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Give Them Awkward Choices: A theoretical and empirical investigation into the operation of prime ministerial influence on policy in 22 countries

Thesis submitted for the degree of PhD in Political Science to the University of Dublin, Trinity College
May 2005

by
Eoin O'Malley

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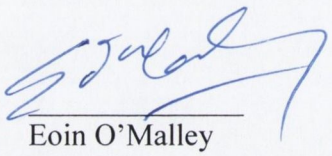

Eoin O'Malley
May 2005

Abstract

Prime ministers are among the most high profile, and we might assume, important actors in the policy-making systems of modern parliamentary democracies. While much has been written about the individuals who have held the office of prime minister in many countries, less has been written about the role and office of prime minister. Less work still is devoted to a comparative or theoretical understanding of prime ministerial influence on policy.

Ultimately prime ministers are of interest to us because they influence the policies under which the citizens of their (and other) countries must live. The apparent influence of many prime ministers within their countries is somewhat puzzling as, unlike many other institutions and office-holders, prime ministers have very few rights to set policy. This thesis seeks to investigate how prime ministers can achieve their policy goals, and in doing so it also seeks to account for some of the variation in prime ministerial power.

In this thesis it is argued that prime ministers must convince other important actors in the policy-making process (veto players) in order to influence policy outcomes. One can use veto player theory to consider the ease with which prime ministers may achieve policy outcomes close to their own preferences. Where the other important actors have similar policy preferences, prime ministers are more likely to get their way. However, prime ministers can affect the decisions of other important actors in the policy process. This is the crux of this thesis.

The former UK prime minister, Harold Wilson, noted that in trying to cope with a tiny parliamentary majority he continually had to set 'awkward choices' for the opposition. Wilson had to force the opposition to face choices where its most preferable short-term outcome coincided with his. Veto players are vulnerable to pressure from other actors. Prime ministers are sometimes able to apply pressure, primarily by structuring the decision-choices facing those actors. This, prime ministers can do, using the significant institutional prerogatives granted them in their countries' constitutions and legal frameworks. So by using their ability to appoint and dismiss ministers, set confidence motions, call elections and chair cabinet, prime ministers can set 'awkward choices' for ministers, the party in parliament and the cabinet to accept. The ability to set credibly

tough choices is based not only on institutional prerogatives, but also on changeable political factors such as electoral expectations.

In the main body of the thesis I look at many of the institutional prerogatives mentioned in the literature on prime ministers, and using rational choice methods I theoretically investigate how these would assist prime ministers to structure the choices for veto players in the policy process.

From these investigations one can then test hypotheses to see if there is a connection between the ability of prime ministers to formulate the decision-structure others face and prime ministers' influence in policy. This sets two problems. One is, how does one measure prime ministerial influence, and the other is how does one get a good understanding of the freedom of prime ministers to use these prerogatives.

Using original data, derived from an expert survey conducted for this thesis, comparable measures of prime ministerial policy influence for nearly 140 prime ministerial tenures in 22 countries are provided. In the same survey scores were elicited for the use of prerogatives in each of the 22 countries, so it is not necessary to rely on the often misleading or uninformative constitutional rules.

In the each chapter one can see an empirical connection between the ability to structure the choices others face and prime ministerial influence. We can also see the importance of electoral considerations in setting out. Therefore one can conclude that while institutions are important, as much of the literature suggests, on its own a benign institutional is not enough to make a prime minister powerful. Thus, this thesis offers a coherent and generalisable framework for understanding how prime ministers can achieve policy influence.

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I'm grateful to my parents and family for their patience and support. Other friends have also helped socially, emotionally and academically with this work. Francesco Cavatorta, John Garry, Mathew Kerby, Caroline O'Flanagan all helped me clarify points and arguments. Other friends avoided asking about the thesis. Most of all, thanks to Catherine, to whom I dedicate this, at last!

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Chapter 1. Introduction

The prime ministerial puzzle

When José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero became the prime minister of Spain in March 2004 he announced that Spanish troops would return from Iraq within two months and they did. He changed the emphasis of Spanish foreign policy from Atlanticist to Euro-focussed. At home, he announced a reorganisation of Spanish federalism, and initiated a new institution whereby the presidents of the autonomous regions meet with central government every six months. In a country with deeply Catholic traditions he repealed laws that had emphasised and protected the role of religion and religious orders in schools. He also reformed the divorce laws, and introduced a law legalising gay marriage and adoptions. Zapatero increased the minimum wage and scrapped a plan to divert the river Ebro to the south of the country. In short, he initiated and achieved some remarkable policy changes in the first year of his tenure. Before coming to office Zapatero was given the epithet *Señor Soso* (Mister Bland) by the public and in Spanish media. His position as leader of his party was thought to be due to party barons, whose debt he was in. Yet despite these facts and being the head of a minority government, Zapatero's image became a potent symbol of power and he quickly consolidated his position to become *the* dominant policy maker in Spain (Gil Calvo 2004).

While in all parliamentary democracies the prime minister will be among the more important people in the policy-making process of the state, in only very few countries do constitutions or legislation give the prime minister the right to make policy directly, and even then only in very few areas. Though it is easy to see how a prime minister can change the tone or approach of a government to policy through a few well-chosen words, *the routes to actual policy changes are not so easily defined.* Prime ministers are rarely allowed to declare war unilaterally; prime ministers are not normally allowed to sanction increases in the bus fares, or TV licence fees, or social insurance rates on their own. They cannot increase or cut public service pay. They cannot introduce or abolish tariffs. Prime ministers rarely have the authority to set policy unilaterally.

It is true that membership of the European Union gives some European prime ministers the ability to make deals on behalf of their states. But usually their parliaments must ratify those agreements and treaties. In contrast, parliaments make policy through legislation within the boundaries laid down in constitutions; Cabinets decide government policy; Presidents can make unilateral executive orders, and sometimes even declare wars; Ministers can often make orders based on legislation; and increasingly, regulators can set prices or fine certain companies. What formal policy-making can prime ministers engage in? Not much, it might seem.

This is puzzling because prime ministers are considered to be important to policy-making within their countries. They are often thought of as more powerful than presidents. Even where the prime minister is traditionally considered 'weak', few people would ignore the potential influence of the prime minister. Where prime ministers are thought of as 'strong', they are often regarded as dominant in the policy-making process. So if prime ministers cannot 'do' much in terms of making policy, how do they influence policy outcomes? It is the aim of this thesis to see how prime ministers effect policy change and achieve their policy goals when there is conflict among the major policy-making actors – that is, to investigate the *operation* of prime ministerial influence on policy. When one understands how prime ministers influence policy outcomes, it then becomes possible to explain the variation in prime ministerial influence on policy.

It is important to distinguish between the two goals. The primary goal is to investigate the ways prime ministers use their political resources to achieve policy change: the operation of prime ministerial power. This, I argue, is based on the ability of prime ministers to set the choices facing other important policy-making actors. In investigating *how* prime ministers make policy gains, one can then provide some explanations as to why some prime ministers have freedom to set choices for others and some cannot. This addresses the second goal: to identify empirically the power resources that enable prime ministers to set choices for other actors in the policy making process.

The theoretical approach

Generally there are two ways in which one could approach the study of prime ministers. One is to look at the internal factors concerning prime ministers as individuals, and the other to look at external or environmental factors facing these individuals. Internal factors might relate to each prime minister's psychology: the motivations, emotions and faculties of the political actor. External factors include the institutional and political environment in which the political actor operates.

Given that many prime ministers possess what we call strong personalities, the internal approach might be thought superior to the environmental approach. One can think of the shift in German politics when the 'managerial' Helmut Schmidt took over from the more 'visionary' Willy Brandt (Ó Dochartaigh 2004: 132-3). The change in speed of reform in the UK when the consensus-driven Major took over from Thatcher also points to the importance of personality (Hennessy 2000). Though personality is without doubt a major variable in understanding the actions of prime ministers, and internal factors such as leadership skills and charisma are undoubtedly important assets possessed by many prime ministers that can explain the power of prime ministers, these are not the focus of this thesis. I believe that the environmental aspects relating to power over policy can also be useful to our understanding of prime ministers and their role in policy making.

Concentrating exclusively on environmental factors is defensible because the choice of individual as prime minister is to some extent a function of the external environment. Parliaments, parties and/ or the public select a prime minister to fulfil a task not of that person's making. This individual is not chosen randomly. S/he is chosen to do a job, and is chosen deliberately for that job. Charles de Gaulle was a leading figure in France when he was brought in to solve the problems facing the country as a result of the Algerian crisis. This was despite a tradition in France of weak and disparate political leadership (Guyomarch and Machin 2001). The French 'system' deliberately chose a strong leader with a known style to deal with an ongoing policy concern. By contrast, John Major was chosen as a reaction to Margaret Thatcher, because at the time a conciliator was required to bridge the divisions in the Conservative party over Europe. It is unlikely that a Thatcher would have been made

prime minister in the Netherlands, where the institutional and political environment favours chairmen. So while I would not deny that Thatcher's personality is important to the study of the UK in the 1980s, she was as much a product of the circumstances as a cause of them.

The basis for developing theory and hypotheses in this thesis is rational choice theory (RCT). This theory, which developed most vigorously in economics, is now common and broadly accepted in political science. RCT makes some strong and controversial assumptions. These are discussed in detail elsewhere (Friedman 1996; Green and Shapiro 1994; Hinich and Munger 1997) and it is not necessary to repeat them here. Suffice to say that actors are treated as individuals who have certain structured preferences and who act to maximise their own utility. Actors' preferences (or motivations) are usually set as exogenous to the study. RCT is most useful for studying institutions and institutional frameworks, and the way that institutional frameworks structure individuals' actions has been a major focus for those using the approach. The institutional structure often sets limits to the possible behaviour and choices of political actors. So the fact that Charles de Gaulle only agreed to become French president if the powers of the executive were strengthened vis-à-vis the parliament should come as no surprise: even 'strong leaders' need a favourable institutional environment. Nor should it be surprising that a politician who is not considered to be charismatic, such as Zapatero, could become a powerful leader given the Spanish institutional environment.

Explaining the operation of prime ministerial power

Politics is interesting to us primarily because it is through the political process that public policies are made and changed. As prime ministers cannot make policy directly, in order to influence policy outcomes they must have influence over those actors who can make policy and prevent policy change.

By using, adapting and amalgamating existing theories of government, this thesis provides a coherent framework with which to analyse prime ministers' position and role in the policy-making process. At an abstract level the policy-making system has been conceived of as a system of actors with mutual vetoes (veto players)(Tsebelis

2002). If one accepts this conception of policy-making systems, there are a number of ways in which policy can be set and changed at an abstract level. The first is for a single political actor to be charged with policy making. Policy change then becomes easy for that person or group to achieve. The second way is if different actors who share similar ideological goals each has veto power. These groups will agree to policy changes that are mutually attractive. If many ideologically dissimilar actors hold veto power and can each prevent policy change, the third route to policy change is if one actor possesses some influence over the other veto-holding actors and can prevent actors from blocking policy change. Where there are many ideologically dissimilar actors with distinct policy preferences, one political actor may also be able to change the minds of others; to convince other actors to follow a particular path. This may be what we mean by political leadership. It has been established theoretically that the likelihood of prime ministers to be able to *achieve* policy goals, however, is reduced as the number of veto players with distinct policy goals increases (Tsebelis 2002) – (unless, of course, the prime minister's policy goal is to maintain the status quo).

Veto player theory can tell us if policy change is *possible* but not when it will occur. In fact we sometimes see policy change even when seemingly powerful figures, who on paper appear to be veto players, do not exercise a veto when they may have been expected to do so. Veto player theory cannot explain what happens in these cases; where some political actors seem to have ways of forestalling the potential vetoes of others. Therefore veto player theory cannot explain all the variation in prime ministerial power.

This is because to some extent prime ministers can control other veto players. They can decide who and where the veto holding actors are, and this will impact on the position of the prime minister in the policy process. So some prime ministers can organise the membership of their governments to suit their policy goals. This thesis argues that to achieve policy goals prime ministers need 'power over' veto players. In order to achieve power over other actors, prime ministers need to set the choices these actors face.

Convincing veto holders not to exercise their vetoes by shaping the choices that the veto holders face is, I argue, the main way in which prime ministerial power operates.

The theory at its most general level takes philosophical discussions of power to argue that power over others is achieved through agenda setting. Or as Schattschneider (1960: 68) eloquently put it, 'the definition of alternatives is the supreme instrument of power'. If they are to influence the public policies of a country, prime ministers must persuade or force other actors to act in such a way so as to achieve the prime ministers' goals by giving them awkward choices. To understand prime ministerial power we need to identify the actors that must be persuaded or forced to act in a certain way in order to change public policy for a prime minister's benefit. Having established who these important actors are, one then needs to look at what resources prime ministers have to 'define the alternatives' for these actors. Prime ministers, though having a paucity of formal policy-making powers, do typically have the right and ability to define the choices of other important actors. This gives prime ministers 'power over' other veto players in the system. Such prerogatives include the right to call confidence motions; to dissolve parliament; to appoint and dismiss ministers; and to chair cabinet meetings.

So the thesis builds an overall framework for studying the power of prime ministers based on the number and policy-diversity of important actors in the policy-making system. But veto player theory alone could not explain all variation in prime ministerial power. Prime ministers can influence other veto players by setting choices for them. This is possible through institutional prerogatives that are common in parliamentary democracies. These prerogatives allow prime ministers to affect the choices of other veto players, which may give prime ministers *de facto*, if not *de jure* power over policy-making.

Of course these prerogatives do not combine to make prime ministers 'elective dictators'. Their potency depends very much on their interaction with real and changeable political factors. This gives prime ministerial capacity to achieve policy goals (what might be called prime ministerial power) a complex quality that a simple examination of the legal bases of prime ministerial powers would fail to pinpoint. The formal prerogatives need to be analysed in their real political context before their true force can be seen (Tsebelis 1990). Thus constitutional law alone does not explain variation in power among prime ministers across countries. While constitutions and institutional frameworks are central to the capacities of prime ministers, the

prerogatives they provide are not sufficient to explain variations in prime ministerial influence.

The power of the prerogatives is contingent on other factors. Political factors such as electoral results and expectations are important in making the prerogatives that many countries' prime ministers hold 'potent', and useful to convince veto players not to exercise their vetoes over policy changes. If prime ministers as party leaders are considered to be electoral assets for their parties, they can link this to some prerogatives in order to achieve their policy goals. So for instance, Silvio Berlusconi's ability to achieve policy gains was not based on a legal right to call elections (which the Italian prime minister does not have) but on the political reality that no alternative government could be formed without Berlusconi's party, *Forza Italia*, unless there was an intervening election. The opinion polls in the first years of his second government showed that Berlusconi had least to fear from an election, and that his coalition partners had most to worry about. Thus Berlusconi managed to get these parties to agree to changes, they would have otherwise blocked (O'Malley and Cavatorta 2004).

To sum up: This thesis attempts to explain variation in prime ministerial power at one level, by showing how prime ministers use their political resources to influence policy when they themselves have no legal mandate to set policy unilaterally. I will show that prime ministers achieve policy gains by structuring the decisions and choices of other actors. I will identify a number of institutional prerogatives and explain how these prerogatives allow prime ministers to influence policy. To show that it is the case that prime ministers set policy through their ability to set choices for others, I then expect to see an empirical relationship between the freedom prime ministers typically have to set choices, and the policy influence of prime ministers.

Plan of Campaign

In chapter two I give a broad overview of the politics literature dealing with prime ministers and identify gaps therein. I note that there are a number of types of literature and concentrate on that which deals with prime ministerial power. From this, it is possible to identify many variables that have been associated with prime ministerial

power. It is the case that institutional factors are considered most important. I conclude that a coherent theoretical framework is needed within which we can locate arguments about prime ministerial power. Also needed and unavailable in the existing scholarship are data with which to test these arguments.

I develop this theoretical framework in chapter three. First I define the concept of power that will be used in this thesis. I then discuss 'agenda setting' as a concept that is useful when we describe and explain the operation of 'power over' others. I argue that, by construing 'power over' others as the ability to set the alternatives for others to choose from, we can use our extensive knowledge of 'agenda setting' to explain the operation of prerogatives associated with prime ministerial power. I propose that by allowing prime ministers to set choices for veto players, these prerogatives form the basis for prime ministerial power over other veto players. In the following chapter I deal with some of the assumptions and definitions used in the rest of the thesis. I define the major political actors whose roles will be analysed, and discuss the motivations of these actors.

Chapter five sets out the research design and data collection for the empirical part of the thesis. It describes the cases that will be analysed, and provides some descriptive statistics about the prime ministers who form the basis of my empirical work. I describe and explain where the data I will be using comes from, and this chapter provides systematic and comparative data on prime ministers in a large number of countries. As this data is original, I use chapter six to explore the data, providing descriptive statistics.

In chapters seven to twelve I expand the theoretical discussion introduced in chapter three and perform empirical tests of the relationships hypothesised in these chapters. In chapter seven itself I develop a discussion on veto player theory, a derivative of rational choice theory used to analyse policy stability in political systems generally. I show in detail how it can be used to analyse prime ministerial power and discuss its limitations before going on to identify the principal veto players in a given political system. From this theory I distil hypotheses about prime ministerial power and the number of veto players in parliamentary democracies. Among these is the hypothesis that an increase in the number of, and in the diversity of views among the veto players

in a system leads to the weakening of prime ministers' influence over policy. These hypotheses are then systematically tested using the data introduced in chapter five.

Even were one to have data that measured prime ministerial power perfectly and data that empirically captured the true nature of the concept of veto player, one would not expect that veto player theory alone could explain the variation in prime ministerial power. This is because veto players in parliamentary democracies act within a political system that makes each dependent on other veto players. Therefore we need to understand how these dependencies operate to discover what explains variation in prime ministerial power.

Chapters eight to eleven elaborate discussions of the institutional prerogatives and other factors identified in the literature review. These are prerogatives that allow prime ministers to set choices for other veto players. Chapters eight and nine look at those prerogatives affecting a prime minister's ability to influence parliament. The confidence motion and the right to dissolve parliament have been analysed formally by rational choice theorists. I assess the value of these models in explaining policy making in the real world. I then test the association of these prerogatives with prime ministerial power, using hypotheses constructed within these chapters.

Chapter ten looks at prime ministerial control of government ministers and the cabinet, analysing the prime minister's right to appoint and dismiss cabinet ministers. I argue that this right gives prime ministers the capacity to structure the choices ministers face and to neutralise senior ministers who would otherwise have the power and incentive to veto the prime minister's policies, by placing them in portfolios where they are less salient. The right to dismiss cabinet ministers provides the prime minister with a 'potent psychological threat' against cabinet ministers. In the right circumstances, the prerogative affects the way ministers make choices. Having modelled the impact of the dismissal prerogative on policy-making, I test the hypotheses developed from these models.

Using a structure similar to that used in the previous three chapters, chapter eleven looks at control over the government exercised via the prime minister's role as chair of the cabinet. Given the extensive formal literature on agenda setting, one would

suppose that this is a significant source of prime ministerial power. I argue that it provides some prime ministers the power to choose the forum in which some decisions are taken, and also provides prime ministers as chairmen of cabinet the ability to set choices for government members through 'calling the consensus' at government meetings.

In chapter twelve I look at the political resources prime ministers need to make the prerogatives investigated in chapters eight to ten useable to overcome potential vetoes by the actors identified in chapter seven. These resources include factors such as parliamentary majorities and electoral expectations.

Chapters seven to twelve use statistical techniques to test the hypotheses generated. In chapters eight to eleven, this will involve looking at broad bivariate relationships linking the freedom different countries' prime ministers have to set certain choices for veto holding actors with a measure of prime ministerial power. In chapter twelve I also study political resources in multivariate analysis, in an attempt to estimate the relative importance of the various factors in explaining variation in prime ministerial power. Specifically I hypothesise that as party leaders, prime ministers can set choices for their parliamentarians framed around whether the party leader is regarded as an important asset or not. I expect that there is a relationship between electoral success and prime ministerial power.

I conclude in chapter thirteen with a discussion of the findings and suggestions for future research. Throughout the thesis I illuminate the discussion with narratives of examples of policy-making to illustrate how the theoretical framework I have developed is useful in explaining politics and policy decisions in the real world.[1] Overall in this thesis I will show theoretically how prime ministers can achieve policy gains by setting the choices for others. I will also show that there is an empirical relationship between freedom to set choices for others using a number of widely cited institutional prerogatives and a measure of prime ministerial power.

[1] As most of the literature in English on prime ministerial power is on the UK, and because available primary sources such as memoirs tend to be by UK politicians the majority of examples are from British governments since the 1960s. Most of the other examples come from Ireland, Italy and Spain. This is simply because I am most familiar with these countries.

Chapter 2. The Power of Prime Ministers: a literature review

Introduction

Prime ministers are the central political figures in the governments of their countries and prima facia evidence exists to suggest that prime ministers are influential in determining their states' policy direction. As is fitting for such senior and important politicians, the collection of works on prime ministers could fill a sizeable library.

That much has been written about prime ministers does not necessarily mean that we know a great deal about prime ministers' place in the policy making process. Only a small section of what is written addresses the role, position and power of prime ministers. The literature can be broken down broadly into three areas; biography and memoirs, process-oriented literature and power-oriented literature. Firstly, and most commonly, there are biographies of individual prime ministers (for example Arnold 2001; Gutiérrez Mellado and Miguel 1993; Naughtie 2002; Seldon 1997; Young 1991). Biographies are of most use in understanding the details of specific events and the role of the subject in those events. A type of biography that has become increasingly common is the memoir, written by holders of the post and those close to them.

The 'process-oriented' literature, which can be broadly described as empirical, assesses who becomes prime minister and describes the role and position of the prime minister in government (Blondel 1980; Blondel and Müller-Rommel 1993; Blondel and Müller-Rommel 1997; Rose and Suleiman 1980). It is most concerned with the process of government. Works in this genre, which are often country specific, describe the structure, composition and activities of central government and place the prime minister in this structure.

A third literature is most relevant to the specific questions posed here: how do prime ministers exercise power and why are some prime ministers more powerful than others? This literature too, attempts to describe the position of prime ministers in the

overall structure of government, but it also attempts to *explain* the role and position of prime ministers in government and the policy-making process. The 'power-oriented' literature identifies some of the factors relevant to the variation of influence between different prime ministers and different countries. It tends to be more comparative and is often more theoretical than the more descriptive, process-focussed literature.

Many works do not fit neatly into any of the types identified. Some works could be classified as part biographies, but also as falling within the realm of the second 'process' oriented type. For example, the contemporary historian Peter Hennessy (2000) analyses the premierships of post-war heads of government in the UK to build up a picture of government in Westminster and Whitehall and offers his opinion as to what a prime minister's role *should* be. Bernard Donoughue's (1987) study of the conduct of policy making under Wilson and Callaghan is partly a memoir, partly an analysis of policy making under those prime ministers and also looks at the role of the prime minister in the UK. Savoie's (1999) *Governing from the Centre* intimately describes the process of Canadian government as well as analysing the causes of the concentration of power at the centre in Canadian politics.

The literature that focuses on explaining the 'power' of prime ministers can be further broken down. One of the first 'movements' in the political studies literature on prime ministers was the debate about what is sometimes called the 'presidentialisation'[1] of the office of prime minister in the UK, but what I call the 'Prime Ministerial Government' debate. From the 1960s, academics and practitioners debated whether the prime minister or the cabinet was more important in policy making (Berkeley 1968; Crossman 1963; Crossman 1972; Jones 1965; Mackintosh 1968a; Mackintosh 1977b; Wilson 1976). This debate took a distinctly institutional approach.

