way the representative 'game' is organised and works: the government may be the leading element, a component of this leading element or a mere subordinate body. During the twentieth century, the party has been the 'shell' which kept all representative politicians together. Party-government relations become in this sense 'within party' relations between different strata or groups of party leaders: the more the party has a strong organisation with a clearly defined identity the more the common structure creates a real unity among the different categories of party politicians and reduces the centrifugal effects of the different political games they are involved in. When the distinctiveness of the identity and the organisational strength decline, the 'shell' may become so weak that the meaningfulness of referring to one group (party) of representative politicians becomes questionable. It is common in America to talk of the congressional party and of the presidential party as fairly independent bodies; Mair suggests that it might be useful to refer to different 'parties' in the European context as well (Mair, 1995).

Meanwhile, one can view party-government relationships also as taking place within the government between (party) politicians and bureaucrats. The two components are united by the institutional structure

of the government and by the responsibilities which flow from the existence of this structure. They are involved in different political 'games', however. The common institutional 'shell' may be stronger, and, if so, the government operates as a unitary body; or it may be weaker, and, if so, political and bureaucratic components of the government become distinct.

As a conclusion to these pages we can say that party-government relationships vary markedly because party and government also differ markedly, with particular traditions, specific forms of development, different institutional arrangements and variable internal and external challenges all contributing to these different 'profiles'.

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