However, the singular focus on policy making in cabinet and the exclusive focus on the relative position of the cabinet vis-à-vis the prime minister is problematic as for

[1] When writers use the term Presidential, it is sometimes used to indicate a strong executive that is led by a single person (Foley 2004). The term often seems to be a synonym for 'increased power'. It is highly questionable whether presidents, generally, are more powerful than prime ministers. Presidents are usually constrained by other, independent actors in the legislature, whereas prime ministers normally have majority support in parliament. I prefer to use the term 'Prime Ministerial Government' to indicate increased influence of the head of government in policy making, as opposed to 'Cabinet Government', which indicates more collective leadership and decision-making.

many policies cabinet is a formality rather than the source of policy discussion. From the 1980s, one group of scholars criticised 'the unthinking adoption of the institutionalist approach' (Rhodes 1995: 37). They argued that policy making occurs in 'policy networks' throughout the broader 'core executive' (Rhodes 1995; Rhodes and Dunleavy 1995; Smith 1999).

While many continue to regard the impact of institutions as important and to debate the relative influence of prime ministers, they have broadened their focus to include other explanatory variables and gathered evidence from other countries (Elgie 1995; Jones 1991b; King 1994a; Rose and Suleiman 1980; Weller 1985). The 'prime minister versus cabinet' debate was a peculiarly British approach. In contrast to the implicit assertion in the 'Prime Ministerial Government' debate, it is no longer argued that the prime minister and cabinet are necessarily in competition. This led to the use of comparative analysis to develop new propositions about the causes of variation in prime ministerial power.

Others study the prime minister from different angles. Recently the concept of prime ministerial 'presidentialisation' has been reintroduced, focussing now, not on policy making but on the centrality of the prime ministerial figure in UK politics (Foley 1993; Foley 2000). Mughan (2000) argued that the overwhelming predominance of prime ministers in the media and public mind has an effect on election results. This hypothesis, which is contested elsewhere (King 2002b), is discussed in chapter ten. Other works look at the influence of officials and advisers to prime ministers in Europe (Kavanagh and Seldon 1999; Page and Wright 1999). Rose (2001) takes as given the view that the UK prime minister has become 'first without equal' in Westminster and Whitehall, but that policy making increasingly does not take place there.

While there is a reasonably sized literature on prime ministers, it is nonetheless striking, given the obvious importance of prime ministers, that the political science literature on the subject is small compared to other important topics such as voting behaviour. The literature on prime ministerial policy influence is still smaller. There are a number of reasons for this, not least that the secretive nature of government makes studying and verifying scholarship on this area difficult. Another reason for the

comparatively small number of works is because of the difficulty in measuring the core concepts and thus testing hypotheses about the role and influence of prime ministers.

Biographies and memoirs

Biographies of prime ministers are very common. They come in different forms. There are quickly-produced, pop-journalistic accounts of 'the making of' a newly elected prime minister or prime ministerial candidate. These serve those who wish to understand a new prime minister, perhaps so that they can predict the prime minister's future behaviour. Examples include Rentoul's (1996) biography of Blair, published a year before he became prime minister, and Aguilar and Chamorro's (1977) work on Felipe González. Others are academic, historical assessments of prime ministers who are often long since dead. These biographies try to use evidence to resolve mysteries or controversies surrounding the subject as well as recording in detail the subject's life. Martin Gilbert's voluminous work on Churchill is a notable example (Gilbert 1988). Biographies by their nature take the individual as the focus of the study and tend to look at the exceptionalism of the individual rather than looking for similarities or trends. Nor is their *raison d'être* to analyse power or its operation in central government.

Biographies often focus on the personalities and psychological make-up of the individuals that hold office, rather than the situations, institutions and constraints that those individuals face. Psychological biographies sometimes focus on major life events to explain the character of the subject and by implication their actions – John Major was constrained by 'those weaknesses [that] date back…to his childhood insecurities' (Seldon 1997: 743); just as perhaps the absence of his mother during his formative years caused Éamon de Valera's failure to act to improve the status of women in Irish society (Coogan 1993: 17). Abse (2003) argues that the traumatic effects of Tony Blair's childhood left him a loner who sought to resolve his private dilemmas in politics. These biographies (and psychological approaches generally) demonstrate the source and strength of their subjects' motivations and policy preferences.

Many biographies do discuss the constraints and situations facing politicians, but naturally enough, are not explicit in their discussion of institutions and political strategies. Biographies such as Young's (1991) excellent portrait of Thatcher give the reader an insight into the choices and constraints facing the prime minister, and chronicle and explain the constraints and incentives facing their subjects. Some biographies look specifically at momentous events and study the subject's life as preparation for these events (Arnold 2001).

Biographies are rich sources of material for social scientists. Often especially useful for this purpose are autobiographies and memoirs. Though they can be post-hoc justifications for actions taken or attempts to place one biased side of a story on the record, autobiographies do allow scholars access to the minds of senior politicians. They have become increasingly common and offer interesting but subjective accounts of events. Though some amount to little more than sideswipes at former colleagues, even these provide interesting insights. Others are written by people who have led fascinating lives and are genuinely good writers (such as Healey 1989; Hurd 2003; Jenkins 1991). Memoirs written by advisers in government can give a less defensive account of their time in government (Donoughue 1987; Duignan 1995; Finlay 1997).

Diaries offer what may be a better contemporaneous view of policy making in practice. And as they are already written it also takes less time for them to be released when the subject ceases to be a minister (Castle 1990; Cook 2003; Crossman 1975; Hussey 1990). Memoirs and diaries also seem to be unconstrained by confidentiality rules implied by collective responsibility[2], so they provide contemporary historians and political analysts with an opportunity to examine the internal workings of cabinet and government before cabinet papers are officially released.

Biographies, memoirs and diaries are interesting and useful sources of data. They offer the reader insights and intuitions as to why policy making power is afforded to some and not to others. However, in using biographies we should be careful not to treat opinions from memoirs as reflecting the opinions of all government ministers or prime ministers. There is an obvious selection bias. They offer political scientists

[2] Attempts in the UK to prevent the publication of memoirs and diaries under provisions in the Official Secrets Act have all failed, and are no longer attempted (Griffith 1985).

sketches of and insights into how government works. Understandably enough, few memoir writers are interested in detailed discussions of the functioning of government (an exception is Wilson 1976). They offer descriptions of events; not systematic description of how government operates. Ultimately one cannot generalise from biographies, but one can use the useful examples and ideas offered in some autobiographies, many of which are used to illustrate points in the text of the thesis.

Prime ministerial 'Process'

The process of government and the position and role of the prime minister in countries has been of interest to scholars of these countries for well over a century. These works provide detailed description of the operation of government, and form the basis on which any theory building can begin.

Constitutional lawyers wrote, and continue to write, on political aspects of constitutions, evaluating the law and its practice in particular countries (see for instance Brazier 1999; Marshall 1984; Marshall 1989; McCracken 1958). By its nature legal scholarship tends to ignore the non-legal causes of political practice.

From the 1960s, political science became a discipline in its own right. Students of politics in particular countries began to look not just at how the law says government *should* operate, but also at how government *actually* does operate. A good example of this type of work on Ireland is Brian Farrell's *Chairman or Chief?* (1971) which described the role of the Taoiseach in Irish government. After describing the office and its holders he argued that the performances of the men who held the office show 'a remarkably close attachment to the chairman's role' (Farrell 1971: 84). Yet Farrell (1971: 83) concluded that 'no single actor…can compare in influence with the Taoiseach: what he says…will be listened to and what he wants achieved'. This might indicate that while all prime ministers must juggle the demands of different actors in the system, no other single actor is in such a strong position to do this.

Similar analyses were carried out to describe the role of the premier in most mature parliamentary democracies. These also give an indication of the importance and influence of the prime minister (other examples include Bar 1983; Elgie 1993;

Hennessy 1986; Hennessy 1995; Hennessy 2000; Padgett 1994; Rose 1980; Rotelli 1972; Shinoda 2000; Zilemenos 1976).

As the subject is relatively complex and difficult to quantify, and as language barriers abound, research in the area remained largely country specific. Jean Blondel and his colleagues have gone some way to make the subject more comparative. They have led the way in attempting accurately and systematically to analyse the *process* of central government in the parliamentary democracies of Western Europe, bringing together country experts in the hope of identifying trends in central government decision-making.

The research group led by Blondel has produced many useful collections on this and related subjects (Blondel 1980; Blondel 1985; Blondel 1988; Blondel and Cotta 1996; Blondel and Cotta 2000; Blondel and Müller-Rommel 1993; Blondel and Müller-Rommel 1997; Blondel and Thiébault 1991; Mackie and Hogwood 1985b). These allow English-speaking scholars to study and compare countries that were previously closed to them because of language barriers. These works brought together a diverse range of scholars in single volumes. They do not attempt to draw broader conclusions, nor have Blondel and his colleagues claimed that they have gone further than providing 'a necessary first step towards a general understanding of cabinet systems' and to give 'a detailed picture of the way these operate' (Müller-Rommel 1997a: 268). At this they have succeeded. Blondel and his colleagues have opened up and published detailed accounts of the governmental process of many European countries. As the extensive use of this literature in the empirical parts of the later chapters in this thesis reveal, these works remain the standard source of information on cabinet government in Europe.

These scholars have also studied the characteristics of those who become ministers and prime ministers (Blondel 1985; Blondel and Thiébault 1991). This research reveals more or less that, to become prime minister, one will more than likely be middle aged, middle class, well educated and have a senior position in one's party. We know for instance, that 69 percent of prime ministers in Europe were between 40 and 60 years of age when in office, 23 percent were lawyers, compared to only a handful of farmers, and 84 percent attended university or college (Müller and Philipp

1991). Obviously, this does not mean that having these attributes necessarily means one will become prime minister. Donoughue is realistic in terms of what political scientists can expect to explain as to who becomes prime minister. He argues that three basic characteristics are needed: 'strong ambition, unusual luck and, above all, remarkable physical stamina' (Donoughue 1987: 8-9). Given that the job comes up so rarely, and that luck seems to be such an immensely important area, it would be unwise for political scientists to try to predict precisely who might become a prime minister.

In their most comparative work on joint decision-making in cabinets, Blondel and others use the results of a European-wide survey of over 400 cabinet ministers and a separate survey of government conflict through qualitative analysis of a sample of newspaper reports (Blondel and Müller-Rommel 1993). This volume highlights many features of cabinet government in Europe. For instance, we learn that Scandinavian and Dutch cabinets tend to discuss issues more fully than the cabinets of other countries, and that ministerial autonomy is greater in Germany. This can make policy change more difficult to achieve in the Netherlands and Scandinavia (Thiébault 1993: 95). Irish, Dutch and German cabinets are among the most institutionalised, while the British and Austrian cabinets are among the least so (Burch 1993: 102). The modal type of minister is the spectator, active neither in cabinet nor departmentally (Blondel 1993: 185).

These Blondel-led works have also highlighted the importance of the prime minister in influencing how government operates. One chapter in *Governing Together* (Blondel and Müller-Rommel 1993) concentrates on the impact of the prime minister in the decision-making process (Müller, Philipp, and Gerlich 1993). Müller, Philipp, and Gerlich's chapter aimed to use these survey data, which included questions on prime ministerial influence, to describe and investigate the power of prime ministers (1993: 224). Of the studies in the 'process' literature, theirs deals most explicitly with prime ministerial power, so for that reason I will look at it in detail.

Prime ministers and cabinet decision-making process

The authors acknowledge that evidence exists to suggest that 'some heads of government are strong and others are weak'. Müller, Philipp and Gerlich (1993: 223-4) suggest that a number of political and administrative resources, personality differences and differences in the political culture could be important. They suggest that differences in type of government, 'in particular between coalitions and single party majority governments are not always as crucial as might have been expected'. They note that these factors 'do not help describe the substantial differences in prime ministerial power from cabinet to cabinet' and argue that the prime ministerial role 'can be examined only by exploring how far prime ministers intervene in cabinet decision-making as a result of structural characteristics' (Müller, Philipp, and Gerlich 1993: 224). They use level of involvement in decision-making as a proxy for influence and power. This may be unwise as there is no necessary relationship between activity and influence. In fact, the most hands-off prime ministers may be the most influential; their lack of intervention may be as a result of satisfaction with the process.

From this assumption they aim to discover three things; to what fields of involvement, if any, do prime ministers devote special interest; to identify the style of prime ministers' involvement; and to describe the general role of prime ministers. In the questions on fields of involvement there are few striking results. About 60 percent of cabinet ministers thought their prime ministers were involved in overall government organisation, and 40 percent felt their prime ministers were involved in both the economy and foreign affairs (Müller, Philipp, and Gerlich 1993: 227).

In terms of style, the most striking result was that only seven percent of cabinet ministers described their prime ministers as 'forceful only' (that is, not even occasionally consensual) whereas over half of respondents saw prime ministers as 'consensual only' (Müller, Philipp, and Gerlich 1993: 229). About 40 percent of cabinet ministers 'feel that prime ministers tend to impose their own solutions to problems' (Müller, Philipp, and Gerlich 1993: 224).

The authors argue that prime ministerial influence 'does not vary markedly over time', and there seemed to be no relationship between different types of government

and prime ministerial influence. Although the questionnaire included an item to measure prime ministerial influence, together with other questions on the nature of that influence, the results are not reported in the volume. Nor are the data available from the authors for replication and reanalysis.

When the data are broken down by country some interesting results were found. The data suggest that Austrian, Belgian, Dutch and Danish prime ministers are highly involved in the overall organisation of the government, rather than in policy-making. In terms of style, prime ministers in all countries appear to be more consensual than forceful (even in the UK). The role of the prime minister is broken down into four types of activity; one, where ministers tend to deal bilaterally with the prime minister; two, where ministers deal with the prime minister and other ministers; three, where ministers approach the prime minister when conflict exists; and lastly where ministers bring problems to cabinet when conflict exists. However, these four types are all positively correlated, that is, countries whose cabinet ministers indicate a higher likelihood toward one forum for decision making also indicate a higher tendency to use all the others. Therefore, it is difficult to get a sense of strict 'types'. To some extent this reveals problems with the survey and the data that comes from it.

The difficulties with the data can also be seen in the results on the 'style' questions. According to the survey, over 95 percent of Irish ministers questioned felt that the *Taoiseach* is consensual, while 60 percent still also think that the *Taoiseach* forces solutions. In France the figure is effectively zero for both measures (Müller, Philipp, and Gerlich 1993: 242). One would expect that, if not mutually exclusive, there would at least be some negative correlation between these two measures. This raises questions about the usefulness of the questions asked to enable one to differentiate between, or find different 'types' of prime ministerial regimes.

When it comes to explanations for levels of prime ministerial involvement, which is suggested as a proxy for influence, the Müller, Philipp and Gerlich chapter suggests many different possible explanations. One of the more questionable is the explanation for the 'high level of involvement of British prime ministers over all fields of political life while Dutch [prime] ministers are…relatively less involved'. They argue that this is a clear example of the 'characteristics of political culture' (Müller, Philipp, and

Gerlich 1993: 239-40). Yet political culture is a 'proper noun' explanatory variable, that is, culture on its own does not offer an explanation. Culture is often used as shorthand for the combined effects of other variables. The authors do admit that 'cultural idiosyncrasies have more commonly a diffuse and indirect effect; they affect prime ministerial characteristics essentially in combination with structural factors' (1993: 240). But they do not explain exactly how this should work or what the characteristics that make up political culture are.

When comparing prime ministerial influence in the Netherlands and the UK, more concrete and plausible explanations are possible. The Dutch prime minister could be weak for various reasons; for example, the fact that governments in the Netherlands always consist of two or more parties; prime ministers have no institutional power to dismiss ministers; they cannot dissolve parliament; and departments (and hence departmental ministers) tend to be autonomous (Andeweg 1991: 117-20). In contrast, the UK prime minister has relatively unfettered rights of appointment and dismissal and can dissolve parliament effectively at will, while the civil service and departments are unified under the official control of the prime minister (King 1991: 34-8). So a plausible explanation for the relative level of involvement of prime ministers in political life could be the precise institutional set up in the country under investigation, rather than personality or culture.[3]

Müller, Philipp, and Gerlich (1993) also look at the relationships between prime ministerial fields of involvement, style and role. They note that 'prime ministerial characteristics do not seem to have any effect on the amount of conflict in cabinets and they seem to have only a small impact on the collective character of these bodies'. They do find that in portfolios 'where prime ministerial involvement [interest] is limited, the centrality of the cabinet is limited' (1993: 249). This shows that prime ministers bring issues to cabinet that they are most interested in, and perhaps that prime ministers expect to gain from involving their cabinet in policy-making. As one would expect, conflict is more likely to be solved by prime ministerial decision when the prime ministerial style is more forceful than consensual.

[3] It is of possible that the political culture through the political elites affect what institutional structure is chosen. In any case institutions will be important.

The authors point out that 'ultimately, the most important question about prime ministers is whether they "make a difference"'. They asked the expert for each country to identify their country's 'most important' prime minister. It transpires that the 'top leader'[4] for each country is markedly different in terms of centrality in policy making to the other leaders; 72 percent of relevant cabinet ministers questioned said the prime ministers who are 'top leaders' were involved in policy-making, as opposed to 58 percent for other prime ministers. 56 percent of cabinet ministers approached 'top leaders' when conflict with other ministers existed, compared to 36 percent for other prime ministers. In other areas the differences are less pronounced. It appears that the prime ministers who 'make a difference' are more involved in policy making and in dispute resolution between cabinet members.

Though not without flaws, this is an important work in the literature, which suggests possible causes of variation in power and points one in directions for future research. Given the relative impenetrability of the subject matter, it is understandable that the researchers do not describe the nature of prime ministerial involvement in cabinet decision-making or prime ministerial power. Therefore it would be difficult to draw conclusions about the causes of prime ministerial power from this work.

However, they conclude that 'there are both a number of structural differences and a continuum resulting from country specificities, and almost certainly, personality characteristics', which help distinguish the bulk of prime ministers from one another. Contrary to their earlier proposal[5] they find that the distinction is greatest between prime ministers in single-party government and coalition governments, and that this and other 'favourable institutional and political conditions can result in some cabinets being very close to being "prime ministerial"' (Müller, Philipp, and Gerlich 1993: 253-4). This, however, is not the norm. This would suggest that one would need to focus on institutional factors and study how these might be important to prime ministerial predominance.

[4] These are Hansson (Sweden), Schmidt (Germany), Lubbers (Netherlands), Spaak (Belgium), Thatcher (UK), Lemass (Ireland), Kreisky (Austria), Kekkonen (Finland) and Gerhardsen (Norway). Unfortunately the data are not available from the project co-ordinators for secondary analysis.
[5] Cf. p. 19

We do not know where countries or prime ministers would be on a power continuum suggested by this work. Therefore it would seem important to begin to measure prime ministerial influence if we are to be able to isolate those variables that may cause variation in influence.

Despite the country expertise available, later works from the Blondel-led research group have not returned to study the centrality or importance of prime ministers in such an overt way. To build up 'a detailed picture' of cabinets and prime ministers is indeed 'a necessary first step towards a general understanding' (Müller-Rommel 1997a: 268). The next steps have yet to be taken.

'Presidentialism' and policy power

One of the liveliest debates in the British politics literature centres on whether the UK prime minister has moved up the continuum of prime ministerial power to a position occupied by a strong president. This dispute has been termed a 'grand old debate' and likened to a 'bar room brawl' (Foley 2000: 13; King 1975: 232). The debate took hold in the early 1960s as a result of the publications of works by John Mackintosh (1968a; 1977a) and Richard Crossman (1963; 1972).[6] The two were students and practitioners of politics. Crossman became a cabinet minister in Wilson's governments and Mackintosh an MP as well as a professor of politics.

Crossman (1963: 51) argued that, before 1867 (when Bagehot wrote *The English Constitution*) the UK prime minister had 'near Presidential powers' and 'since then his powers have been steadily increased'. Mackintosh (1968a: 529) was more measured in his views, and could only conclude that 'now the country is governed by the Prime Minister, who leads, co-ordinates and maintains a series of ministers' and 'the Prime Minister stands at the apex supported by and giving point to a widening series of rings of senior ministers'. The cabinet, Crossman argued paraphrasing Bagehot, was reduced to a *dignified* part of the constitution and 'the hyphen which joins, the buckle which fastens…become one single man' (1963: 48-51).

[6] Hennessy (2000: 55) points out that a similar debate was ongoing between academics and practitioners, in a less high profile way, from 1960.

Crossman and Mackintosh were not alone in holding these opinions. A former UK premier, Harold Macmillan, shared the view that 'the power of the prime minister has steadily grown. Although he is only *primus inter pares*, the very complexity of affairs leads to the concentration of authority in his hands' (Macmillan 1972: 31). Another British MP at the time wrote that the cabinet 'has been superseded by disguised presidential rule on the part of the prime minister' (Berkeley 1968: 21). Other MPs support the general proposition that the prime minister has become much more powerful (Benn 1980). A former cabinet minister in Blair's government, Clare Short, claimed shortly after resigning that only a small number of favoured ministers run government, and the system is effectively one of 'presidentialism' (*Channel 4 News* 27 August, 2003). One Labour MP argues that the UK has

> 'allowed the evolution of a form of government shaped by circumstances and events this century which fits more easily into the concept of a unique UK Presidential system than an old fashioned Prime Ministerial one' (Allen 2001: 39).

Whatever we choose to call it, this, proponents of the existence of 'Prime Ministerial Government' argued, happens for a number of reasons;

1. The UK prime minister has the right to select and dismiss members of the cabinet 'at will'. This offers the prime minister both a means to win friends and punish enemies;
2. The prime minister controls other areas of patronage (within the civil service, to knighthoods and the House of Lords, as well as other state boards and bodies);
3. The prime minister dominates cabinet by controlling the agenda and the decision-making process there;
4. The prime minister is party leader and as such controls the apparatus of the political party and this makes the prime minister more secure;
5. The prime minister has the ability to bring down the government and call an election at a time of his or her choosing. This allows the prime minister to threaten an election against rebellious ministers and backbenchers ;
6. The prime minister controls the flow of information from the government (Crossman 1963: 51-56; Crossman 1972: 62-68; Mackintosh 1968a: Ch. 20; Mackintosh 1968b).

Interestingly, Crossman and Mackintosh complained their prime ministerial contemporaries had too much power – especially Harold Wilson and Harold Macmillan. Today Tony Blair and Margaret Thatcher are the prime offenders (Foley 2000; Hennessy 2000). Writers such as Hennessey and Foley seem to imply that government in Wilson's era was collective. Could it be that these writers remember the past fondly, or has there been a centralisation of power to the prime minister in the UK?

There is by no means a consensual acceptance of the 'Prime Ministerial Government' thesis in relation to British prime ministers. Harold Wilson (1976: 4, 56) claimed that 'the doctrine [of prime ministerial government] is pure fantasy'. For him

> 'the classic refutation of this 1963 assertion was Richard Crossman as a minister, and his unfailing, frequently argumentative, role from 1964 to 1970 in ruthlessly examining every proposal, policy or projection put before the Cabinet by departmental ministers – or the prime minister.'

A minister at the time agreed that Wilson's governments were not 'Prime Ministerial' in nature, but she does suggest that this occurred later in more recent administrations. Barbara Castle thought that 'it's a contrast with modern concepts, Margaret Thatcher or Tony Blair, that [Wilson] made no attempt at presidential government'[7]. James (1999: 92), who was a civil servant in the Cabinet Office during John Major's premiership regards Crossman's essay as 'greatly over-rated' and the 'Prime Ministerial Government' thesis as 'remote from the truth'. George W. Jones in particular was sceptical of such claims. Jones did not argue that they were completely wrong per se but that 'there are grounds to argue that the prime minister's power has been exaggerated' by these writers (Jones [1965] 1985: 196). All the prerogatives mentioned by Crossman and Mackintosh may be influential and, if prime ministers could use all these powers, they might be very powerful. Jones ([1965] 1985: 203) argues that the proponents of the 'Prime Ministerial Government' thesis 'neglect many factors which restrain the prime minister in the exercise of his power'.

Having presented the 'Prime Ministerial Government' case in its most extreme form (and according to Mackintosh (1968a: 618) exaggerated it) Jones systematically takes

[7] From *The Top Job: King of the Beasts* presented by Peter Hennessy first broadcast on BBC Radio 4, 16th October, 2000.

the points made by Crossman, Mackintosh and other writers and offers counter-examples that undermine their validity.

He first looks at a point not made by Crossman or Mackintosh, that the increasing focus on the party leader in the media means that the public therefore 'see in his personality the embodiment of the party and, in times of emergency, the trustee of the national cause' (Harvey and Bather 1964: 224). Elections then become 'an indirect way of voting for prime ministerial candidates' (Andrews 1961: 184-5). Jones pointed out that (by 1965) political science had no firm evidence to suggest that people voted for or against party leaders in elections. This should matter in that, if MPs get their support vicariously from the party leaders, the candidates depend on the success of the party leader. The elections are presidential and the victor receives a moral mandate similar to that of a winner of a presidential election.

However, Jones' point may not be relevant. It is stated that if the prime minister as party leader is not important for the electoral consideration of candidates, then the prime minister ceases to have the mandate of the individual MPs (Jones [1965] 1985: 204). It is more relevant that MPs and cabinet members perceive the elections as presidential in style and substance. If MPs *think* they get elected and into government on the coat tails of the party leader, then they will act as if this is the case. I deal with this subject in further detail in chapter 11.

Concerning a prime minister's ability to hire and fire ministers, Jones points out that prime ministers' ability to choose the cabinet is constrained by the strength of others in the party, and 'his cabinet must represent a cross-section of opinion in the party and contain the main faction leaders' (Jones [1965] 1985: 209). He argues that some ministers 'pick themselves', and cannot be left languish on the backbenches threatening to cause problems for the prime minister. Indeed, Rose says that 'Wilson claimed to have six potential heirs in the cabinet, hoping that each would be sufficiently suspicious of the others to leave Wilson in the job' (Rose 1980: 6).

Nor can ministers be easily sacked. Jones argued that none of the ministers dismissed in Macmillan's purge of the cabinet in 1962 were serious contenders for the

leadership (1965: 210). Indeed the prime minister's control of other forms of patronage is also tempered by tradition (1965: 215).

The potency of the dissolution threat was also dismissed as 'not a very realistic threat against potential or actual rebels'. Jones (1965: 204) argues that 'the individual who has most to lose from a dissolution is the prime minister himself, who may lose his government office'.

On the ability to control the cabinet agenda, Jones claims that the prime minister 'would be unable to prevent permanently a group or even one of his major colleagues from bringing up a matter they wished to discuss'. He argues that prime ministers' summaries of cabinet discussions of particular issues cannot 'go against the sense of the meeting' (Jones 1965: 211). And the charge of 'creeping bilateralism'[8] is countered with the claim that major decisions have to pass through the cabinet.

All of Crossman-Mackintosh claims and Jones' counter claims were backed up with no more than anecdotal examples. Thus the debate descended to the style of a 'bar room brawl'. Anthony King (1975: 232) characterised the defence of this type of argument as 'proof by illustration', with case and counter case being flung to and fro in support of each side's thesis. Support for each argument could be found in particular memoirs, but illustrations of the counter arguments can also be found in the same memoirs. Thatcher's dominance gave credence to the Crossman-Mackintosh side, but the Jones thesis received a significant boost by the manner of Thatcher's departure, which seemed to show that she was far from being as powerful as some had thought.

Both sides in the debate seemed to assume that there was little or no variation in prime ministerial power in Britain after 1960. One side claimed that the prime minister is all-powerful; the other rejected this. Jones acknowledged that variation is possible. He suggests that the main variable that affects the variation in prime ministerial power in the UK is the extent to which the prime minister is seen as an

[8] This is the alleged growing tendency for policies to be effectively decided by the line ministers and prime minister.

electoral asset (Jones 1991c: 176). However, as yet, no research has been done to test this claim.

Academic writing on the 'Prime Ministerial Government' debate receded without making significant theoretical advances. Both sides of the debate make plausible arguments and almost certainly highlight some likely causes of variation in prime ministerial power, but they failed to go beyond this. To some extent this was caused by the paucity of data that could be used to verify their respective claims. Arguably it would be difficult, or impossible, to make statistical associations when the number of prime ministers in the UK is so small, but in-depth case studies were not even used to investigate the causal relationships identified. However, Crossman and Mackintosh did explicitly identify the institutional prerogatives they regard as important.

A different type of presidentialisation

The debate on the 'presidentialisation' of the prime minister was reinvigorated by Foley, who adopted a different way of looking at the presidentialisation of the UK premier. Foley (1993; 2000) noted that Tony Blair's personal authority (like Thatcher's before him) 'confounded convention and defied traditional analysis'. Blair (like Thatcher before him) also defied the 'normal methods of characterising party leaders and prime ministers' (2000: 1).

He then sought to characterise the UK prime minister as a president, and the UK system as presidential. Foley takes up a point made in the 1960s in the first wave of the 'Prime Ministerial Government' debate, but one that was not investigated further (Andrews 1961; Harvey and Bather 1964; Jones 1965). He argues that the prime minister's relationship with the public is now central and decisive. The concentration on the party leaders in the media, and consequently in the public mind, has given these leaders political authority that their predecessors did not posess.

We might think of this as 'leadership stretch', which refers to the prominence of party leaders in the media. According to this idea, leaders are 'no longer party spokespeople, but ostentatious flagships of their respective fleets' (Foley 2000: 205). Television makes leaders strong, while others suffer as a result. The other prominent

members of the government/ party no longer get the same level of coverage since nearly all coverage goes to the prime minister/ party leader.

It is unclear if Foley merely wishes to provide a new way to characterise UK prime ministers or if there is a link between 'leadership stretch' and prime ministerial power. If he solely wishes to chart the rise of the individualisation of politics in the UK, he succeeds at this. Foley painstakingly looks at changes in media concentration on the party leaders over time. However, Foley does make allusions to power in his work. He finds that without 'presidentialisation',

> 'the way to power...is by a slow graduated route of collective appraisal, so the exercise of power is cautious, sensitive and above all, collaborative in nature. Leadership in such conditions could almost be said to be a contradiction in terms...As a consequence, the British system, at least until recently, was "always held to be stronger than any particular man (or woman)"' (Foley 1993: 1)

By implication, where leadership is direct and monocratic, as Foley claims it now is in the UK, so is the exercise of power. Foley (2000: 301) points to Tony Blair's 'extraordinary dominance...in his party and in his government'. King also argues that 'public visibility in and of itself may be a source of influence'. Some prime ministers are very high profile figures; they are associated with the policies of the government. They are held responsible for these policies; they therefore want to *be* responsible for formulating the policies (King 1994a: 158).

Yet, wanting to be responsible does not make one responsible, and this does not explain how the personalisation of leadership accounts for the alleged concentration of power in one person in the UK. Perhaps the causal direction suggested by Foley could be reversed: the media focuses on the most powerful actors in the system, making them more prominent. It is plausible that 'leadership stretch' or the media concentration on leaders reflects the fact that the leaders are already powerful, rather than the other way around.

As James (1999: 25) points out, one of the problems with this work is that it is not exactly clear what the thesis is. Key concepts such as 'presidential' and 'power' are neither defined nor measured. One can never be sure if factors mentioned in the text are incidentally interesting or central to the whole question.

2.01(i) Policy networks

In the 1980s and 1990s another research programme covering central government arose in the UK. These scholars acknowledged that the 'grand old debate' about Prime Ministerial Government became a sterile dispute between those who said cabinet government was dead and those who argued that 'the cabinet was in charge all along'. It regards questions like 'Has Prime Ministerial power replaced cabinet government?', 'Who is dominant, ministers or civil servants?', and 'Does Parliament control the executive?' as 'oft repeated, and unhelpful' (Smith 1999: 1).

Rhodes correctly points out that power cannot be located as simply as the Prime Ministerial debate suggests. Policy-making is conducted between 'multiple actors whose relative power shifts over time and between policy areas'. So it is wrong to assert that one or other of the cabinet or prime minister control and organise policy-making. These scholars proposed that studying policy networks and policy communities within the core executive would offer a way out of the 'theoretical and methodological impasse' (Rhodes 1995: 26).

The policy networks approach broadens the focus of the policy-making process. Most analysts of government studied the cabinet. Others studied public administration, and these people concentrated on the civil service. This separation was criticised because it delineated the policy-making process in a way that is not found in real life. In contrast, 'Policy Communities' are held to identify the actors in the policy universe who share a common interest. The actors in a policy community interact and the network is the linking process (Wright 1988: 600). Advocates of policy networks proposed that executive politics and public administration be studied together under a new term: the core executive (Rhodes and Dunleavy 1995). This work set out to move research away from either studying the cabinet and prime minister, or the civil service/ public administration, or interest groups separately and argued that there are good reasons to analyse these together. For example, to study interest groups without focusing on government would be relatively meaningless, because we could not see their effects.

Proponents of the policy network approach also argue that the power within the 'core executive' is not hierarchical but a 'maze of institutions that makes up the differentiated polity...Services continue to be delivered but by a network of organizations which resist central direction' (Rod Rhodes quoted in Smith 1999: 16). There are no strict hierarchies of power (Wright 1988). These policy networks combine formal and informal aspects of relationships in central government. It is argued that studying the networks enables the interaction of the different institutions and actors to be viewed. Networks also allow different institutional cultures and attitudes to be studied.

Quite how they do this is not clear. The actual studies using this 'method' tend to describe the different 'networks' and show diagrams of how they overlap. This would lead one to conclude that 'policy networks' offers a broader focus of study, but that there is no new method to solve the methodological problems from which previous studies suffered.

The policy network approach changes more than just the area of study; it also changes the dependent variable and the unit of analysis. Rather than having prime ministerial power or executive power as the focus, those using this approach take policy outputs or policy change as the dependent variable and specific policies as cases. As such this research group combines the policy-making literature with the political science/ public administration literature on the operation of central government. However, if policy change is the dependent variable, offering the explanation 'policy network' is not on its own enlightening. One needs to look at *how* the network operates. Saying that one network is different and yields a different outcome tells us only that something *within* the network may have been the cause of the change. Networks, as such, are not the explanation (Dowding 1995: 139, 142).

Policy network research uses another concept to explain policy change: this concerns power dependencies. This is a major focus of what policy network research regards as the added value offered by the approach;

> The starting point is that all actors within the core executive have resources with no actor, or institution, having a monopoly. These resources, which include information, authority, finance and control provide the potential for achieving goals...Because no actor or institution

> controls all the resources necessary to achieve their goals, actors within the central state depend on each other. The political process is about exchanging resources, and through the process of exchange a range of actors can influence policy outcomes (Smith 1999: 1).

This characterises politics as a bargaining game, whereby each actor uses his resources to achieve a desired outcome. A fruitful approach might be to find out where the resources come from. Then one can start to predict who will be the stronger players in the political process where resources are exchanged.

Keith Dowding, in a critique of the policy network approach, argues that the approach can do no better than be a metaphor for describing how central government might operate. To expect more than that 'will ultimately lead to disappointment' (Dowding 1995: 158). As Heffernan (2003: 348) has pointed out, the core executive scholars are only partially accurate in their characterisation of power as relational, and not based on domination. Core executive scholars attempt to oversell their case if one denies the possibility of domination. Their empirical works show their approach at its best. These offer astute observations of UK government (their approach has thus far only been tried by British scholars) and the case studies provide fascinating, if atheoretical, overviews of policy making there (see for instance Rhodes 1997). The proponents of 'core executive' studies raise legitimate concerns about the existing research by arguing that the focus was unrealistically narrow. So, while the approach does not provide a new theory or method, by broadening the focus of study and concentrating on the changeable relationships within these networks, the approach could help to overcome some of the difficulties faced by the 'Prime Ministerial Government' scholars.

2.01(ii) Comparative studies of prime ministerial power

As was noted above, the literature on prime ministerial power is not confined to the UK, although the UK gave it its impetus and much of its terminology. However, many studies of policy-making and government in individual countries are based to some extent on the original debate between Crossman-Mackintosh and Jones, among others. For instance;

> Canadian prime ministers, again, particularly when they have a majority government in parliament, have in their hands all the important levers of

> power. Indeed all major national public policy roads lead one way or another to their doorstep. They are the elected leader of the party by party members, they chair Cabinet meetings...; they appoint and fire ministers and deputy ministers, establish Cabinet committees, and decide on their membership...The prime minister is the only politician with a national constituency...he does not need to search out publicity...In short, the prime minister is head of government with limited checks on his power inside government or in Parliament. (Savoie 1999: 72)

Similar passages are written about most countries' prime ministers to explain why they are powerful or not (see for instance Hine 1993: 199-201; Koutsoukis 1994: 272-8). Most mention the same factors as being important; the prime minister's right to hire and fire ministers, the government's control of parliament, prime ministers' chairmanship of cabinet and prime ministers' leadership of their party. These pieces do not show in detail why these factors are important and how these factors are used to convert to political influence on policy. Although some suggestions are made in the literature, works like this do not go to the next stage of explanation by seeking to address the causal mechanisms through which these prerogatives are important or what factors cause variation in the freedom to use the prerogatives mentioned in passages such as this.

A number of comparative studies have been published, which look at these issues in more detail. The comparative literature has been useful in that it looks for generalisations, and seeks to explain variation, rather than denying the existence of variation as the original debate tended to. The comparative literature seeks to search for and investigate the 'resources' and 'constraints' on prime ministers' influence in policy making in different countries (Smith 1991; Smith 1994). Most comparative and country studies approach the topic with this angle, aiming to discover and analyse the constraints and resources available to prime ministers and weighing up a prime minister's ability to achieve policy gains on the basis of these factors. Many writers using a resource-based approach find that certain institutional prerogatives, such as those mentioned by Crossman and Mackintosh, are the resources prime ministers have, while the party, coalition partners and electoral politics provide constraints on the use of these resources.

One of the first writers to have used the institutionalist approach derived from the 'prime ministerial government' debate looked at four countries with very similar institutional frameworks, historical experiences and political cultures; Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the UK. Patrick Weller (1985) discusses, in some detail, cases where these factors mentioned above do seem to work and where they do not seem to lead to prime ministerial dominance.

Weller offers illustrative examples of the operation of prime ministerial power, based on the Crossman thesis. His work is primarily empirical. Though he analyses when institutional factors are, or are not, important, more than anything Weller attempts to offer balanced judgements of factors mentioned in the 'Prime Ministerial Government' debate, by providing examples and counter-examples. His aim is to analyse prime ministerial power by looking at the constraints facing prime ministers in their ability to set policy. He argues that Conservative prime ministers in the UK and National Party are least constrained in how they can deal with their party, their cabinet and with parliament. Weller warns the reader to keep the potency of institutional factors in perspective. For instance, on prime ministerial patronage, he concludes that it 'is widespread, important and influential. Its impact may be subtle and difficult to identify. Yet it must always act within limitations. Politically prime ministers must balance their cabinets...' (Weller 1985: 102). He concludes by observing 'what prime ministers can do is determined by convention and traditional practice' (Weller 1985: 209). Yet institutional factors are found to be the most important causes of prime ministerial power, and the examples he offers show why this might be the case.

King identified prime ministers' role in controlling the careers of other senior politicians as another factor important for explaining the varying dominance of prime ministers in their countries' political system. He argues that the prime minister who can do this 'is not likely to find it too difficult to bend other ministers – and would-be ministers – to his or her will' (King 1994a: 155). This is something mentioned by most individual country specialists. Weller also focussed on the right to dismiss ministers, but again he urged caution in drawing conclusions from prime ministers' constitutional rights.

Like Weller, Rose finds that 'differences between national political institutions create more variation in the office of prime minister than do differences of personality and circumstances within a country' (Rose 1991: 9). Or put another way, there is more variation between countries than within countries. Elgie's (1995: 195) study of political leaders in six liberal democracies comes to conclusions similar to Rose and King; that is, that 'institutional structures had the greatest impact on the leadership process'. More recently, Helms (2005: 14) identifies similar devices as important;

> The right to decide upon appointments and dismissals of members of the cabinet...the right to determine the number and terms of reference of ministerial departments; a superior position within the cabinet; and the unconditional right to dissolve parliament.

However, Jones finds that 'formal allocations of power in constitutions and laws alone are no sure guide to the real distribution of power' (Jones 1991c: 165). For instance, Mulgan's (2000) work on Japan points out that Japanese prime ministers do not want for constitutional provisions affirming their power, yet in practice Japanese prime ministers cannot be regarded as strong leaders. Institutional factors evidently make up an important aspect of any explanation of the position of the prime minister and prime ministerial influence but these must sit within a more general framework. It is important to understand what factors are important to the potential use of these prerogatives for policy making.

To look at the topic from first principles one needs to firstly think of the prime minister as a political actor. Elgie points to the importance of the motivations of this actor. Some prime ministers, he points out, have few policy-oriented goals. These prime ministers see their role as managerial, to facilitate progress in policy making, rather than to drive and lead the change. Elgie also notes that some prime ministers restrict their policy interests to areas of 'high' politics, such as foreign policy or constitutional change (Elgie 1995: 9). Some prime ministers may simply not be interested in policy power.

It is also important to think of the number and type of other actors in the policy-making system. Blondel (1997: 10) focuses on the number of deep cleavages, which 'seem able to prevent the ascendance of many Prime Ministers towards a presidential or near-presidential stature'. A large number of cleavages in the political system may

prevent the prime minister from using the institutional prerogatives made available to prime ministers. King (1994a) looks at what might be the effect of the number of cleavages in society. He claims that an undoubted element of a theory of prime ministerial power is that 'the prime minister of a single party government is likely to be more influential than the leader of a multiparty government'. He further claims that;

> the more parties that make up the coalition the more likely it is, other things being equal, that the prime minister will find himself, not a significant influence wielder but rather a mere influence broker, a passive referee...Coalitions are inimical to strong prime ministerial government. (King 1994a: 154)

Jones' (1991b) study uses individual country literature on prime ministerial power to suggest that management of one's party is crucial. It could then be that control of one's party is important to allow one use the institutional prerogatives for policy gains. Within each country, Jones proposes that 'the main variable determining the success or failure of a prime minister was the capacity to manage his or her party if one party had an overall majority, or the coalition parties if no party had an overall majority' (Jones 1991a: 7). This was found to be the most important variable in the seven country studies (Jones 1991c: 175). Unfortunately the hypothesis as stated is almost impossible to refute because success and failure in terms of managing one's own party or coalition is only measurable in terms of power, the phenomenon it seeks to explain. One merely has to argue that prime ministers who are not powerful failed to manage their parties. Those who are powerful managed their parties well.

The ability to manage one's party could be the result of electoral politics. Of four prime ministerial personal power resources cited by Heffernan (2003: 351) three could be regarded as electoral: 'association with actual or anticipated political success; public popularity; and high standing in his or her party'. Jones argued that 'the nature of the party system as thrown up by electoral politics is the critical factor determining the prime minister's power' and that this comes through from most of the specific country chapters in his book (Jones 1991c: 177). Prime ministerial resources are 'ineffective if the party feels the prime minister is leading it to electoral defeat' (Jones 1991c: 176). This collection of essays, together with conclusions drawn from them, offer the student of prime ministerial power numerous clues as to where to look

to see variations in prime ministerial power. The essays themselves provide some evidence for these hypotheses, but the exercise was an attempt to develop hypotheses rather than test them.

A factor mentioned by both King and Blondel is political culture. Where countries have a legacy of strong leaders, it is common for the prime minister to be strong. King makes the argument that the citizens have an expectation that is based on their historical experience. Elgie identifies this as the 'needs of society'. For instance it is suggested that the Italian prime minister is weak in reaction to the experience of Fascist government under Mussolini (Hine and Finocchi 1991). Yet the Italians designed a system to produce a weak premiership. The proximate cause of the weak prime ministerial figure in Italy is the institutional structure.

The political culture of a country may define what is acceptable behaviour in a political system in a way that reference to rulebooks does not. So for instance, a prime minister may be legally entitled to dissolve parliament at any time, but precedent may make it unacceptable to dissolve parliament for party political gain. This could lead to the situation in which attempts to do so would be punished by the electorate. One could then say that this norm was a part of the political culture.

What Elgie calls the 'needs of society' can also be thought of as the attitudes and desires of the people. The 'needs of society' could be fruitfully thought of in relation to the status quo policy. Where the status quo is unacceptable to many in large sections of society, the 'needs of society' are greatest and governmental freedom to change policy is greatest.

These writers identify many important factors that might go to explaining prime ministerial power. We know that institutional prerogatives, such as powers of patronage and parliamentary agenda setting rights, might affect prime ministerial power to set policy. Prime ministers' role as electoral assets for their parties could be relevant to their ability to use these institutional prerogatives. Prime ministers' policy goals and interests, and the status quo policy could be pertinent to understanding prime ministerial power. However, we do not know how these resources and constraints could combine to create a general theory. Indeed, I think it is fair to say

that none of the works mentioned above attempts to provide an explicit theory of prime ministerial power. Nor does the extant literature provide testable hypotheses. Many of the discussions could be developed, and hypotheses derived from them. However, even if explicit hypotheses did exist, a lack of data would prevent hypothesis testing.

Measuring prime ministerial power

Jones' framework focused on describing the role of the prime minister, but contributors were also asked to make 'an assessment of the power of the prime minister'. Jones suggested that authors take account of some factors to analyse prime ministerial power. These were the traits of the individual prime ministers; how the role of the prime minister was viewed by ministers; whether prime ministers had more freedom in dealing with certain issues; and if the popularity of the prime minister and the party affected power. Unfortunately no attempt was made in that volume or subsequently to operationalise these concepts.

King made an important addition to scholarship by measuring prime ministerial power, which opens the way for studying prime ministers comparatively. Based on assessments of the literature, he places the prime ministers of 13 Western European countries into one of three categories; low, medium and high power (see table 2.1). Although the measure is only trichotomised, and we can be certain that within each group there is considerable variation, it does offer a step towards testing theories of prime ministerial power.

Table 2.1- King's Rank of Prime Ministerial Power

Low	Medium	High
Italy	Austria	Germany
Netherlands	Belgium	UK
Norway	Denmark	Greece
	Sweden	Ireland
		Portugal
		Spain

Source:
(King 1994a)

Conclusion

Much of the literature points to institutional causes of prime ministerial power, but many of the effects are non-observable. For instance the ability of a prime minister to

fire ministers would logically have an effect on the behaviour of those ministers. Purely empirical research could not reveal this possible relationship, as it is rare that a prime minister overtly threatens dismissal against ministers. And even with this theory, attempts at empirical confirmation through analysis of ministers' decision-making may not reveal the importance of the dismissal prerogative because a change in behaviour might be subconscious.

These works point to a gap that can only be filled by analysing prime ministerial power using an explicit theoretical framework, and confirm that analyses need to be verified with data that is more reliable and more objective than is available in this field. New research, therefore, needs to make both theoretical and empirical advances.

Though much work has been done to identify what factors are important to prime ministerial power, as yet no complete and general theoretical framework exists to study prime ministerial power. Crossman (1963; 1972) and Mackintosh (1968b; 1977a) identified important institutional prerogatives, but the operation of these prerogatives has not been studied in detail. The importance of institutions has been re-emphasised by comparative studies. Some, such as, King (1975; 1991; 1994a), Jones (1965; 1991c) and Elgie (1995) have started to bring together the elements of possible frameworks for this purpose, but these have not been made generalisable. With the insights of the scholars mentioned above, one has the main building blocks of a theory.

However, even if this is achieved, a major problem, and most certainly one of the reasons for the lack of progress in the area, is the shortage of hard data. Policy making in cabinet and government is by its nature secretive, making case studies over-dependent on secondary sources and biased primary sources, but very little observable data. Without new and different data, testing hypotheses on prime ministerial power will remain beyond our reach.

Chapter 3. 'Give them Awkward Choices': a theoretical framework of Prime Ministerial Influence

On 15 February 2003 between one and two million people marched on the streets of Britain in opposition to the invasion of Iraq. There is reason to believe, from opinion polls, that there were many Labour party voters among those anti-war marchers. One could also assume that for every one person marching, many more were against the war. According to surveys carried out at that time, a majority of Britons were opposed to the war (*The Guardian* 18 February, 2003).

At the time, Tony Blair argued and lobbied both domestically and internationally in favour of the military action in Iraq. Though, in March 2003, 139 Labour MPs voted against going to war and that one senior cabinet minister resigned, the government defeated the anti-war motion and won its own motion quite comfortably. Its motion passed with a majority of Labour backbenchers supporting the government's position. The government's success was also thanks to the support of the opposition Conservative party, which had firmly supported possible invasion of Iraq in the preceding months.

In September 2002, 160 backbench Labour MPs had signed a motion expressing deep unease at the prospect of a war with Iraq. Blair's own election agent noted that 'People would like more proof that Saddam Hussein is as dangerous as George Bush says [he is]' (*The Economist* 5 September, 2002). A majority of the country and a majority of Labour voters were against the war, even with UN backing (*The Guardian* 28 August, 2002). So, in a way, even the large revolt in February and March of 2003 reflected a success for Blair.[1]

How did Blair manage to convince a majority of his own backbenchers to support military action? An uneasy status quo had been in place for the previous decade whereby sanctions were in place in Iraq and UN weapons inspectors searched for weapons. The anti-war movement's main argument against the war, apart from the obvious humanitarian reasons, was that the Iraqi regime posed little real threat to the

[1] Although the UK government did not need specific approval from parliament, it was committed to achieving it, and war without it may have been politically too dangerous.

outside world. It was argued that after ten years of sanctions and a terrible defeat in the First Gulf War, Iraq was hardly able to feed itself and was in no position to attack Western Europe or the US. There were also worries about the consequences of war for the stability of the Middle East.

Blair, it seems, was convinced that war was necessary and had 'an almost mystical faith in his powers of persuasion' (*The Economist* 5 September, 2002). But he also had one significant advantage over both his own backbenchers, much of his cabinet and the opposition – information. When soliciting support for military action the British government released a 'dossier' stating that Iraq was developing missiles with a range of 750 miles – capable of attacking 3,000 British troops in Cyprus. Iraq, it was alleged, had plans to employ its existing weapons, some of which were deployable within 45 minutes of an order to use them. It added that Iraq had sought to acquire 'significant quantities' of uranium from Africa, despite having no civil nuclear programme that could require it (*The Guardian* 24 September 2002).

In September 2002 Blair defied 'anyone to say that this cruel and sadistic dictator should be allowed any possibility of getting his hands on chemical, biological or nuclear weapons'. Many were convinced. The Conservative leader, Iain Duncan-Smith, told the House of Commons at the same time that the dossier showed that Iraq had not abandoned its weapons programme, which posed a threat to Britain. 'He has been willing to defy the world order and to terrorise and starve his own people to continue his weapons programme. He has diverted £3bn in the last year alone for that very purpose: money that could have gone to feed his own population' he said. 'The only question remaining is whether he has the motive to strike against Britain. I believe it is fair to assume he would.' (*The Guardian* 24 September 2002).

By February 2003, when the likelihood of receiving the backing of the UN Security Council seemed low, public opinion needed to be convinced that war was necessary, even without Security Council approval. At this stage another dossier was released which made further claims about the control of the Saddam Hussein regime over Iraq. Blair and his ministers re-emphasised the dangers associated with inaction. One internal observer noted that the prime minister's advisers searched desperately for

better ways to present their case, and his account of the time up to the war portrays the group in Blair's office as a group of persuaders (Stothard 2003).

Blair, partly through his superior information, was able to convince a large number of Labour MPs and the Conservative party that military action was necessary because the alternative to war was no longer an uneasy peace, but a likelihood of attacks – if not directly on Britain, then on British troops and interests.

We do not know whether the Conservative or Labour MPs would have backed the government had they not been given this information and these arguments, but it is clear that the release of this information was a significant part of the strategy to convince the public and the Commons of the case for war. Blair was forced by sceptics in his own party to release a dossier on what intelligence the government possessed, so he would have found it much more difficult to convince these sceptics without this information.

The events leading to the war against Iraq shows the importance of parliament in foreign policy making in the UK. The prime minister needed to prevent Labour backbenchers from using a veto that they both have and might have been expected to use. He had to find a method to structure the choice that these people made so as to influence them in a way beneficial to him. He used the superior information available to him to structure the choices the MPs faced, but he could have used any one of a number of other institutional advantages that UK and other prime ministers routinely possess.

Introduction

The literature review in the last chapter reveals that one of the major gaps in scholarship on prime ministers is the lack of a theoretical framework within which to study the operation and sources of prime ministerial power. Though the literature identifies many of the elements that would feature in a theory of the operation of prime ministerial power, it gives us no indication as to how such a theory should be structured. In this chapter I will outline one possible framework for a theory of prime ministerial power. To do this I will use RCT, which is now commonly used in

political analysis. This gives us a method to predict and explain how political actors interact within political institutions and how power to influence policy content could flow from these interactions. Rational choice analyses of government have tended to ignore the position of prime ministers, despite the fact that they are self-evidently important actors. However, RCT does provide the concepts and the language with which to study prime ministerial power theoretically. The aim of this chapter is to outline a framework to study and explain prime ministerial power, borrowing from and developing extant rational choice theories of government.

To develop a framework within which we can analyse the operation of prime ministerial influence, I argued in the introduction that one should not simply look at the constitutional or legislative rulebooks in order to explain what prime ministers can do in terms of making policy and how they do it. This is because prime ministers typically do not make policy directly. Prime ministers rarely have codified authority or 'power to' make policy in the way presidents, parliaments and ministers do. Prime ministers instead have 'power over' the important political actors who do make policy. An explanation of the operation and sources of prime ministerial power must first identify who these 'important political actors' are.

Though prime ministers have few resources to set policy directly, they are comparatively well resourced in terms of opportunities and abilities to affect the choices faced by important policy-making actors who form the policy network. By affecting the choices faced by other actors in the network, prime ministers can effectively have 'power over' these actors. If prime ministers can, as Harold Wilson put it, 'give them awkward choices' (Crossman 1975: 50) – that is, force the policy-making actors to choose or accede to policies that they would not have otherwise accepted – the prime ministers can exercise power over these actors. In setting choices for other actors, one effectively sets the agenda for them. We might thus think of power over others as analogous to agenda setting. In doing so, it is then possible to bring to bear the significant RCT literature on agenda setting generally, and on specific agenda setting prerogatives, on the relationship between prime ministers and policy-making actors.

One then needs to identify and explain the mechanisms prime ministers have at their disposal to set choices, or set the agenda for policy-making actors. Indeed, these opportunities and abilities are referred to in formal political 'rulebooks' and many of these were mentioned in the literature review. Prime ministers often have influence to set the agenda in cabinet and parliament. As the people who select cabinet ministers and call elections, prime ministers can influence political actors by controlling politicians' careers. As party leaders, prime ministers have other mechanisms to offer incentives and make threats.

However, the political rulebooks alone do not tell us the extent to which prime ministers are free to set the choices of key political actors. The credibility of the 'awkward choices' that prime ministers can set is influenced by political factors, such as the type of government, the political support for the parties and the electoral system. In this chapter I will elaborate this framework in some detail, starting by discussing and defining the 'important political actors'.

'Important Political Actors' as Veto Players

Prime ministers need to have power over policy-making actors. Arguably all politicians are policy-making actors, but it is unlikely that a prime minister needs to have power over all politicians in order to achieve policy change. One need look only at the 'important' policy-making actors. In any political system, individuals usually emerge who are usually thought of as important political actors. These will be actors whose opinions will be listened to. Journalists and their peers might think of them as 'Big Beasts of the Jungle'[2], that is, people who because of their leadership and charisma achieve positions in government and their parties that make them decisive actors in policy making. These will be people who have strong views and are not afraid to express them; people who have defied or would be willing to defy their party; people who are well-known and well-regarded by many voters (King 1994b: 218).

[2] Anthony King (1994b: 219) says the phrase was first used in the UK Conservative Party to describe ministers who are highly visible, independent and influential.

For instance, in the UK in the 1970s, the Labour Party had a number of senior ministers who were contenders for the leadership and could count on supporters in the cabinet and parliament. Apart from Harold Wilson and Jim Callaghan, these were men such as Denis Healey, Roy Jenkins, Michael Foot and Tony Benn. In the 1990s John Major's cabinet contained people such as Ken Clarke, Michael Heseltine and Douglas Hurd. In most governments there are people like these, whose opinions are not just valued but must be listened to and considered.

Where there are a number of Big Beasts in a political system, and these people have divergent policy beliefs, one might expect that policy change becomes difficult. Many strong personalities pulling against one another may lead to deadlock. It is arguable that some of the policy failures of the UK Labour party in the 1970s occurred because at the time policy change was difficult to achieve due to the blocking strength of Benn and Foot. Though wonderfully evocative and useful in political discourse, the concept of a 'Big Beast' is difficult to define or operationalise (possibly because it depends on the ambiguous concept of charisma). So the concept is not useful to social scientists. However, a more prosaic concept exists, and this may be useful to understand and explain prime ministerial power.

A 'Veto Player' (VP) is an actor whose agreement is needed for a change to the status quo policy to occur. Though 'Big Beasts' may number among the more influential political actors, they may not necessarily be able to prevent policy change, although it is likely that they could make change more difficult. Veto players, on the other hand, by virtue of the positions they hold or their position in the political system, are able to block change. For instance, Denis Healey, who was the UK's Secretary of State for Defence from 1964 to 1970 has claimed that the prime minister, Harold Wilson wanted to enter the Vietnam War but that he had simply said 'no', thus preventing any policy change (speaking in Keegan 2004).

Chapter seven shows in detail how veto player theory can conclude that where there are a large number of VPs with different goals, policy change becomes more difficult. When the VPs' policy goals differ such that the status quo appears to be central in the policy space, policy change becomes even more difficult. Therefore one would expect

that where VPs are more policy diverse, prime ministers will find it difficult to effect policy change.

If one can identify the veto players in the political system, then one can estimate their policy positions on relevant dimensions. This will point one towards the potential freedom that exists for policy change. Identifying who the veto players are and their numbers is not simple. However, there are certain people or groups of people who, for institutional or political reasons, are likely to be veto players.

Who are the veto players in a political system?

Parliamentary democracies are organised in such a way that there are rarely any *official* or *pure* veto players. In many parliamentary democracies the Head of State is legally required to sign legislation into law. So monarchs and presidents may be *pure* veto players. But monarchs and presidents are not usually regarded as serious political players, except in some countries such as Finland and Portugal. Therefore finding out who the purely legal veto players are may not be relevant.

By looking at the policy-making process one can determine who the *effective* veto players are – that is, those actors that can effectively veto policy proposals or who are the actors who one might expect to be able to veto proposals. Legislation must normally be passed by the parliament, so parliament is a veto player. This, however, is a collective entity rather than an individual actor. The government sometimes has to give official approval to legislation, and usually gives tacit approval to most policy changes. Cabinet is also a collective veto player.

Though parliament and government are not individual actors, it may be possible to disaggregate them into the functional actors who effectively control each of these institutions. Parliament and government are more closely connected than constitutional theory would suggest. Indeed, it is the case in most parliamentary democracies that one, government, emerges from the other, parliament. So it would be misleading to suggest that the two are distinct veto players (Andeweg and Nijzink 1995). Parties hold the two together. A party, or a coalition of parties, usually controls majorities in parliament. This majority is often reflected in the composition of cabinet.

Unless there is a surplus majority in a coalition government, each party's support will be necessary. Even where surplus majorities exist, only 'passenger' parties (Laver and Schofield 1990: 81) – that is, those parties who cannot determine whether the government stands or falls using their votes in parliament – cannot be regarded as veto players. Therefore, in most cases, each of the parties that make up a government can be thought of as veto players.

The ministers that make up the government, though they may control their departmental turf, are not legally entitled to override a cabinet decision. However, the line minister may be able to act to prevent a change in policy through inertia. The minister is an actor that one would expect, given his or her position in the policy-making process, would be veto player in his or her area. Another actor who will have significant control over policy making is the finance minister. By virtue of their control of the public purse, finance ministers could be expected to be able to prevent policy change involving significant public spending commitments should they wish to.

Though these actors are not *pure* veto players, in the sense that they do not have an institutionally guaranteed veto, these are among some of the possible *effective* veto players. In the case of parties, by withdrawing their support from government they can prevent the passage of legislation. In the case of the line minister, slowing down or stopping policy implementation can prevent policy change. Finance ministers may be able to prevent policy changes by withholding funds for those changes.

If these veto holders do not actually veto proposals, where, given their policy positions one would have otherwise expected to see them prevent change, we can argue that this is not because they are not veto players, but that they are veto players who have been influenced in some way. Some aspect of the choice they face may prevent them from using their veto. The veto players could have been vulnerable to challenge by some other actors. Prime ministers, though not greatly fortified with authority to make policy, may have 'power over' policy-making actors to get them to act in certain ways by setting choices for these actors.

Status Quo and Policy Distance

Veto player theory aims to predict the feasibility of policy change from a status quo. The importance of the status quo in models of politics is well established (Romer and Rosenthal 1978). It is likely that the position or acceptability of the status quo will have an effect on the feasibility of attaining support from diverse veto players. Where, to use Elgie's (1995) phrase, the 'needs of society' are greatest, so will the willingness to accept policy change, and hence the power of policy-making office holders. That is, where the status quo is at a generally perceived extreme point, policy change is made easier. If, however, the status quo is centrally located among the veto holding actors then change is difficult.

It will be of no surprise that politicians who have become most powerful, or managed to achieve immense policy changes have been those who came to power at times of turmoil. Hitler and Mussolini came to power at times of record inflation and mass unemployment in Germany and Italy. This phenomenon is not confined to non-democratic politics. Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal is unlikely to have been acceptable had it not been for the Great Depression. Margaret Thatcher achieved power, and eventually support for what has been described as her 'revolution' after a 'Winter of Discontent' that followed a decade of disgruntlement (Jenkins 1987). As Storr points out, 'ideologists tend to get power...really in times of misery and frustration and hopelessness' (Tayar 1971: 100).

Where an exceptional status quo allows a radical policy departure, the policy departure need not just relate to seismic shifts in fundamental policy, as one might argue both the introduction of a welfare state and monetarism were for the US in the 1930s and the UK in the 1980s respectively. The restriction on freedom of speech in the media and the introduction of non-jury courts in Ireland in the 1970s were acceptable to even the most liberal ministers because of what was seen as a direct threat to the security of the state (Cruise O'Brien 1998: 354-7). The US government can restrict human rights in the US to an extent unimaginable a decade ago perhaps because the US people believe that there is an imminent threat to their security in the wake of the attacks on New York and Washington in 2001.

An extreme status quo will have the effect of bringing veto players relatively closer and make policy change easier to achieve. However, even where there are a number of veto players that diverge on policy, and where one would not expect policy change to be possible because the status quo is preferable, it may be possible for prime ministers to achieve change by structuring the choices of other veto holding actors.

Setting 'Awkward Choices' for Veto Players

'Power' is probably the most important concept in political science. Indeed it is probable that 'all politics is the struggle for power' (Mills 1956: 171). Yet the concept of power is a slippery and controversial one – it is an 'essentially contested' concept (Gallie 1964). There is no agreement on a broad definition of power and achieving one is unlikely.

However, while there are significant problems with concepts like 'power', one could admit that the problems are not insurmountable. The concept might be 'essentially messy' (Barry 1980: 349). In this section no attempt to define power is made, but I argue that 'power over' another actor, the power a prime minister needs to have over other veto players in the policy-making system, can be usefully thought of as the power of an actor to set the agenda from which the other actor must choose. Consequently the significant rational choice literature on agenda setting can be used as the basis from which to understand prime ministerial power.

Agenda Setting as 'Power Over'

Agenda setting has been a large and important field of study for political scientists. Some scholars have also shown the power of the agenda setter in committee decision-making (McKelvey 1976), but agenda setting is also commonly referred to in relation to the power of the media (Iyengar 1991). Agenda setting often refers to setting the tone of the government and being able to raise new issues; 'agenda setting means bringing serious attention to an issue in a general way' (Hayao 1993: 186).[3] One student of the agendas of US presidents assumes that given a finite set of resources, presidents can choose items for their agenda which will then get passed if put high

[3] Indeed it is the constitutional duty of the German Chancellor to set the general policy for the government (Article 65).

enough up on the agenda (Light 1999). Setting the agenda is also regarded as one important aspect of the prime ministerial role (Crossman 1963: 51; Rose 1991: 14; Thakur 1995: 122). One writer on Margaret Thatcher predicted that 'the future may not be hers but she has set its agenda' (Jenkins 1987: 379). The ability to highlight issues in the policy process or the public's minds allows those able to set the agenda to control what the policy process deals with. In Schattschneider's (1960: 71) words, 'some issues are organised into politics while others are organised out'.

Bachrach and Baratz (1962) argued that power referred to the ability to define what decisions are made. Certain decisions are not brought on to the political agenda and the ability to prevent them from being brought onto the range of acceptable decisions is in itself a very significant power. So A has power 'when A...reinforc[es] social and political values and institutional practices that limit the scope of the political process to public consideration of only those issues which are comparatively innocuous to A' (Bachrach and Baratz 1970: 7). This is 'agenda setting' power.

'Power over' another actor can then be thought of as being based on agenda setting. Both agenda setting and power can be conceived as the ability to deliberately change the incentive structure faced by another actor (Dowding 1996). Using agenda setting in the broad sense alluded to in the narrative at the beginning of this chapter means thinking of agenda setting as the ability to *define* the alternatives for others to choose from. This includes not just the ability to set what those alternatives are but also the ability to influence how others view those alternatives. This is central to the understanding of power over others, including over other veto players. When prime ministers can set alternatives for other actors and when prime ministers can change the way other actors view the alternatives set them, prime ministers have some power over the actions of other actors.

The former UK prime minister, Harold Wilson was conscious of this. He felt that the best way to avoid defeat in the Commons, where between 1964 and 1966 his government had a wafer-thin majority, was to structure the choices of others:

> 'My strategy is to put the Tories on the defensive and always give them awkward choices...They have an awkward choice voting for or against the pension increase. We have given them an awkward choice on office building and, Dick, you'll be giving them an awkward choice with your

> Bill for preventing evictions. Whatever we do we must keep the initiative and always give them awkward choices' (Crossman 1975: 50).

So one might agree that 'the definition of alternatives is the supreme instrument of power', or at least the supreme instrument for power over others (Schattschneider 1960: 68). Tony Blair effectively defined the choice facing many MPs in the lead up to the invasion of Iraq as one between appeasing an evil and dangerous dictator who was able and likely to attack British targets at any time and a just war to liberate a downtrodden people. Blair tried to persuade the MPs who were agnostic on the issue of war by using information that was not available to groups that opposed his policy proposal.

Persuasion may draw on technical knowledge or use superior information to convince someone of the correct way to act in a situation. Thus it is possible to conclude that 'information is power, and control of information in the first step in propaganda' (Denton and Woodward 1990: 42).

The centralisation of information and expertise in certain systems allows those who control the information to affect the incentive structure others think they face. Where information is held competitively, that is, many groups hold information on any issue, the ability to control the way others regard events is diminished. Then the power of any actor over another actor is diminished.

The decision in the UK to go to war shows how a prime minister was able to use a monopoly of information to change the structure of decision for another veto player, the parliament. When prime ministers have a monopoly of information and expertise they can present events to other actors in a way to manipulate their actions.

In another, more narrow view of agenda setting, agenda setters can actually structure and limit the choices faced by other actors. This will occur in more formal settings, where the power subjects are given choices upon which they must vote. As is set out next, prime ministers are also well equipped to define the alternatives from which others must choose more formally. Prime ministers have means of setting choices for veto holding actors in parliament, cabinet and government.

Where and how 'Awkward Choices' are set

To achieve their policy goals prime ministers normally must find ways to prevent veto players from using their veto where the veto players would have otherwise been expected to have done so. Prime ministers want to make the veto players they deal with 'vulnerable', or make them think themselves vulnerable. That is, prime ministers will benefit if they can associate the use of the veto with some negative consequences for the veto player. Thus, for the veto player, the use of the veto becomes less attractive and the veto player becomes vulnerable to pressure not to use it.

Prime ministers' ability to influence those actors who *one would expect to be* veto players is to some extent based on institutional prerogatives, which can be used to alter the choices veto players face. Important prerogatives available to prime ministers were raised by writers highlighted in the last chapter. These give us some idea as to what are the important methods by which prime ministers can set choices for veto players. The prerogatives include the ability to appoint and dismiss ministers, cabinet agenda setting, parliamentary agenda setting and through party leadership (including rules to control the party such as candidate selection and disciplinary procedures, and through the ability to offer coat-tails for MPs to get elected by).

In this thesis I assume that policy making occurs in stages; the government decision stage, the parliamentary decision stage and the government implementation stage. Firstly the government agrees a policy, and the doctrine of collective responsibility ties government members to publicly accepting that decision. Only then is the second stage officially started.[4] This means that even the members of a government opposed to a policy will have agreed to the use of the government's institutional advantages at the parliamentary stage. All of these privileges are relevant to explaining the parliamentary stage and governments' dominance of their parliaments, which can also help to explain prime ministerial power. Of course, politics in parliamentary democracies is not accurately portrayed when characterised as a conflict between government and parliament. In fact, the conflict is usually within the party or between parties of government. The victors of these battles in government use their

[4] Obviously the likelihood of difficulties in the parliamentary stage will inform discussions and the decision at the governmental stage.

prerogatives to force recalcitrant supporters of the government majority to accept government policy.

Agenda setting in the parliamentary arena is highly institutionalised. In many parliamentary democracies governments have been granted certain rights over the administration of parliament (Döring 1995b; Döring 2001; Rasch 2000). These give the government, at times in the name of the prime minister, the right to set the plenary agenda. Among the more significant prerogatives are;

- Priority for government bills
- The right to *guillotine* bills
- The right to set restrictions on sitting and speech time
- The right to select amendments
- Government has a veto over Bills or amendments to Bills and Acts with expenditure implications
- The right to take bills together
- The right to make a bill an issue of confidence
- The right to dissolve the parliament

In this thesis I concentrate on two agenda setting prerogatives relevant to the parliamentary stage that vary across countries, the confidence motion and the right to dissolve parliament. The right to put a confidence motion allows the prime minister and/ or government to put a final policy proposal to parliament, and forces parliament to choose between government's preferred policy and the collapse of the government. The right to dissolve parliament allows prime ministers and/ or government not just the ability to choose the best timing of an election and influence the issues on which the election will be held, but it also poses an implicit threat in all of a parliament's dealings with a government. Although government is in theory an agent of parliament, the government's right to dissolve parliament gives it the ability to set choices for parliament.

An example can show the power of the confidence motion and the dissolution prerogative at work. In early 1976, the British government was under pressure from the left of the governing Labour Party after the publication of a White Paper on Public

Expenditure that proposed large cuts. Labour had a majority of just two. 39 Tribunite MPs (a left-wing faction in the Labour party) abstained in a vote on the White Paper on 10th March ensuring the government's defeat. The next day, the prime minister, Harold Wilson, put the question to the House of Commons in an Adjournment debate. In his own words, 'the Government forced a debate on what was, in effect, and was recognized by every Hon. Member as being a motion of confidence. It was carried easily' (Wilson 1976: 127-8). The government effectively changed the terms of the question facing MPs by simply stating that it regarded the vote as a confidence issue. The Tribunite MPs quickly fell in behind the government when an election became a real possibility.

In the government/ cabinet arena, prime ministers are also granted prerogatives over the proceedings and the personnel there. These rights give prime ministers important influence over cabinet decisions and hence the form of government policy. Among the important rights that some prime ministers possess are;

- The right to form the cabinet agenda
- The right to chair the cabinet meeting
- The right to decide on the form of government departments
- The right to form cabinet committees
- The right to appoint and dismiss members of the government
- The right to rearrange the government

The two prerogatives most prominent in the literature on prime ministers are the right to chair cabinet meetings, and the right to appoint and dismiss ministers. The right to appoint ministers can be potent, because if the right is unfettered by political constraints, it may allow prime ministers to completely control government by placing their own agents at the various veto points of government. Where prime ministers can dismiss ministers, prime ministers are able to set choices for ministers in which dismissal is included in the alternatives. Ministers are conscious that defying prime ministers may lead to dismissal and are likely to have their actions influenced.

Prime ministers can also neutralise potential veto players by changing the forum for a decision. So, a minister may normally be a veto player on a certain policy, but the

prime minister may change the way in which a policy decision is made, thus removing his or her veto. For instance, if a prime minister changes the effective decision forum from cabinet and parliament to a referendum of the people, otherwise powerful veto players in cabinet will no longer be able to veto a policy.

Where prime ministers exclusively control agenda setting of cabinet meetings they could have some control over the decisions made at cabinet. I use an agenda setting model taking into account the realities of cabinet decision-making to estimate whether cabinet agenda setting and chairmanship is a significant aid to prime ministers.

An example of the use of the cabinet process by a prime minister to influence policy can be seen in Harold Wilson's efforts to control the left-wing industry minister, Tony Benn, and Benn's attempts to bring about government control of private industry. The policy of public ownership and planning was in the Labour manifesto, and one to which Benn was strongly attached. As a result of Benn's popularity in the Labour party, Wilson was forced to make Benn the Industry Secretary – a portfolio Benn had held in opposition. However, Wilson pared the department down significantly by removing Trade to a separate department (which oversaw of the newspaper industry) and he placed the broadcasting industries under Home Office remit.

When Benn produced a White Paper outlining these policies, Wilson was anxious to ensure that the policies as Benn envisaged them would never become government policy. Wilson argued that the White Paper was sloppy and polemical and asked a special committee on industrial policy (of which he made himself the chair) to reconsider it (Hennessy 1986: 86-7; James 1997: 121-4). Wilson asked his Policy Unit to rewrite the White paper (Donoughue 1987: 54) and a series of cabinet committee meetings with a majority of prominent right-wingers as members continued to dilute Benn's proposals despite Benn's efforts to postpone consideration of the new paper (James 1997: 123). Wilson, despite not having control of the portfolio, was able to use his position as agenda setter in cabinet, i.e. the person who organised the way in which decisions were made, to ensure Benn could not achieve approval for his policy.

The foregoing prerogatives are looked at in terms of how they help to explain the operation of prime ministerial influence on policy. For these prerogatives to be used successfully depends on prime ministers having *the power to use them*. While prime ministers can often legally dismiss ministers or call elections, their ability to do so and not suffer adverse consequences usually depends on party politics. For instance, if dismissing a minister from within one's own party, a prime minister would need to be secure that such a move will not cause party revolt. Ministers with a following in the parliamentary party may be able to organise some type of rebellion against dismissal.

Thus, the next stage in the explanation is to study the source of the freedom to use these prerogatives. This is strongly related to a prime minister's position in his or her party. Prime ministers are often also party leaders and as such have important powers to choose which actors occupy certain influential posts within the party. A further factor to consider in terms of prime ministers as party leaders is their ability to win votes or to appear to win votes for their party. Where prime ministers as party leaders provide expected electoral benefits, leaders can use their prerogative of resignation to extract policy concessions. As we shall see in the next chapter, before Felipe González became prime minister of Spain, he was able to use his considerable popularity and charisma to achieve a seismic shift in his party's policy that many powerful elements in the PSOE were reluctant to allow.

Ultimately, to achieve their policy goals where there are significant forces against them, prime ministers must create situations whereby political actors that would otherwise veto prime ministers' policies do not do so. Given that the government and the parliament normally must agree policy changes, prime ministers must be able to counteract the instincts of veto players with divergent policy preferences to use their veto in both the cabinet and parliamentary settings. So controlling the government alone may not suffice. Prime ministers may be able to control their cabinets, but this may be insufficient if the policy changes need to be passed by parliament.

Formal theorists have looked at some of these factors and these models will be discussed in subsequent chapters. But as the models are necessarily simplifications of reality, they leave out many important political factors. As well as considering how the prerogatives operate, it is imperative to consider how these political variables

could affect the predictions of the models. So for instance, prime ministers can offer coalition parties the choice of accepting certain policies or an election, but the threat will only work if the prime minister's party is expected to gain from such an election.

The Berlusconi case is useful to illustrate this. He was prime minister of two coalition governments; one in 1994 and again in 2001. Although in his second government his party's share of the seats in parliament went up by ten percent to 28 percent, the number of parties in government and Berlusconi's control of cabinet places remained basically the same. However, Berlusconi's dominance of his second administration was far greater than his first, to judge by media interpretations. In part this is because of Berlusconi's ability to control government colleagues by threatening to leave government. In 1994-95 that threat was not very menacing as his colleagues in government had performed well in intervening regional and local elections. In his 2001 government, the threat was a real one as opinion polls show Berlusconi and his Forza Italia party to be in a far stronger position electorally, and that his coalition colleagues would have been severely weakened in the event of an election. This allowed Berlusconi to set choices for his government colleagues that involved the acceptance of his preferred policies or an election in which they were not expected to perform well.

The prerogatives are intervening but necessary variables for policy influence. In order to use them, prime ministers need certain political resources. But without the prerogatives (whether constitutionally defined or not) the political resources may be ineffective. Even US Presidents that have a great deal of popular support find it difficult to influence policy (for example, think of Clinton's inability to change health policy). The US President has no way to control the parliament or the careers of the country's major politicians. He cannot set awkward choices for them. He can only hope that his interests coincide with the major veto players.

Conclusion

It is my contention that prime ministers cannot make policy directly, so must influence the important political actors who can make policy directly to act in certain ways. Where these important actors would not be naturally inclined to accept the

prime ministerial position, the prime minister may have to exert power over these actors in order to achieve policy change. To exert power over these actors, prime ministers must be able to set choices for those actors. The choices must also be structured so that the prime minister's preferred outcome will be selected. Certain institutional prerogatives allow prime ministers to set choices, but these prerogatives will only work where certain political conditions are in place.

Before outlining the research design and developing hypotheses to explain the operation of power of prime ministers from this theoretical framework, I provide definitions of the major actors and provide and discuss some assumptions used in the models that follow. As well as the definitions of the actors these concern their motivations, and to set out the policy-making arenas in which the theoretical framework is useful.

Chapter 4. Assumptions of the thesis

Felipe González resigned as Secretary-General of the Spanish socialist party, the PSOE, in 1979 after its 28th Congress insisted on maintaining its commitment to Marxism. The party members had become unhappy that the PSOE had signed the *Moncloa Pacts* – austerity measures agreed by Spain's major parties and to stabilize the Spanish economy and hence democracy – and unhappier at the policy changes proposed by González for the PSOE. His decision to resign may have been a ploy to get the party to accept his preferred policy changes, or might have been ultimately driven by his desire to achieve office (Preston 1986: 154-159). The socialists had not swept to victory in the first or second democratic elections as many inside the party had expected. There was a realisation among some that the commitment to Marxism was unattractive to the electorate (Román Marugán 1999: 262-3). The young and charismatic González offered the leftist majority in the party's Congress the choice of 'Felipe or chaos' (Share 1999: 106). An extraordinary Congress later re-elected him leader with his more centrist policies and soon afterwards the PSOE went on to govern Spain for 14 years with González as prime minister during which time his control of the PSOE was almost complete (Powell 2001: 320, 334). His government implemented some monetarist economic policies and achieved a spectacular U-turn on its original policy of leaving Nato. In 10 years the PSOE had gone from being a Marxist party with contacts with Moscow to a party advocating monetarism and supporting Nato membership.

When the Dutch Labour Party (PvdA) resigned from cabinet in 1981, it did not do so because its leader did not desire office. Joop den Uyl had effectively let his willingness to compromise on policy known with the statement that 'The second Den Uyl cabinet will be formed in any case' (Hillebrand and Irwin 1999: 117). Yet it was not formed; the PvdA did go into coalition but Den Uyl was not the prime minister nor did the cabinet last very long. In order to facilitate his desire to be prime minister, Den Uyl proposed removing some policies which might later hinder coalition negotiations. The rank and file members strenuously opposed this move, but a compromise was agreed after Den Uyl threatened to resign months before an election. After that election a coalition was formed with the Christian Democrats (CDA) but

there were continual problems about agreeing a budget. Though Den Uyl agreed a compromise with Prime Minister Dries van Agt, the rank and file of the PvdA would not tolerate it. The party chairman, Max van den Berg, unilaterally came out against the compromise. Den Uyl was forced to take the PvdA out of the cabinet, causing the government's collapse.

The two politicians González and Den Uyl acted differently; one left a government to avoid a policy compromise, while the other achieved government in part through policy compromise. Both may have been motivated by the same desire to achieve office. Yet neither appear to have been myopic office-seekers. They appeared to have been willing to forego office in the short and medium term for long-term benefits. Den Uyl knew that his leadership of the party and any future presence in government would be threatened by remaining in that government. González knew that the electorate would not elect the PSOE while it remained a Marxist party.

These cases highlight a difficulty with models purporting to represent policy making. If one is to predict how political actors will act, one must define who they are and make assumptions about their motivations. This chapter is designed to clarify and define the actors and the key operational assumptions used in the thesis before going on to use them in the substantive chapters. First of all I will set the limits to the scope of the thesis. I then move on to define the main actors within the realm of policy-making as I have limited it. After that I discuss the motivations of political actors in general and party leaders and prime ministers in particular.

The scope of policy making

Public policy is made every day in every country in the world. When hospital managers decide on opening hours in their hospitals, a public policy is made. Prime ministers, ministers and legislatures will rarely be involved in making this policy. Any theoretical framework needs to set limits as to what policies and what institutions it aspires to cover.

Which policy outcomes the theoretical framework can help to explain depends very much on each prime minister. A former British prime minister, Herbert Henry

Asquith, observed that 'the office of prime minister depends on what a prime minister wants to make of it' (Oxford and Asquith 1926: 185). So some prime ministers may indeed worry about the opening hours of hospitals, whereas others would not bother with what they might regard as trivial matters. Some prime ministers tend to ignore domestic policy, preferring the international stage. Others find foreign policy a distraction from the real business of government. As the theoretical framework depends on policy-making, the framework will only be relevant in policy areas in which each prime minister is interested.

The institutional breadth of the policy-making process also depends on the country and the time in history. In the 1960s and 1970s the leaders of British trades unions were to be seen walking into 10 Downing Street for consultations with the Prime Minister (Jenkins 1987: 16). In Ireland, in the last century, members of the Catholic Hierarchy could write to Taoisigh (prime ministers) on matters of policy and expect a swift and usually very accommodating reply (Whyte 1980: 213-20). Many countries, such as Canada, Germany and Spain, have institutional structures that give significant power to regions. Some of these countries allow the regions a say in central policy-making. Therefore one might make the argument that trades unions, interest groups, and federal structures supply or are themselves additional veto holding actors.

The theoretical framework I introduce could encompass the many different actors in policy making, and it could be easily adapted to include different institutional designs. However, to make empirical testing more manageable, I concentrate on two specific domains of policy-making; the government and the legislative process. I assume a three-stage process. It starts with policy proposals in government/ cabinet (which probably originate from political parties). Any proposal will then go from cabinet to the legislature, where the policy will be discussed, accepted, amended or rejected. The final stage returns to the government for policy implementation. At any of these stages policy proposals can be vetoed.

I exclude from this analysis the influence of other groups of actors on the legislature, the cabinet, ministers and the prime minister. I assume that policy preferences are exogenously derived and prior to the operations covered in this thesis. I ignore the sometimes large and important policy domains covered by local and regional

government. I also disregard the potentially significant influence of the courts on public policy. Judges and the courts of many countries can veto policies only because the policies are incompatible with the constitution (or some other basic law). It is true that judges and courts are becoming increasingly activist and deriving judgements from assumed principles that are not explicitly stated in the constitution (Stone Sweet 2000). This may seem unrealistic to suggest that judges and other actors are not veto players, as many diverse actors, such as pressure groups, seem increasingly influential in policy making. However, to make testing the theory empirically manageable, these restrictive assumptions are necessary.

Many policies can become law and be implemented without either a government's approval or a parliament's approval. Ministers can make orders that do not require parliamentary approval. Parliaments, in theory, can make laws of which the governments charged with implementing the law do not approve. However it is more common for significant and important policies to require the support of both parts of the political system; parliament and government. For that reason, in the models in this thesis I assume that the approval of both parliament and government is required to achieve public policy change, and that the actors therein are the only relevant actors.

The framework should work best for policies that are controversial. Many policies go through the process without ever seeing the hand of a prime minister (which is not to say the prime minister had no influence) and these are not the types of policies that can be easily explained through the framework I propose. Rather the framework should be most useful for studying the policy process for proposals that generate a serious debate and strong disagreement among the main policy-making actors. Indeed the framework is probably well suited to single case studies analysed through the framework proposed here using the 'Analytical Narratives' approach (Bates et al. 1998), and it is for this reason that the thesis is interspersed with real-world examples.

Defining the actors

Now that the limits of the type of policy-making conflict that the theoretical framework is best suited to analyse are set, I look inside the system at the actors that operate within it. The first and most obvious actor to be defined is the prime minister.

Surprisingly I can find no definition of prime ministers in any literature. Definitions of leadership have been offered (Blondel 1980; Janda 1972), but the closest anyone gets to defining prime ministers is a definition of parliamentarism, with the addendum that the chief executive of parliamentary government is the prime minister (Lijphart 1994; Sartori 1997).

Prime ministers

Different government architectures are manmade, and at some level of detail they are unique across countries. So there is no 'natural' distinction or definition for prime ministers or parliamentary government. However there is a widely accepted distinction between parliamentary and presidential systems and the leaders of the parliamentary systems are prime ministers. It is most useful to compare the prime minister with definitions of chief executives in presidential systems. One prominent definition of the role of 'president' notes first that presidents name and direct the composition of the government (Shugart and Carey 1992: 19). To a varying extent the same is generally true of prime ministers.

Presidents are often popularly elected, whereas in parliamentary systems the parliament itself, either directly or indirectly, selects the prime minister.[1] In presidential systems the terms of the chief executive and assembly usually have independent constitutional bases, and are not contingent on mutual confidence. In most parliamentary systems, the legislative term can be shortened for political reasons such as policy differences. The prime minister is often, but not necessarily, involved in terminating the legislature. The ease by which this can be achieved varies greatly. Norway is an exception to this rule, as the Storting's term cannot be curtailed under normal circumstances.

So, if the legislature does not have to depend on the executive for its continuance then, if prime ministers are not presidents, they must require the confidence of the

[1] A notable exception to this was in Israel between 1996 and 2001 when the prime minister was directly elected in a separate election, which took place simultaneously to the legislative elections, although this was not strictly necessary (Brichta 1998).

legislature to maintain their appointment.[2] Again, how easy it is to remove a prime minister depends on law. German Chancellors can be removed only on the nomination of a specific replacement. In Israel between 1996 and 2001 the prime minister could be removed by an absolute majority of Knesset members, which then caused a new election both for the prime minister and for the Knesset. However, a qualified majority of the Knesset could also remove the prime minister without risking its own position (80 out of the 120 MKs).

Taking these factors and exceptions into account, it is now possible to offer a definition of prime ministers that can cover all those people who are regularly thought of as prime ministers, and which can also exclude presidents. *Prime ministers are heads of government, who either directly or indirectly depend on the support of the parliament to maintain their position.*

Ministers

These are members of the government who become the political head of departments of state usually on the (direct or indirect) appointment of prime ministers. They hold their office as members of the government, and therefore cease to hold office when the government falls. Ministers are said to be individually responsible for the actions of the department. This means ministers are legally responsible for actions of a department. In practice this has meant that a French minister has been convicted of manslaughter for consequences arising from the policies introduced by his department.[3] Ministers are also bound by collective responsibility for government policy. This requires that all members of the government should publicly defend all government decisions, even where privately they are against the policy. If a minister is willing to remain in government s/he should support the policy, and if s/he cannot support the policy, s/he could be expected to resign.

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[2] Of course presidents can be removed by the legislature, but impeachment will be in exceptional circumstances and not normally for policy differences.

[3] Former French Health minister, Edmond Hervé was convicted in relation to the deaths of two people who received blood contaminated with the HIV virus. Specifically he, another minister, and the prime minister at the time (Laurent Fabius) were accused of delaying the introduction of a US blood-screening test until a French competitor was ready to go on the market. Over 4,000 people were given blood contaminated with the virus. Fabius claimed he could not have the expertise to decide on complicated issues and that his administration made mistakes.

Governments

The doctrines of ministerial responsibility, which have received a good deal of academic attention (Beattie 1995; Kam 2000; Marshall 1984; Marshall 1989; Sutherland 1991; Woodhouse 1993; Woodhouse 1994), effectively define the legal basis for government, which is itself a committee of the parliament. The doctrine of collective responsibility – what Lord Salisbury in 1878 called a 'great constitutional principle' (Wilson 1976: 72) – is cited as a boon to prime ministerial power (Crossman 1963: 52-3). Yet because prime ministers enforce the doctrines, they may be meaningless in practice. Prime ministers are not independent observers of cabinet; they are active participants. As such, the doctrine is enforced to suit prime ministers, and the primacy of politics negates constitutional niceties. The doctrines can be bent when it is politically expedient to do so and are serially broken by those who can break them.[4] In some countries, such as Italy, where unified single party government is unlikely to occur, the principle is widely ignored (Hine 1993: 220). In theory however, the doctrine means that ministers must tacitly support all government policy.

In parliamentary democracies the government automatically falls when the prime minister as head of government resigns, retires, dies or is removed, although it may stay on as a caretaker administration that normally has limited policy-making rights. When a government falls, it is normally the immediate duty of the legislature to appoint a new government, and the normal legislative process is suspended until this occurs.

Parliamentary parties

Ministers are also members of parties and may be members of party factions.[5] The parties or factions are represented in government. The factions and parties represented in government usually, but certainly not always, represent a majority in parliament. That majority is normally a stable one that nominates and supports a government.

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[4] Government leaks, and leaks against ministers, are violations of the doctrine of collective responsibility and seemingly occur regularly in most governments. Occasionally ministers are reprimanded even to the extent of being sacked. But this only happens when prime ministers want to and *can* sack ministers. The doctrine gives a prime minister in this situation a 'constitutional' reason to sack a minister, but it is likely that another could have just as easily been found.

[5] Even in those systems where there is a tradition of having non-partisan ministerial appointments, the ministers are appointed to achieve some partisan policy goal, and will only remain in their position as long as they seek to achieve that goal.

Even where the government parties do not represent a majority in parliament, or the majority in parliament that the government claims to represent rebels against it, it is unlikely that any policy will be introduced either through legislation or by some order of central government that the government is both opposed to and to which it is willing to express its opposition, i.e. vote against.

Now that I have discussed and set the scope of the thesis and defined the main actors within those limits, it is now necessary to discuss the motivations of some of those actors.

The motivations of actors: policy versus office

Given that the ability to implement preferred policies is used as a definition of power, a fundamental assumption in the thesis is that prime ministers are interested in policy. Is the assumption of policy-driven actors reasonable? It is probably fair to argue that all prime ministers and senior political actors have at least some interest in policy. The public would probably not make them policy-makers if it did not suspect so. It is also reasonable to expect that all political actors will have their limits to what constitutes acceptable policy changes. There will be some level of change that is unacceptable even to political actors who sometimes seem indifferent to policy.

This is important because the theoretical framework will not be useful where prime ministers do not care about policy. Burns argued that effective leadership requires motive and resources, and that 'the two are interrelated. Lacking motive, resources diminish; lacking resources, motive lies idle. Lacking either one, power collapses' (Burns 1978: 12). A difficulty arises, however, because sometimes one motive – the desire for policy change – may be inconsistent with another – the desire to remain in office. For many analysts the difference between policy and office-seeking behaviour can often be neatly swept under the carpet without any analytical loss, but it is more difficult when that office is a major prize in politics.

If we assume that a prime minister's only wish is to remain prime minister, measuring success is simple on that standard: one need only look at a prime minister's longevity

in office. However, few would argue that this is a sufficient measure for prime ministerial power or influence. Prime ministers must also *do* something; they must achieve more than office. Yet, it is difficult to accept an assumption that prime ministers are wholly policy driven, when one of the greatest prizes politics has to offer is being fought over.

The debate about motivations of politicians has been developed primarily within discussions of theories of party competition. A recent review of the literature on the motivations of political actors categorised these motivations into three areas; policy, office and votes (Müller and Strøm 1999). The use of the policy-driven assumption in models whose purpose is to predict government formation or the allocation of some other major prize is not problematic, because the goal (say, entering government) is such a major objective (for policy driven actors as much as for office motivated ones) that achieving 'the goal' of the model is not inconsistent with one's policy desires. A policy-driven actor is likely to put a great deal on the line if entering government is the prize. However, when the prize in the model is just a single policy goal, the assumption could lead to ridiculous results, because one could be asked to accept that a policy-driven actor will forego membership of a government in order to achieve a single policy goal. One of the reasons for such odd outcomes in models is the single-play nature of the models. The game in models dealing with policy-making essentially ends with the decision to adopt a new policy, or maintain the status quo. I propose a way to avoid this problem by extending the time horizon of the analysis to include influence on future policy-making in the payoffs.

I now review the literature on the differing motivations of political actors and raise some questions about the differentiation of actors into types based on their motivations, by showing examples of actors who all seem policy driven, but nonetheless act in very different ways.

The motivations of politicians

Political scientists who have made assumptions about the motivations of political actors for their analyses have, without an obvious exception, used a single exclusive motivation. This is not because they do not acknowledge the relevance of other

possible motivations, but rather because it is technically much more difficult to model using an assumption accepting more than one motivation, which inevitably requires the analyst to come up with some means to calculate the trade off between motivations. No assumption will be completely realistic and all are consciously defined as simplifications. The aim is to find the most useful operational assumption.

Perhaps the most famous sentence used to describe the motivations of political actors is Downs' fundamental assumption that 'parties formulate policies in order to win elections, rather than win elections in order to formulate policies'. Voters are interested in politics in order to achieve policy goals, but parties, or rather the politicians within them, 'are motivated by the desire for power, prestige, money which come from being in office' (Downs 1957: 28). Thus Downs did not see votes as intrinsically valuable, but as an instrumental route to office and the rewards associated with this. Taken to the level of the individual, politicians can be characterised as policy 'carpetbaggers', aggressively advocating a policy suitable to the electorate.

Riker took up this point in his *Theory of Political Coalitions*. He rejected Downs' notion that maximising votes was necessary for office-seeking politicians. It was only necessary to maximise votes up to the 'point of subjective certainty of winning' (Riker 1962: 33). Thus a coalition should comprise as many groups as needed to achieve a majority and no more. Anything above this would require a diminution of the shares of the fixed prize (office) that could be given to each group.

According to this approach office is valued intrinsically, that is, politicians want the jobs, cars, money, prestige and other perquisites that come with government office. Indeed one could go down to a further level of detail and see differences between the types of motivations causing politicians to seek office. One would expect that those who pursue money would act differently to those who want office for its prestige.

Other writers have pointed out that office may also be valued for what it can be used to achieve including, crucially, control over policy. De Swaan was the most explicit in choosing the policy motivation over any others. He argued that 'considerations of policy are foremost in the minds of the actors…the parliamentary game is, in fact, about the determination of major government policy' (de Swaan 1973: 88). Under this

assumption, politics is ultimately about policy, and political actors are therefore interested in policy.

However, when we observe the actions of politicians it is difficult to argue definitively for one or another assumption. Budge and Laver (1986) argued that even if we see what looks like office-seeking behaviour this could be caused by policy-seeking motivations. Laver and Shepsle (1996: 20) indicate that in the 'big' political game, the sequence of elections and government 'may force office-seeking and policy-seeking politicians, who seem on the face of it to be so different, *to behave in quite similar ways*' (emphasis added).

Political actors with different goals may behave in similar ways because democratic policy-making takes time. Legislation usually takes months if not years from draft to passage. Implementation is often also crucial to the eventual legislation, so arguably, years are needed in office if one is actually to implement one's preferred policies. In many countries, the pursuit of policy is only viable in practice from a position in government. A policy-seeking actor must thus seek office. This is in a sense a happy coincidence of interests for office-seeking politicians as a policy-seeking electorate must give them enough time in office for policy results to be expected of them. Even in the Netherlands, where parliament is comparatively strong vis-à-vis government, government membership is a decisive factor in influencing policy (Döring 1995b; Hillebrand and Irwin 1999: 114). So it is a reasonable strategy for a policy-seeking politician to pursue office, and to prefer longer to shorter periods in office.

Similarly office-seeking politicians in coalition negotiations will behave as if they are interested in policy because they need to retain their credibility as politicians in the wider electoral arena. As Tsebelis notes;

> 'people participate in a political system in order to promote the outcomes (policies) they prefer. As a result, policymaking is important for political actors (parties or individual representatives) whether these actors have direct preferences over policies…or whether they care simply about re-election…or whether they are ideologically motivated.' (Tsebelis 2002: 6)

All parties need office to achieve policy, which in turn might assist in acquiring votes. Figure 4.1 (below) shows a possible causal connection between policy, office and votes. No matter where one starts on this circle the effect is the same.

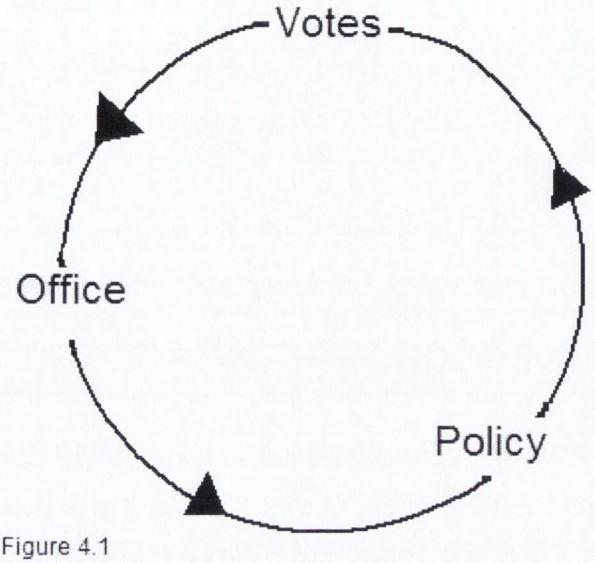

Figure 4.1
The connection between policy, office and votes

One reason why even policy-seeking prime ministers do not voluntarily place themselves on the backbenches is because the position of prime minister probably accords them significant policy control. However all parties (or rather the individuals within them) cannot be completely policy-driven. Why then would parties complain that other parties have 'stolen their (policy) clothes'? Politicians in a purely policy-driven party would be delighted about this, as it would allow them to stop wasting their valuable time getting involved in politics, yet they would receive the benefits of involvement.

To assume that prime ministers are purely policy driven could lead one to empirically unlikely conclusions. A prime minister who is offered the choice of either retaining the post or accepting an ideal policy on a specific issue might be predicted to resign their post, or act in a way that would risk losing that post so as to achieve that policy goal. This does not seem to occur. This is a problem with the model specification. It is caused by the necessity to take individual policy decisions as the single events the models explain. In reality however, decisions are usually taken as part of an on-going process, and a decision in one policy area will be affected by past decisions and likely

future decisions in other areas. I propose a simple, if incomplete solution to this below.

Conclusion: Extending the one stage model

Actions that we may interpret as being policy-driven or office-driven behaviour may not indicate that the actor taking those actions is policy-driven or office-driven. Felipe González may have been genuinely interested in Marxist policies, but may have pragmatically felt that his party would offer a better alternative to the right-wing government, which might have taken power had the PSOE remained too far to the left. The situations facing each actor in each case of policy-making are different, but each actor will have some idea of the costs and benefits facing him or her, and have some utility function that will identify the policies on which they are more open to compromise. Each actor will have a unique utility function, so an attempt to map a single utility function for all prime ministers would not be very useful. On policies on which politicians are less amenable to compromise, politicians may prefer to resign than be associated with the specific policy. Resignation would appear to be a policy-driven action. However, at times resignation may be rewarded (or not punished) by the policy-driven electorate. Therefore, in these cases an argument can be made that a political actor resigning on a policy principle may be making an office-driven decision, because it makes holding office more likely in the future.

In the thesis I assume actors are (intrinsically) motivated by policy. This is needed because the theoretical framework is useful only when it is applied to cases where the policy is important to the actors involved. If few of the actors have strongly held preferences on the policy to be decided, then the actor or actors who are most patient and most persistent in demanding their (even weakly-held) preferences will probably achieve an outcome close to their ideal point. In the models presented below I avoid the possibility that one actor achieves his or her goals by merely wanting those goals more by assuming that, where a policy is debated, this is equally important to all the actors involved.

Given that single-stage models could produce empirically unlikely results if either one or other pure motivational assumption is used, one needs to use multistage models

that can envisage accepting losses in the short term in pursuit of longer-term gains. In multistage models actors might act in apparent variance with one assumption in the short-term in order to achieve longer-term goals. This will be especially true when the actor is, or aspires to be, prime minister. The position is such an overarching career goal, that long-term strategies are more realistic than short-term ones.

However, multistage models are much more difficult to design and could be too complex to solve. For this reason they are rare in rational choice accounts of policy making. It may be possible to avoid the unreality of single-stage models but to maintain their applicability by integrating more than one time period into a single stage. This is unnecessary in many models of government because the endgame or subject of the models is often sufficiently important that a single-stage model accurately represents the actuality of the phenomenon under study. For instance, it is possible to accurately portray government formation as a one-stage model; government is formed at the end of one game, and a new game begins for the formation of a new government.

However, day-to-day policy-making is an ongoing process, and actors expect and tolerate losses in some policy areas so long as these are offset by gains in other policies. Hence, a prime minister does not resign if his or her ideal policy is not the outcome in one policy-making decision. Defining a policy-making 'event' might be difficult. If after an actor resigns, the stage ends, then an actor in a single stage model can secure that there is no change in policy by resigning. Therefore a model that portrays a single policy-making 'event', in which it is assumed that there is one, sole and final policy-making decision, will not accurately represent policy making and such models may predict empirically unlikely outcomes.

One can incorporate some medium-term consequences (further stages) into the potential outcomes of a single stage model; such that resignation on a policy issue not only causes the newly agreed policy to be retained, but also the loss of future influence on policy. If these factors are integrated into the outcomes of the single-stage model, the policy-driven actor will be likely to compromise on policy, because intransigence will lead to significant policy losses.

So, if an actor is willing to sacrifice office in an attempt to secure a policy, it is possible that the office holder's successor will reverse any policy gains achieved. By incorporating the second-stage policy consequences of resignation or dismissal into the model the policy-seeking assumption will produce realistic outcomes even in a single-stage game. The policy-driven actor will be open to compromise on policy given that complete refusal to compromise could lead to a worse policy in the short-term and a reduction of influence in the medium to long term.

Conclusion

Chapters 7 to 11 contain highly stylised models in which the assumption, that the actors defined in this chapter are motivated by policy, is important. In these chapters there is also an assumption that the actors have fixed policy preferences. While this is possibly true in the broadest sense – politicians do not change their ideology overnight – it is not true to say that political actors do not change opinions on policy as a result of rational debate.

Chapter 5. Data Collection

Introduction

The theoretical framework with which I approach the study of prime ministerial power is based on the number and diversity of important political actors in the policy-making process, and on the ability of prime ministers to influence those actors. In this chapter I introduce and describe the data on which later statistical analyses are based. The main focus of the data gathering stage is to measure the ability of prime ministers in different countries to set choices for others, and specifically to see to what extent certain institutional prerogatives cited in the literature are available to prime ministers. One can then see if there is a link between one's ability to set choices for other actors in the policy-making process (veto players) and one's ability to achieve one's policy goals (prime ministerial power). I discuss the problems of operationalising variables that represent the concept of power, and argue for the use of an expert survey to overcome the many problems associated with measuring this contested concept. The expert survey that was used to operationalise and measure prime ministerial power is introduced and discussed. I then test the resultant data for its validity and reliability. I also outline the sources of the other data that are used in later analyses. This chapter therefore introduces an extensive and comparable data source designed specifically to measure this unit of variation. With these data in place, the way is open to develop and test specific hypotheses in chapters six to eleven.

The unit of analysis

In any research one must decide 'what' one is in fact studying. For instance, in this general area one could choose 'prime ministers', their 'power' or 'policy-making' as the unit of analysis. The choice, therefore, is of utmost importance. Ideally one wants as many cases as possible, so as to have greater leverage on the dependent variable. The greater the number of cases, the more degrees of freedom will be available for statistical analysis, thus allowing more complex relationships to be investigated.

It would be possible to treat individual policy choices or decisions and non-decisions as the unit of analysis. This would enable a researcher to look at all policies that are made in the countries in the time under study, which could amount to millions. One could then analyse the role and impact of the prime minister in each choice. Where the prime minister's role is influential, this could be counted as a case where the prime minister has power. The proportion of times where the prime minister is influential, taking into account the saliency of the issues, could then be used as an estimate of that prime minister's power. The difficulty of this approach is that the universe of cases is indeterminate, and ultimately one would have to select cases that are known. We have reason to believe that many important policy decisions are those that in fact are *not* made (Bachrach and Baratz 1970). Known cases of policy-making may not be representative of the indeterminate universe, and the analysis may be misleading.

Ultimately, one would want to be able to say with some certainty that one prime minister is more powerful than another in a given set of circumstances. At the moment this information does not exist in a comparative format. Only one well-known piece of work has attempted to measure or rate the prime ministers of different countries comparatively. This is Anthony King's scale of prime ministerial power, and is constructed at a country level.

As the focus of this thesis is on the institutional foundations of prime ministerial power and the way these institutional prerogatives allow them to structure the choices others face, using countries as the unit of analysis would seem an adequate basis on which to empirically investigate prime ministers. However, given my selection of cases (discussed below) this would limit the number of cases to just over 20, which would in turn limit the number and type of independent variables that could confidently be analysed. But I argue that changeable political factors within countries have an impact on the viability and potency of the institutional prerogatives available to prime ministers, it makes sense to set the unit of analysis at the level of individual prime ministers. This is the strategy I use, but I break the level down further to treat the different terms of different prime ministers as different cases. This way, different terms of office of the same prime minister are comparable.

The cases

In this thesis I analyse the role of prime ministers in those parliamentary democracies that had been democracies for twenty years by 1st January 2000, and were covered by the European Journal of Political Research (EJPR) data yearbook. I chose established democratic countries because it takes time to learn how institutions operate and how they are best exploited. I chose the established parliamentary democracies featured in the EJPR data yearbook because it offers a source of reliable and standardised information for each country.

5.01(i) Definition of 'parliamentary democracies'

Of course this raises the problem of defining a parliamentary democracy. The definition I use is that a parliamentary democracy is a system in which the executive, consisting of a prime minister and a cabinet, is dependent on the parliament for its continuing survival. Some of the parliamentary democracies featured in the EJPR yearbooks are problematic.

In France, for example, the president is so powerful, especially when s/he is of the same party or side as the parliamentary majority, that the prime minister is effectively an agent of the president rather than of the parliament. France is possibly not a hybrid system, but one which moves between presidentialism and parliamentarism (Guyomarch and Machin 2001: 14-5; Lijphart 1993: 120), although this characterisation is contested. Most variation in prime ministerial power is likely to be explained by whether or not there is a period of *cohabitation* between a prime minister and a president of different parties. For this reason, France cannot be considered a normally functioning parliamentary democracy and its prime ministers will be excluded from the study.

Other systems with popularly elected presidents present quite a different situation. The Irish president, for example, does not have many more powers than a typical modern monarch, and in practice uses them sparingly (Elgie 1999). Iceland and Austria also have *de facto* parliamentary systems despite their directly elected presidents (Linz 1994: 55). These are therefore included in the analysis. The Portuguese president although initially powerful, has seen a whittling away of his

power and the norm is that the prime minister is the most significant single politician (Colomer 1996: 194; Lancaster 1996: 192; Linz 1994: 50). Indeed, one writer has argued that the prime ministerial figure in Portugal has been presidentialised (Moreira 1988). The same is true of Greece, which though not having a directly elected President, had a relatively powerful one (Sapelli 1995: 166). Thus, these countries' prime ministers will also be included in the study.

Finland is another case that departs from the norms of classical parliamentary democracies. The Finnish President has traditionally been quite strong if not directly elected. However, there is some evidence that the Finnish parliament (and its most significant committee, the government) has reclaimed some powers (Lane and Ersson 1996: 267). With the changes in the Finnish Constitution (codified in 2000) that strengthened the hand of the government vis-à-vis the President, the presidency became a directly elected position (1994). The cumulative effect of the reforms since the late 1980s in Finland seems to have moved this system towards being a true parliamentary democracy, and certainly the President of Finland is nowhere near as strong as the French President. For example, since 1991, the President can no longer dissolve the parliament, except at the initiative of the prime minister; the President can no longer dismiss the government without a motion of no confidence having been passed, or at the initiative of the government; the Finnish President's veto can be easily overturned in the next parliamentary session, where previously it had to wait until a new parliament (Paloheimo 2000). In addition to these factors, the accession of Finland to the European Union gives the government more control over foreign policy and EU-affected domestic policy, as it is government ministers who attend council meetings, rather than any representative of the President. All these factors lead one to think of Finland as being a parliamentary democracy at least since the 1990s, and that it therefore should be considered a normal parliamentary democracy and its prime ministers are included in the study.

Another exceptional case is Switzerland, which has fixed rules governing the composition of governments and their termination. It is also unusual in having a rotating chair of cabinet (there is no prime minister). For these reasons, Switzerland was not included in the analysis that follows. This leaves the following countries in this study;

Table 5.1 – Countries under study

Australia	Austria	Belgium	Canada	Denmark
Finland	Germany	Greece	Iceland	Ireland
Israel	Italy	Japan	Luxembourg	Malta
The Netherlands	New Zealand	Norway	Portugal	Spain
Sweden	UK			

5.01(ii) Selection of time periods

In the following empirical analysis I consider the role of all the prime ministers in each country back to those whose term of office ended after 1st January 1980, but with a maximum of seven for each country. I limit the number of prime ministers in the study for two reasons. Firstly, I did not wish to overburden the respondents in the expert survey. Secondly, I wanted to maintain a relatively similar number of cases for each country so that the greater number of prime ministers in some countries, for instance Japan, would not bias the results from the full dataset.

I leave out prime ministers who were in charge of caretaker governments and those who were in power for less than 200 days. In Israel and Italy I merged what would have otherwise been the distinct premierships of certain individual prime ministers. When a single person had been prime minister continuously for a number of years, but the party composition of the government had changed marginally and regularly, these individual terms were conflated to create a single premiership.

The cumulative effect of these definitions is that there were 22 countries in the study with 137 different prime ministers between them (see appendix B for a full listing).[1] This study thus investigates more countries than any other similar investigation. It adds new countries that have traditionally been left out of studies such as this, for example, Malta, Iceland, Luxembourg, Greece and Portugal. It also brings together for comparison countries that are not usually studied together, e.g. Japan, New Zealand, and Australia, with the countries of Western Europe.

[1] The number in the later statistical analysis later is sometimes lower because of missing data.

What variables need to be operationalised?

Of all the variables under investigation, an important one that needs to be operationalised is the dependent variable: prime ministerial power. This is the different power of prime ministers to influence policy in different situations. I discuss how this concept is operationalised in section 5.04.

The independent variables also need to be operationalised. According to the theoretical framework proposed in this study, the operation of power is predicated on the ability of prime ministers to set the choices facing veto players in the political system. Some of the ways in which prime ministers set the alternatives from which others must choose were identified in chapters two and three. These were mainly based on the ability of prime ministers to use constitutional prerogatives. However, Farrell finds that in Ireland 'the Constitution as a rulebook, has only tangential connection with the Irish political and government game' (Farrell 1987: 162). Some constitutional provisions are out of date and do not reflect modern political realities. For instance, to rely on the Australian constitution to understand Australian politics would leave one wondering if a prime minister exists, as there is no mention of such an office. Therefore one cannot rely solely on legal provisions to estimate the freedom that prime ministers have to set choices for veto players. Below I look at ways of estimating the freedom prime ministers have to use the prerogatives mentioned in chapters two and three, such as the rights to dissolve parliament, to appoint and dismiss ministers, and to determine the agenda in cabinet.

A further stage in the analysis looks at the source of this freedom. That is, why are some prime ministers more likely to be able to set the alternatives that other actors must choose from? These electoral and political variables are directly observable. So, for instance, the proportion of seats a prime minister's party commands in the legislature or in cabinet, or the electoral success of those parties, are absolute and meaningful numbers.

Measuring power

The greatest empirical difficulty in a study of this nature is to measure the dependent variable – the extent of influence or power over policy within a given country. In

essence, we need an index of prime ministerial power, but power indices in general are problematic. Barry (1980) for instance, has argued that a general index for power probably does not exist. Shapley and Shubik (1954: 787) suggest a method for evaluating the distribution of power based on 'the chance [a member of a committee or legislature] has of being critical to the success of a winning coalition'. This assumes that voting preferences are exogenous inputs; that actors are autonomous and their preferences unaffected by other actors in the political process. Since the possibility that one actor in the system can influence others lies at the heart of my theoretical framework, an index such as this is not useful to my purposes.

In studying presidential systems various scholars catalogue prerogatives as a way to measure power (Frye 1997; Metcalf 2000; Shapley and Shubik 1954). Each proposes a list of possible prerogatives and either uses a checklist to construct the scale of power or places each country on a scale for each prerogative (these can then be weighted to account for importance). Each author then uses what he or she regards as important prerogatives to construct a score for each country. Obviously this type of method cannot account for short-term intra-country variation because the institutional framework in each county remains constant in the medium-term. A greater difficulty is that these indices measure the dependent variable (power) using variables that are central to the hypothesised explanations for the operation of power.

Lack of information on sincere policy preferences

One method of measuring power would be to create a scale measuring policy outputs and comparing these with the stated policy goals of actors. But a serious impediment to studying the operation of policy making in central governments is a lack of data, caused by the intrinsically secretive nature of cabinet government. This is because government in parliamentary democracies work, to some extent, in 'black boxes'. Any information one does have is both unreliable and often biased. The social scientist is then left trying to balance competing informal and often self-serving accounts of any given event. Even when allegedly reliable information becomes available through each country's declassification of cabinet papers, or by the use of freedom of information acts, one can suppose that the recorded decisions on important issues do not necessarily reflect the real debate that occurred. Cabinet minutes are

often anodyne notes of decisions taken and do not reflect the extent of the conflict that preceded them.

To measure the effect of particular actors in a policy process, one ideally should be able to measure the sincere preferences of those actors. In practice we typically need to measure the revealed preferences of actors by studying their words and actions of the actors. Inevitably this means that what we can study is, in part, an endogenous output from the political process rather than a purely exogenous input to it. Thus, what some minister says in parliament about a piece of legislation will be the result of a complex political process involving negotiations in cabinet, with parliamentarians and party members. Ministers may not propose their ideal policies if they are certain such policies would receive a poor reception in the public or among political colleagues. There is simply no way of reliably estimating the truly sincere nature of the preferences of any political actor. So purely empirical studies would not be able to see everything even if we could get inside the black box of cabinet decision-making.

Therefore when 'power' is defined simply as the ability to achieve one's policy goals, it would be impossible to measure the 'success' of different political actors in achieving these goals with certainty because we have no reliable measure of those goals. For this reason it would be unwise to use a comparison between publicly stated goals and actual policy outcomes.

Similarly, in order to measure an independent variable – say, for instance, the ability to dismiss ministers – one could use direct observation of the number of dismissals. However, this method has a number of obvious problems. It does not measure the actual freedom to dismiss ministers, merely the number of times ministers have been dismissed. These are very different. Dismissals or reshuffles may be forced upon a prime minister as a way of alleviating falling popularity or because of a scandal (Dewan and Dowding 2003). One could of course ask prime ministers about the freedom they felt they had to dismiss ministers, but this information might well be biased and self-serving.

5.01(iii) Expert surveys

One solution to the problem of estimating the relative power of different prime ministers, and of estimating other difficult-to-observe variables, is to ask others who both claim expertise in the field and are independent of the research to be carried out. This method has been used for some time in political science beginning with the eliciting of the 'expert judgements' of others using a coded review of a listed literature (de Swaan 1973; Taylor and Laver 1973). Mair (2001: 17) reports that the first explicit expert survey in political science was carried out by a US PhD student (Morgan 1976). This sought to get interval-level data on positions of parties on some dimensions.

Expert surveys were slow to take hold in political science but since the 1990s they have become much more common. Their uses have been principally restricted to estimating positions of political parties. Castles and Mair (1984), Laver and Hunt (1992) and Huber and Inglehart (1995) have all used expert surveys to derive interval measures of party policy on a number of dimensions for their studies. These different expert surveys have been shown to be reliable over time. According to Huber and Inglehart (1995: 79), the correlation of the scores from Castles and Mair and their scores is .94.

Expert judgements have also been elicited to help gain knowledge of executive-legislative relations. A group of scholars led by Döring (1995a) used expert judgements to assess the effects of parliamentary procedures in Western Europe. As the standing orders of European parliaments are rarely available in a common language, these scholars used each other's expertise to shed light on a little known area.

As Mair (2001) points out, while not 'real', the data elicited from such surveys are better than having none. If the researcher is aware and open about the problems and deficiencies of the data, to have some data with known problems is better than having nothing with which to work.

Expert surveys have the advantage of giving a quantitative measure to the concepts being investigated, and experts, being experts, should get it at least partly right.

Though the data are not 'real', they are the product of many sources all asked the same questions and they should have a higher probability of being valid and reliable than an estimate drawn from a review of literature in which the authors may have used intrinsically different approaches to the topic.

For my own question, given the difficulties in eliciting reliable estimates of power, the most efficient solution was to ask experts in the field of their own country's government to place each of the prime ministers in the study on a scale of prime ministerial policy influence or prime ministerial power to get a measure of the dependent variable. I also asked the experts to estimate the freedom that prime ministers in their countries generally have to use certain prerogatives that are sometimes available to those prime ministers.

5.01(iv) The survey

The full text of the survey and its cover letter is reported in Appendix A. The purpose of the survey was twofold; firstly, to estimate the level of prime ministerial 'influence over the policy output of the government' and the ability of prime ministers to get their 'preferred policies enacted' on an interval measure. Secondly, experts were asked to estimate the ability of prime ministers in each country to use certain constitutional prerogatives.

The survey was deliberately short – the estimated completion time was ten minutes. Either seven or nine questions were asked in the survey, depending on whether coalition government is the norm. The other questions attempt to measure some of the independent variables. For those countries where coalition governments have either never taken place, or have not occurred since 1980, two questions relating to a prime minister's freedom to appoint and dismiss members of other parties were omitted (Canada, Greece, Malta, Spain, UK). These questions dealt with the other constitutional prerogatives discussed earlier, i.e. the right to select and dismiss ministers, control the cabinet agenda, the parliamentary agenda, and to dissolve parliament, as well as to measure the influence of individual prime ministers on policy in their countries. Possible responses for the questions were on a scale between one

and nine, where one indicated 'no freedom' to use the given prerogatives and nine indicated 'a great deal of freedom' to use these.

Some of the questions were unlikely to elicit a great deal of variation among respondents' answers. For instance none of the Norwegian experts had any trouble pointing out that the constitutional limit on the *Storting*'s term is absolute. Indeed it would have been worrying for the validity of the results had they not been able to point this out. In other cases the task was more subjective. The experts were asked to measure the effective level of freedom prime ministers have to use some constitutional prerogatives. It was therefore necessary to ask experts to estimate the political practice as opposed to constitutional theory. I take the responses to give a reliable estimate of the effective freedom of prime ministers to use these prerogatives.

Most respondents answered all the questions set them. There is a slightly lower response for questions six and seven (in the coalition survey) on the functioning of cabinet discussion. Perhaps due to the secretive nature of cabinet government, some respondents indicated that they were unsure as to how cabinets in their country of expertise operated. However, only about twenty respondents (of a total of 249) failed to answer either one of or both questions six and seven, and non-response was not common to any particular countries.

The question asking respondents for an estimate of prime ministerial power is obviously central to the study. This asked respondents to provide judgements of each prime minister's influence on policy, and each one's ability to get 'his or her preferred policies accepted and enacted'. The full question is;

> In some countries the prime minister has very little influence over the policy output of his/her government. In others the prime minister has a great deal of influence over the policy output of the government and is usually able to get his/ her preferred policies enacted.
>
> Below is a list of recent [nationality] prime ministers. How much influence do you think each had in terms of getting his preferred policies accepted and enacted. For each prime minister please indicate your views on the 1-9 scale where '1' means you think that particular prime minister had very little power to influence government policy and get his preferred policies accepted and '9' means you think that prime minister had a great deal of power to get his favoured policies enacted.

The estimates for different prime ministers derived from the responses to this question (*PMpower* in the datasets) ranged from little influence on policy to a great deal of influence. Most respondents gave estimates for all prime ministers, though some respondents did not give estimates of influence on policy for the earlier prime ministers, which may vindicate the decision not to choose prime ministers whose terms ended before 1980.

5.01(v) The experts

The survey was posted to self-declared academic specialists of the politics of the countries in question. As the likelihood of achieving a more reliable estimate of academic opinion is achieved by eliciting the judgements of as large a number of experts one would want as many experts as possible. So the aim was to contact the universe of political scientists in each country who study that country's executive and/ or policy making process.

I chose the experts using a number of means. The first criterion on which I chose was to use those academics who had published (in English) academic work on prime ministers and cabinets on specific countries. This list was not long. The next method was to use the Thematic Network in Political Science website directory (which was at http://www.epsnet.org). This gave lists of political scientists throughout Europe and allowed them to be broken down by area of expertise and languages spoken. I chose only those academic experts who said they could speak English, and those whose research expertise or interest was in the executive politics of the country in question. I then used the ECPR directory of members (at http://essex.ac.uk/ecpr) and again chose experts depending on their list of interests. These were the main sources of my universe of experts. For Japan and Luxembourg I also used the APSA directory of members. For the Commonwealth countries, Malta, Luxembourg, Iceland and Greece I also looked up individual department websites to identify potential respondents. Having failed to achieve more than one target for Iceland, Malta and Luxembourg, I chose any political scientist as well as political editors in newspapers. In the UK and Germany the universe of political scientists with an interest in executive politics is much larger than in other countries, and I restricted the search to those who had published on prime ministers or policy-making. Surveys were sent to 34 and 31

experts from these countries respectively, whereas for most other countries the number was between 15 and 20.

Unlike some previous studies I did not restrict myself to indigenous experts. One of the reasons that response rates were so low in other expert surveys (most I checked were about 30 percent) is possibly that in some countries, the potential response rate is restricted by the general lack of fluency in English among academic political scientists. In any case the majority of the respondents were indigenous, except in Japan where only a quarter of respondents were based in Japan (43 percent of targets). Given that only eight percent of Japanese-based experts questioned responded to one previous survey (Laver and Hunt 1992), the response rate of 57 percent using foreign-based experts shows that this is a beneficial route to take.

Another difference between the selection of targets for this survey and that of other expert surveys is that I also restricted (as much as possible) the experts to those claiming knowledge of the specific subject in question (here, elite-level decision making). In limiting the number of potential respondents to those with a professed interest in the subject, a higher response rate could be expected and, perhaps, the survey's results offer a more accurate estimate of prime ministerial power.

In all 413 different questionnaires were sent out. From these 262 responses were received. Thirteen of these were refusals, the bulk of which cited a lack of expertise. Of the 249 completed responses, 15 were anonymous. The response rate was just over 60 percent. Comparatively this is quite high. One notable feature is that no Northern/ Southern Europe divide in response rates exists (for confirmation see Laver and Hunt 1992). In other surveys, southern European countries have much lower response rates. Perhaps because language ability is taken into account, the rate here is about equal. In fact Greece has the highest response rate.

The estimates were calculated as the average of the responses. Instead of requiring a minimum number of respondents to accept an estimate as valid, I looked at the standard errors of the means of the responses. This checks the dissonance of the different responses. Where all experts respond to a question in the same way, then the

standard error of the mean is zero. Therefore to accept an estimate as valid I needed the responses of at least two experts. This is smaller than is usually found in expert surveys, but it is deliberately low to allow the inclusion of those counties where it was difficult to find experts or elicit responses from them. In fact Huber and Inglehart (1995) report some party policy positions on the basis of just one respondent and frequently with just two or three.

Unfortunately, unlike with p-values, standard errors do not have standardised cut-off points. This is because the size of standard errors depends on the metric of the estimates. The range of possible answers in the survey questions is eight (between one and nine). Where the estimate from a survey question has a standard error greater than one, I do not use that estimate in my analysis. It is chosen because where there are just two respondents, and their respective answers are within two points of each other on a nine-point scale, then the standard error is one. In these cases at least two experts in their field concur to some degree on the answer to the question posed. This cut-off point is deliberately high to allow as many cases into the analysis as is reasonable. As a result, seven of the 327 mean estimates are not used in the analysis.[2] One of these is from Portugal, which had seven respondents. This meant that no country had to be dropped from the analysis altogether.[3]

5.01(vi) Other data sources for independent variables

Most of the remaining data used in the various analyses came from three sources. The first source is the European Journal of Political Research data yearbooks. Data on government composition and election results were found here. The data on government composition was checked against Woldendorp, Keman and Budge's data section in the EJPR (Woldendorp, Keman, and Budge 1993; Woldendorp, Keman, and Budge 1998). The main data source for election results before 1990 was Mackie and Rose's (1991) extensive almanac of election results. Another data source for election results and government composition was Siaroff's (2000) collection. This was used to cross check the other data sources.

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[2] 137 prime ministerial estimates and 190 estimates for freedom to use prerogatives.
[3] I report those estimates that are not used in Appendix C.

Data Quality

The quality of the data in any academic study is a significant factor in determining the quality of the results and conclusions of that study. Where the observable units are the same as the variable being measured, for example using the percentage of votes received to estimate electoral support, this is not an issue. However, when variables are measured indirectly through some other observations, there may be problems of random and non-random error between the observed units and the variables that the observations are intended to measure. To establish the quality of the data emanating from the expert survey there are two questions one needs to answer; Are the data reliable? Are the data valid?

Reliability

Data are reliable when, if one were to gather the data a second or third time, the results would be the same or similar. So if I were to conduct the expert survey again, with the same experts or experts who matched the criteria I set, would I receive the same results? The most common test for reliability is the *test-retest check*, in which the investigator collects data twice and compares the two sets of data to see if they are similar.

It is not practical to conduct a whole new expert survey, simply to ask the limited number of experts for their opinions again. In any case, if there were a change in the results, this may be due to non-random factors. Perhaps the experts had discovered a new piece of important information in the time between the first and second surveys.

The reliability of expert surveys generally can be ascertained firstly, by their continued use and popularity as a way to operationalise concepts in political science such as ideology. Surveys continue to be used to measure parties' policy positions. Secondly, expert surveys of policy positions performed at roughly the same time produce similar results (cf. Huber and Inglehart 1995; Laver and Hunt 1992). The results of the expert surveys on policy positions are also relatively consistent with other, independently gathered data of party policy – the Manifesto Research Group data (Budge et al. 2001).

A second test for reliability is *Split-half check.* It is used to test that the different factors making up a scale in fact measure the same concept. If the elements making up a measure are randomly split into two groups, then the two summary measures should correlate if they are accurate measures of the same property. This type of test can be adapted to see if the different elements of the survey estimates (that is, the individual expert responses) are consistent by randomly splitting these into two groups and checking that they correlate. It is unnecessary to do this, as the *standard error of the mean* provides a coefficient that measures the consistency of the elements that make up the estimate. As I have removed from the analysis those estimates I deemed to be unreliable (those with standard errors greater than one) I feel confident that the data used in this study are reliable.

Validity and comparability

The reliability of a measure is a necessary, but insufficient condition to ensure the accuracy of a measure. A measure must also be valid. Measures are valid if they actually measure those phenomena that they are intended to measure. For instance, if a theory of voting predicts that social status will be linked to the party one votes for, then can we use annual income to measure the concept of social status? It could be, and is argued, that these are fundamentally different. Status – one's standing in society – is possibly a function of one's income, but there are other elements that make up status, such as education and type of employment.

In this study the measure was designed to directly elicit the judgements of academic experts on the variables in question – the power of individual prime ministers to set policy among others. Therefore, on the face of it this measure is valid if one accepts that these experts are qualified to make these judgements, and that these judgements are superior to the judgements of any other easily reachable group.

As well as checking that the data are valid in themselves, a further question arises about the comparability of the data across countries. The measure for prime minister X of country A might well show that she is more powerful than prime minister Y from the same country. But can we say that prime minister X is more powerful than prime minister Z of country B? Are the data valid across countries? Do the experts use

the extremes on the scale to indicate the extremes of influence of prime ministers in the respondents' own country? Or do experts across countries interpret the scales in the same way, assuming the extremes of the scales to be absolute or theoretical extremes of influence?

If experts use the end points of the scale as theoretical extremes rather than points to be used to plot the range of examples within their own countries, then the estimates will be comparable across countries. If the experts interpreted the outside points on the scale as overall extremes, then one would expect to see that there is a good deal of variation between countries. This is expected because the comparative literature suggests that a good deal of the variation in prime ministerial power occurs between countries rather than between the prime ministers of each country (see Jones 1991b).

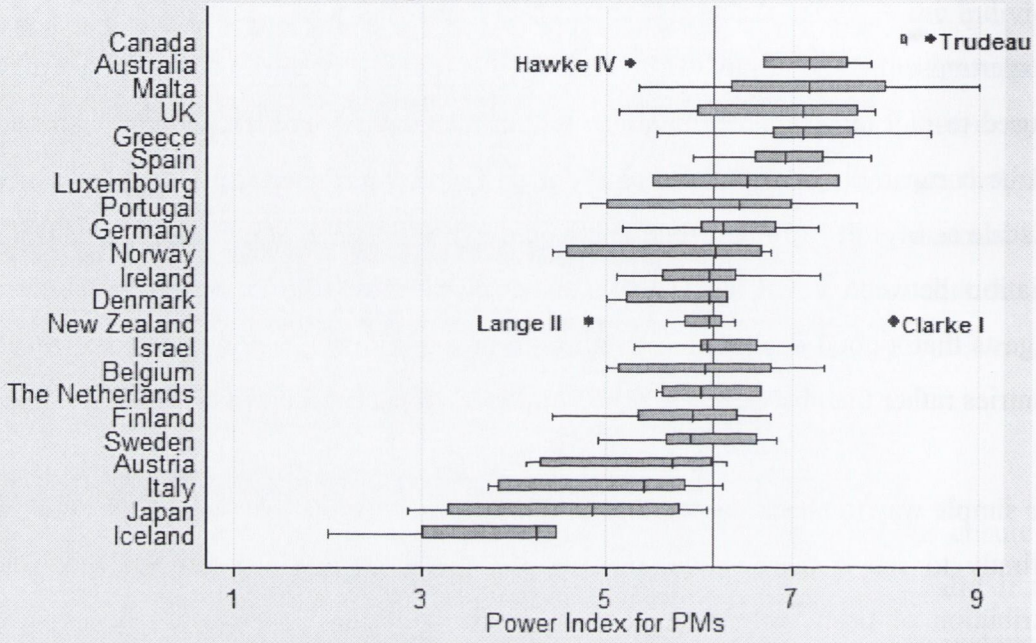
One simple way to check the validity of the measures for comparison across countries is firstly to see if there is variance across countries, and secondly to see if the distribution of prime ministerial power across countries is as would be expected according to the literature on prime ministers. Figure 5.1 uses box-plots to show the distribution of prime ministerial power by country. It shows the distribution of the five to seven prime ministers from each country on an eight-point scale, where 1 indicates 'not much influence on policy' and 9 indicates 'great deal of influence on policy'.

Looking at the box-plots of the distribution of prime ministerial power within and between countries, there appears to be a good deal of variation in the level of influence of the prime minister between countries. As one would expect, the median prime minister from Westminster system countries, Greece and Spain are estimated to be well above the overall average in terms of influence on policy in their own country. At the other end of the scale the median Italian and Japanese prime minister (on the power scale) are well below the overall average.[4] One would also expect that prime ministers occupy the space on the upper end of the scale, as surely these important political actors will have more influence than most other actors in the policy-making

[4] Iceland is probably not comparable because the power estimates for David Oddssonn's three premierships in Iceland were dropped because of high standard errors. These gave Oddssonn an average score of 7, which would have increased the Icelandic average considerably.

process. This analysis indicates that the estimates from the expert survey are broadly in line with our expectations, and that the data can be considered comparable.

Figure 5.1 Distribution of PM Power



Highest median first. Vertical line is overall mean. Source: Expert Survey

The expert survey's estimates of prime ministerial power in each country can be cross-validated against another empirical measure prime ministerial power provided by Anthony King in 1994. Based on a review of the academic literature, he categorised the prime minister in thirteen of the European countries in this study according to their 'degree of influence within government'. King grouped and scored countries into an ordinal measure of low, medium and high power, or weak, medium and strong (1994a).

Although King deals with each country's prime minister's 'degree of influence within government', and not within the policy-making process as a whole, government is an important part of the policy-making process, so one expects the two measures to be related.

Few of King's estimates would be considered controversial among country specialists. Perhaps categorising the German Chancellor as a 'strong' prime minister is disputable. It is usually accepted, perhaps given Adenauer's primacy, that the German Chancellor is among the more powerful heads of government within his or her policy-making process. However, some writers are clear that there are great 'constitutional and political limitations to the degree of personalisation' (Elgie 1995: 104-5) and that "Chancellor Democracy' was just a transient phase in the evolution of the federal republic' (Padgett 1994: 18). Indeed Müller-Rommel (1994: 162) cites elite survey data that shows that 62 percent of German ministers interviewed 'do not believe that the chancellor has an important impact on the overall business of government'. However, this hardly sits comfortably with another result from the same research that shows that over half of the cases of policy conflict (from a sample) were 'solved' by the Chancellor unilaterally (Nousiainen 1993: 276).

This controversy aside, other scores assigned to European heads of government tend to tie in with the literature on which the assignments were based. The relationship between the King measure and the measure based on the expert survey of prime ministerial power is strong and positive. The Pearson's correlation coefficient for the King's measure and the expert survey estimates is .72 (using the thirteen countries to which King assigned scores).

For those European countries not covered by King I use the data provided by Heywood and Wright (1996: 80), which correlates exactly with King's classification. Though this data actually measures executive dominance, I follow the example of Helms (2005) who uses it to measure the 'strength of the government head within the core executive' as there appears to be an empirical, if not logical, relationship between the two concepts. Iceland is not covered in any of these measures. The Icelandic government, according to Kristinsson (2000: 87), 'is not a strong collective body, nor does the prime minister have substantial powers within the government'. Iceland is therefore assigned a score of 'weak'.

For the non-European countries in this study, I assigned scores, following the approach of King (1994a), looking at the relevant literature. This was carried out before the results of the expert survey were available. For some countries assigning

the level of prime ministerial influence was easy. Japan, according to many writers on the subject, has an ineffectual prime minister (Curtis 1999; Hayao 1993; Mulgan 2000). Although it is claimed that Israel had prime ministerial government up to the 1980s (Arian 1985), since then the country has had little government control of public policy – hence the failed reform in 1996 (Hazan and Rahat 2000; Sprinzak and Diamond 1993). These countries were assigned to the 'weak' category. The Westminster systems are traditionally regarded as having strong executives and prime ministers (Weller 1985). Canadian writers are clear on the issue, they claim the prime minister is exceptionally strong in his own system (Campbell 1980; Savoie 1999), as do writers on New Zealand (McLeay 1995; Palmer 1994). A former New Zealand prime minister referred to the influence of the New Zealand *government* as 'unbridled power' (Palmer 1987). In Australia the situation is similar. Though the Australian constitution does not even mention a prime minister, the prime minister is leader of the major party and in practice has assumed the constitutional powers that are granted to the government through the Governor-General.[5] In Australia 'belief in over-powerful prime ministers has become orthodox' and as such the country can be coded as having a 'strong' prime minister (Weller 1985: 8).

Table 5.2 reports the mean scores of prime ministerial power for each country, based on the average of the between five and seven prime ministers in each country for whom we have estimates. These are on a scale of 1-9 where one indicates little influence on policy and nine indicates a great deal of influence. There are some scores that are notable but only Iceland's score of 3.75 is more than two standard deviations from the overall mean (see note 5).

Except for Ireland and Israel, all countries with prime ministers that are categorised as high or low power in King's measure are on the expected side of the mean. The mean estimate for Ireland's Taoiseach (prime minister) is, surprisingly, slightly below average at 6.08; this is despite its having been categorised as a 'high-power' premiership. Indeed, one study concluded that 'within his own political system the

[5] The Governor-General is the British Queen's representative in Australia. S/he is supposed to be apolitical, but in one extraordinary case in 1975 the Governor-General sacked the prime minister, Gough Whitlam (see Butler 1976).

Irish prime minister is potentially more powerful than any other European prime minister, with the exception of his British counterpart' (O'Leary 1991: 159).

Table 5.2 Country averages for PM influence

	Country	King's*	Mean PM power		Country	King's	Mean PM power
1.	Australia	strong	6.98	12.	Italy	weak	4.98
2.	Austria	medium	5.42	13.	Japan	weak	4.61
3.	Belgium	medium	6.05	14.	Luxembourg	medium	6.5
4.	Canada	strong	8.24	15.	Malta	strong	7.16
5.	Denmark	medium	5.77	16.	Netherlands	weak	6.09
6.	Finland	weak	5.76	17.	New Zealand	strong	6.15
7.	Germany	strong	6.29	18.	Norway	weak	5.72
8.	Greece	strong	7.10	19.	Portugal	strong	6.20
9.	Iceland	weak	3.75	20.	Spain	strong	6.92
10.	Ireland	strong	6.08	21.	Sweden	medium	6.01
11.	Israel	weak	6.21	22.	UK	strong	6.80

Total PM power	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
	6.13	.943	22

Pearson's correlation coefficient for the relationship between King's measure and PM scale is 0.71 (sig. 0.0002). Each country's result is based on the mean of the (5-7) means of the different Prime ministers in that country. The overall mean is based on the mean of the 22 means.
*The 'King' estimates are use those provided by King, but also include the other estimates described in the text.

Of course scholarship on the Taoiseach is not plentiful. It is possible that the previous work is simply wrong. A more likely explanation is that this assessment of prime ministerial power is based on Taoisigh from 1982 to 2000, whereas other research is based on the study of Taoisigh up to 1990 at the very latest (Farrell 1991; O'Leary 1991). It is possible that the relative influence of prime ministers in Ireland has changed over that period, especially given that no Taoiseach under study here had a single party overall majority, whereas they had been relatively common before 1980. Thus I would argue that the expert survey estimate is possibly more accurate for its time than King's estimate.

The Israeli score is also surprising given that most writers on the subject claim that the Israeli prime minister has become much less powerful. They do, however, also argue that the Israeli prime minister was a 'first among equals' up to late 1996 (Brichta 1998: 181). One scholar of Israeli politics argued that 'Israeli government can rightly be called prime ministerial government' (Arian 1985: 164). So perhaps the literature-

based assignment of a low power score to Israeli prime ministers was based on works covering a brief period from 1996 to 2000.

When the new King estimates are added and all countries in the analysis are used, the correlation coefficient between King's scores and the expert survey estimates is .7 (N=22). Both this correlation coefficient and the coefficient based on just the 13 original King scores are statistically significant. This analysis shows that the mean response for each country is roughly in the expected order. However, given that one variable is ordinal, the correlation is not ideal to test the relationship between these variables.

Table 5.3 Difference of means test for survey estimates according to King's categories

King's	Expert survey est.		
Measure	**Mean**	**Std. Dev.**	**N**
Weak	5.30	.897	7
Medium	5.95	.393	5
Strong	6.79	.659	10
Total	6.13	.943	22

F= 9.50 Prob. > F = 0.0014

The analysis of variance reported in Table 5.3 is a better way to proceed. It shows that that the three King categories do not have equal means for the expert survey scores, and that the differences are in the expected order. This indicates that the expert respondents took the country-specific causes of variation in prime ministerial power into account when assigning scores to the individual prime ministers, and that the survey estimates are valid for comparison.

Conclusion

In this chapter I described the way in which I chose the cases for the study and set out how I gathered the most important data for the project. I described the problems measuring the dependent variable and argued for the use of an expert survey. I then describe the expert survey and went on to test the quality of the resultant data. The data was tested for reliability by looking at the standard errors. The combination of cross-validation and the face validity of the measure allow one to conclude that the data are valid in themselves and valid for comparison.

With these interval data I can now develop and test hypotheses derived from the overall theory laid out in chapter three. However, they do attempt to measure a highly complex concept (power over policy) in a simple metric. Given this, I will abide by Cohen's (1990) dictum that 'simple is better' in data analysis. The data analysis below, therefore, takes into account that the data are not perfect, and so as not to aggravate any problems the data may have I shall only use common and easily interpretable statistical techniques. Before that I briefly provide some descriptive statistics.

Chapter 6. Data description

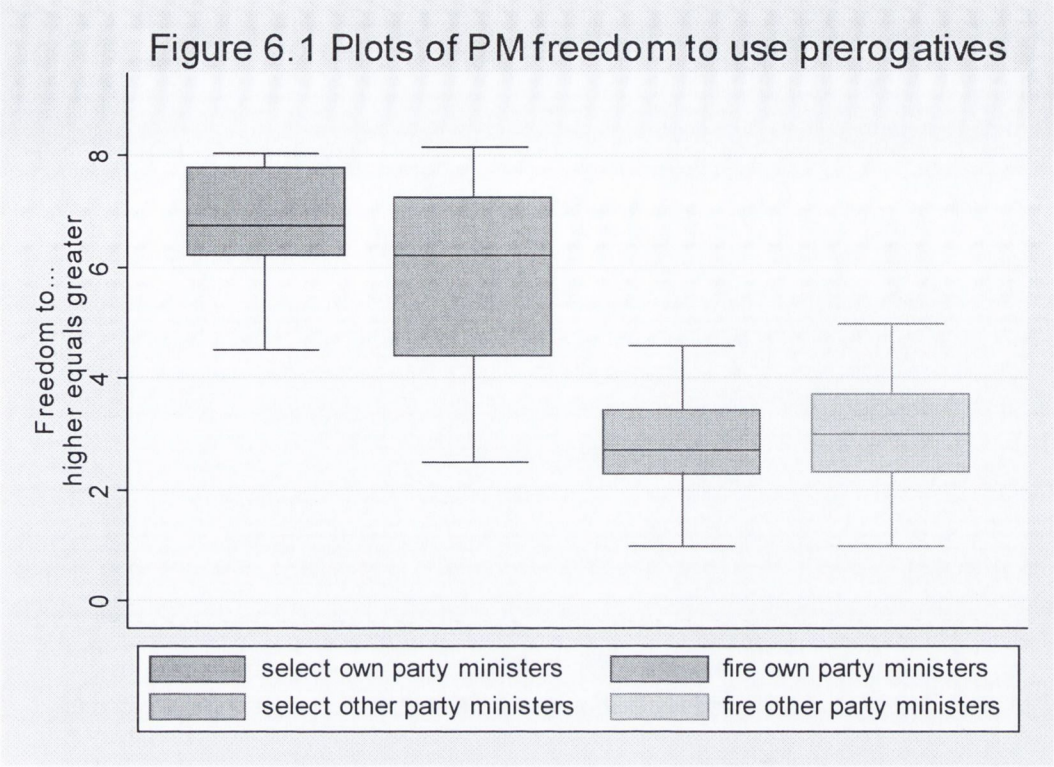
Although I will outline the data from the survey described above and other sources at the country level in the relevant chapters, it is useful to see the results of that survey together in a short chapter. Here I show the broad results of the survey in one place and show the data's suitability for use in statistical analysis.

Firstly we can look at the data for each of the survey estimates in summary statistics. Table 6.1 gives the mean, standard deviation and range of the country-level estimates for the various prerogatives investigated in the expert survey. One can see that prime ministers' ability to select and dismiss ministers from their own parties is on the upper end of the scale (mid-point 5). The lowest scores are for Japan, where factionalism reduces the ability of a prime minister to select who he wants, and the New Zealand Labour Party, where the party caucus selects who gets into the cabinet. While prime ministers seem to have a good deal of freedom to select ministers from their own party, the ability to dismiss ministers is more limited. This fact makes it important that prime ministers choose judiciously when constructing their cabinets.

Table 6.1 – summary statistics of freedom to use prerogatives

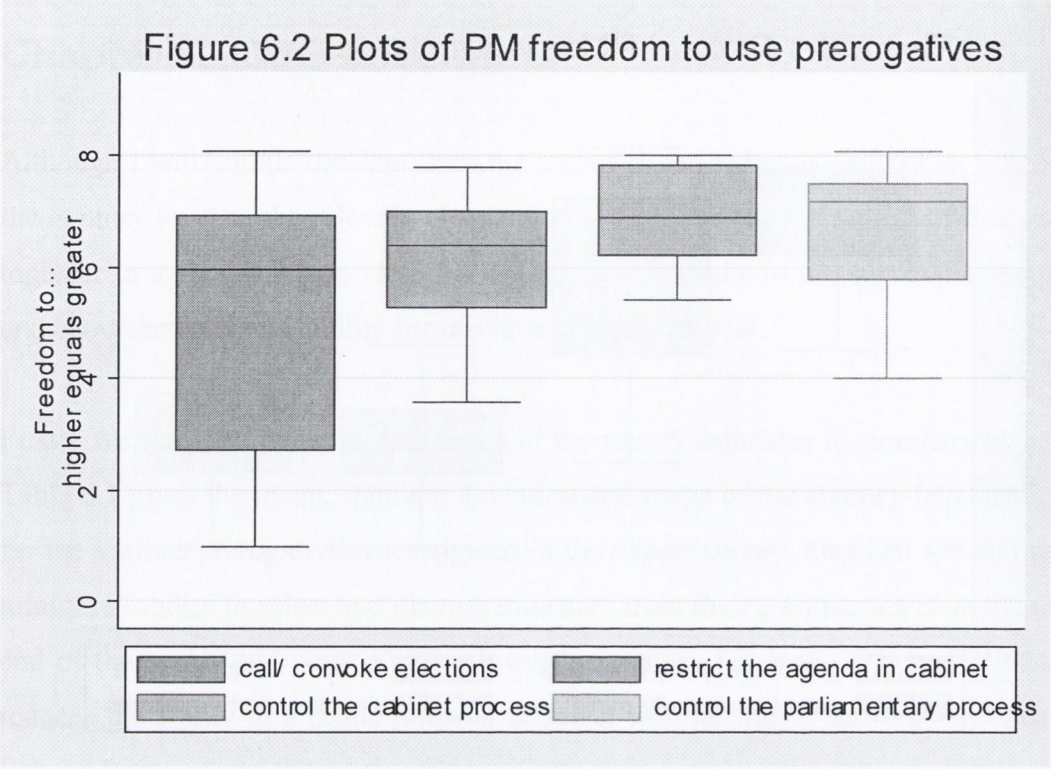
Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Select own	22	6.69	1.02	4.50	8.04
Fire own	22	5.90	1.62	2.50	8.14
Select other	17	2.79	0.88	1.00	4.57
Fire other	17	2.91	1.10	1.00	5.00
Call Election	22	5.04	2.17	1.00	8.10
Restrict cabinet	22	6.16	1.14	3.57	7.77
Cabinet process	22	6.89	0.94	5.41	8.00
Parliamentary agenda	22	6.55	1.36	4.00	8.09

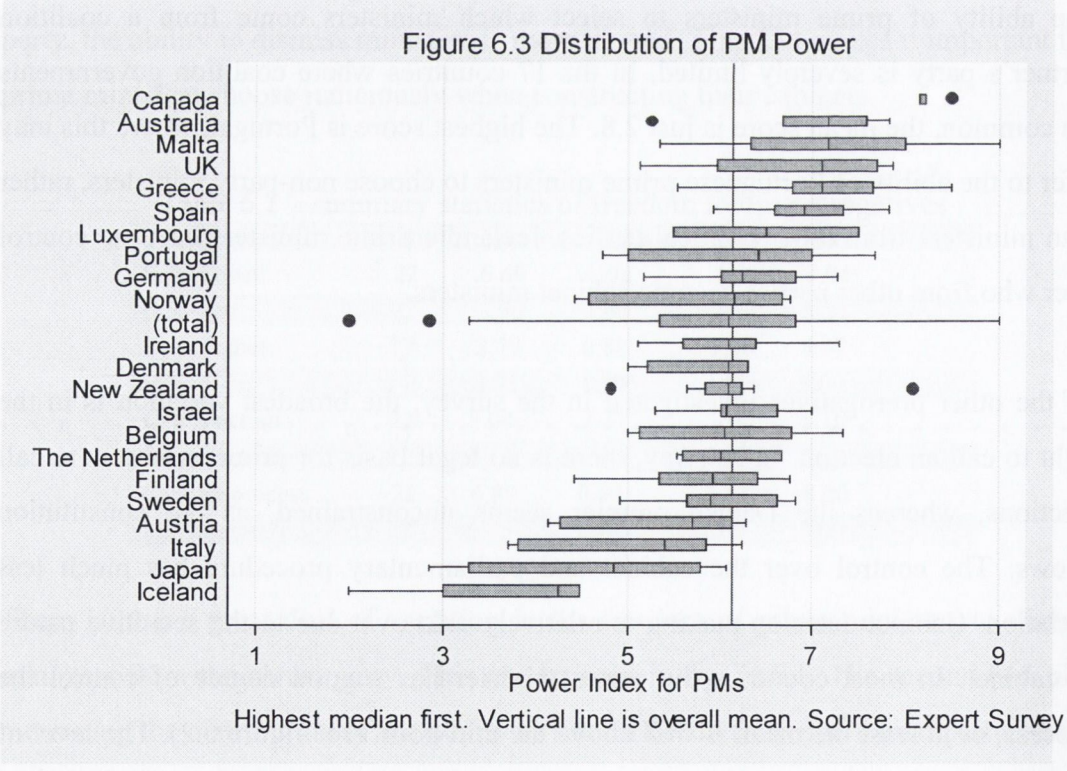
There is also a great deal of variation in the freedom of prime ministers to dismiss ministers from their own party. This can be seen in figure 6.1. The second box plot, measuring the distribution of the ability to fire ministers from one's own party, shows a greater degree of variation, ranging from a low of 2.5 in Iceland to a high of over 8 in Canada.



The ability of prime ministers to select which ministers come from a coalition partner's party is severely limited. In the 17 countries where coalition governments are common, the mean score is just 2.8. The highest score is Portugal, where this may refer to the ability of Portuguese prime ministers to choose non-party ministers, rather than ministers from other political parties. Icelandic prime ministers have no control over who from other parties become cabinet ministers.

Of the other prerogatives investigated in the survey, the broadest variation is in the right to call an election. In Norway, there is no legal basis for prime ministers to call elections, whereas the Danish premier seems unconstrained, as the constitution allows. The control over the cabinet and parliamentary procedure has much less variation. Cabinet decision-making is relatively unknown due to the secretive nature of cabinet. In most countries the prime minister has a good degree of control the process, or at least the mean is well above the mid-point (see figure 6.2). The level of government control of the parliamentary process is more varied across countries. Portugal, Norway and Italy have the lowest reliable scores, and the UK has the highest.





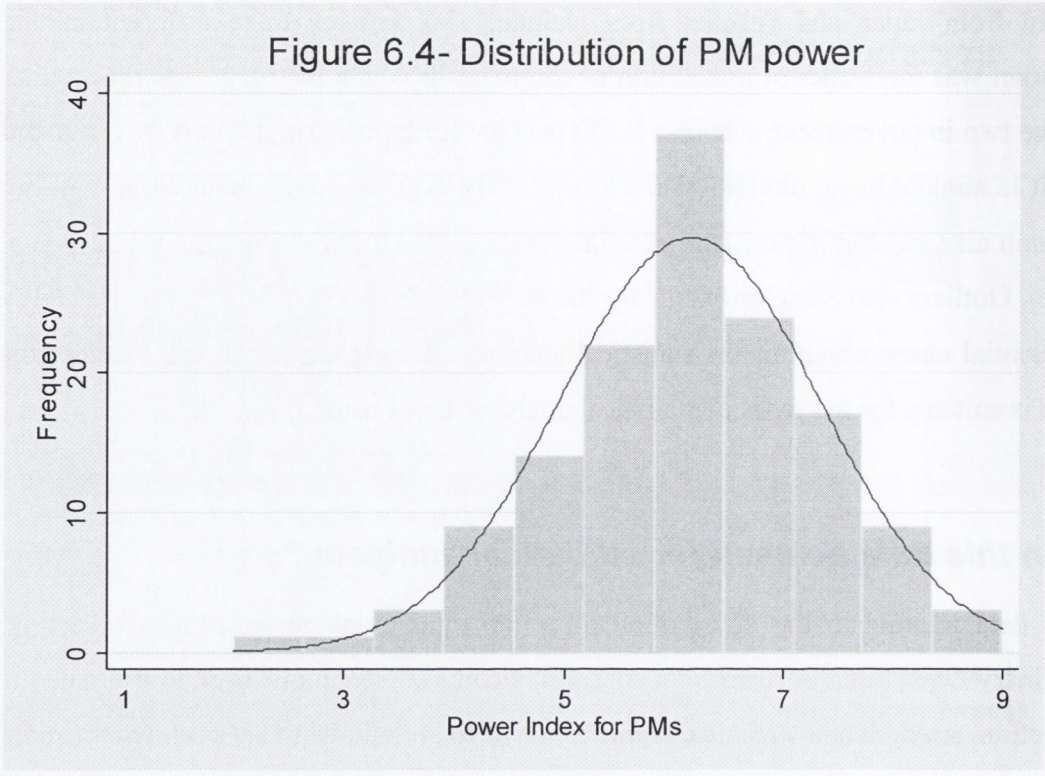
The distribution of prime ministerial power within countries was shown in the last chapter, and here we can see it again with the overall distribution (total). There are two outliers in the overall distribution, both on the lower end of the scale. These are

Kaifu from Japan and Palsonn from Iceland. The two are quite different in that Palsonn was the leader of a coalition government in which his party was the smaller of the two in government, whereas Kaifu was the leader of a single party government. So it is straight away obvious that looking at the type of government alone will not explain all variation in prime ministerial power (although this is not the primary goal here). Outliers also cause problems for the stability of analyses, as these can be highly influential cases which distort statistical analyses. This leads one to ask whether the data is suitable for the types of statistical analyses I will use.

Can this data be used for statistical analyses?

The data relating to the distribution of prime ministerial power is also revealing. Ordinary Least Squares regression analysis (a common technique used to estimate the direction, strength and statistical significance of the relationship between two or more variables) makes a number of assumptions about the data and the relationship of the variables for the estimators or coefficients to be unbiased and the tests of the significance of those estimates. Luckily the regression technique tends to be quite robust to violations of these assumptions, so it usually suffices to be aware of violations, but that only major violations invalidate the analyses. The normal distribution of the variables is not an assumption or requirement for OLS regression analyses to be unbiased, rather it is that residuals be normal, independent and identically distributed for p-values of t-tests and F-tests to be valid. The regression coefficients will still be valid regardless. And if we are only interested in estimation, and not inference, then this requirement is unnecessary (Gujarati 1995: 238-9). It is not required that the independent variables be normally distributed: otherwise how could one use dummy variables?

However, there is an assumption that the relationship between variables is linear. It is often the case that the relationship is appears non-linear when one or other variable is highly skewed. When this assumption is violated one can often 'transform' variables, to make the data linear without affecting the veracity of the data. However it might be problematic if the dependent variable was highly skewed. Here we can see that the dependent variable measuring prime ministerial power is normally distributed.



One reason that regression equations might not be reliable is that there is multicollinearity among independent variables. That is, two or more independent variables are perfectly correlated. This may be expected to be a problem where much of the data used is from the same source.

Table 6.2 Correlations between prerogatives

	Select own	other	Fire own	other	Election	Restrict	Process
Select own	1.0000						
Select other	0.4308	1.0000					
Fire own	0.5695	0.5294	1.0000				
Fire other	0.1565	0.7906	0.6966	1.0000			
Call Election	0.1604	-0.2753	0.4388	0.0348	1.0000		
Restrict cab.	0.4369	0.4135	0.5952	0.4901	0.4512	1.0000	
Cab. process	0.2921	-0.1790	0.4522	0.0501	0.6234	0.7361	1.0000
Parl. agenda	0.0643	-0.1201	0.4600	0.0539	0.6069	0.3413	0.3228

The correlations in table 6.2 reveal no major problem. One would expect that there would be high correlations between certain factors that measure similar concepts, such as control of cabinet procedures and the ability to restrict cabinet agenda, and indeed there are. However, for multicollinearity to be become an issue, the correlation should be near perfect. A test of each regression model for each independent variable's variance inflation factor (vif) also alerts one to problematic

multicollinearity. Some models have had superfluous variables removed, and the estimates from models reported here are not affected by multicollinearity.

OLS regression, though quite robust to violations of assumptions is not immune to giving misleading results. Happily there are some reliable and reasonably simple diagnostic tests one can carry out on either the data or the regression analyses themselves to establish that the results are reliable. For each regression reported in the thesis this battery of tests were completed and none showed extreme results that would lead one to question the validity of the methods used.

For influential observations, Cook's D statistic was used. Although some cases were found to be influential, none was unusually influential. Most of these were Japanese, Italian or Canadian prime ministers, and their difference can be explained theoretically. I consider it better to keep these observations in the analysis rather than exclude them.

To check for the normality of residuals for the different models, I generated graphs of the kernel density estimates, and compared these to a normal curve. None of the reported regressions deviated markedly from the normal curve. A plot displaying residual versus fitted values (rvfplot) allows one to check for homoscedasticity as does the Cook-Weisberg test (hettest). These tests did not indicate that heteroscedasticity was a problem in the various models. Where there are skewed data, making the assumption of linearity transformations are carried out on the relevant variables. These are mentioned in the text.

As the observations can be grouped by country, there is the possibility that the independence of errors associated with one observation may be correlated with the errors of another. This is known as autocorrelation. It is most common in time series data. The Durbin-Watson d-statistic shows that autocorrelation is not a problem in any of the reported models.

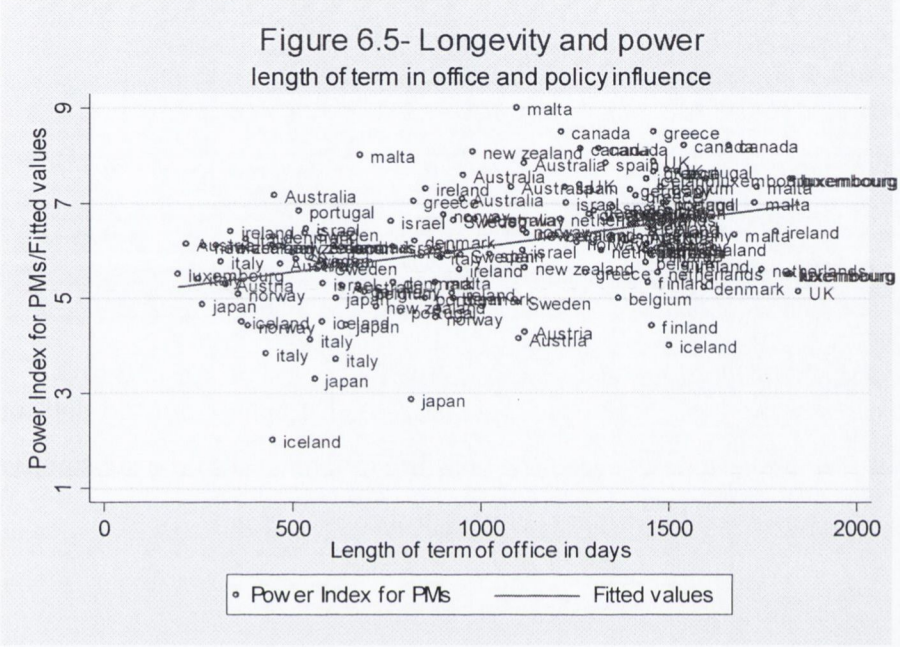
Overall variation: some initial results

It is noted in the literature review that some writers believe there is greater variation between countries than within countries (Jones 1991c; Rose 1991). With this data it can now be tested. 'Eyeballing' the box plots in figure 6.3 is a useful method to discern the variation within and between countries. This obviously shows that there is a greater spread in the total than in anyone country. However, given that this is bound to be the case, we need a test that takes account of the number of cases. One does this by using a test of variation, the standard deviation test (using the *sdtest* command in Stata v8.0), which is based on the F-test. I completed 22 tests, one for each country, comparing the variation within each country with the variation of the 22 country averages.

One might expect that the variation within the country is significantly lower than that across countries. However, while many countries had lower standard deviations as compared to the cross-country data, only in one case was this difference significant. That country is Canada, which one can see from figure 6.3, has little variation. If one includes the estimates for Icelandic prime ministers that were removed due to unreliability, then this is also significantly different, with variation being significantly greater than the cross-country variation. These tests show that we can say that internal and country-level factors account for roughly equal levels of variation (or at least not significantly different). This would suggest that the office holder matters as much as the office, and that a 'strong person' can overcome a weak office, and a 'weak person' will not be made forceful by a strong office. This would contradict assertions in some of the resource-based literature, but would accord with the fact that we have seen weak prime ministers in countries such as Britain and New Zealand, and that we have seen relatively strong prime ministers in Italy. This result is also corresponds with the thesis proposed here, as the ability to set 'tough choices' for other veto players often depends, not just on institutional factors, but on political factors that make those choices credibly 'awkward'.

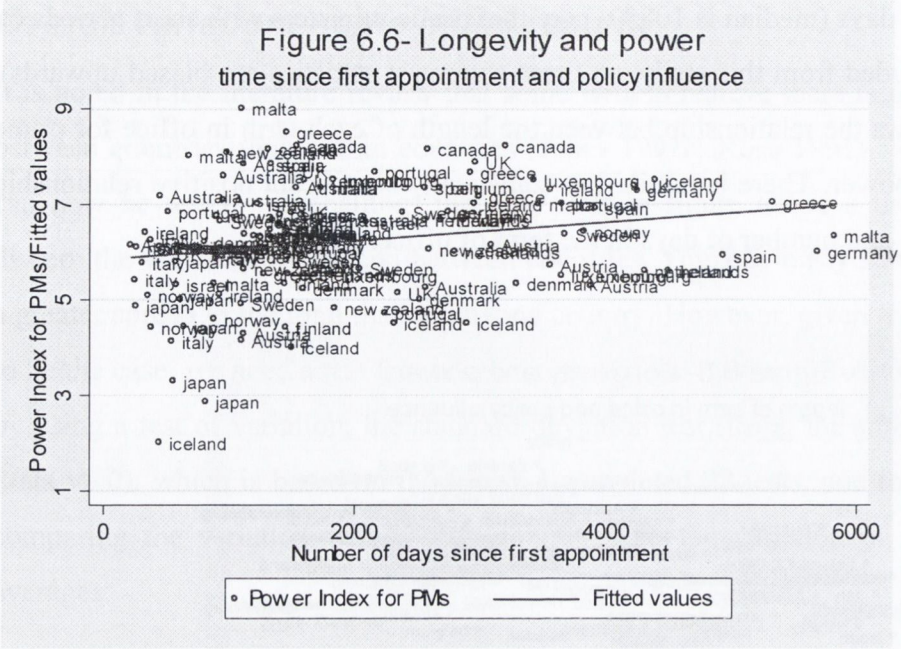
Another argument that sometimes emerges from literature on prime ministers is that there is a relationship between longevity and power (Blondel 1980: 218). The average length of a term of office for the prime ministers in the countries and time period

chosen is 1014 days (median is 1085 – note that prime ministers with short periods on office are excluded from this study, so these summary statistics are biased upwards). Figure 6.5 shows the relationship between the length of each term in office for prime ministers and power. There is a mild but statistically significant positive relationship between power and number of days in the term of office.



It is arguable that it is not the length of a prime minister's term in office, but their overall time in office that is important. Figure 6.6 shows the length of time since a prime minister first held office to the end of each term. So for instance, for Margaret Thatcher there will be four values, one from 1979 to the end of her first term, another from 1979 to the end of her second term, and so on. Where a prime minister's terms are not continuous, the same rule applies, still taking the time from the first term in office. This is done because it indicates how long a prime minister has been a very senior figure in the politics of that country.

The data reveals that there is a weaker relationship between the total length of time prime ministers have spent in office and their power to determine policy. The data seem to indicating that relationship between policy influence and time is weak but one where there is more variation for newly appointed prime ministers than more experienced prime ministers.



This chapter provides some basic descriptive statistics and graphs from the data on prime ministers in the survey results. It is now possible to move on to the substantive chapters investigating how prime ministers achieve power over policy.

Chapter 7. Veto Players and Political Power

Having been elected Mayor of London in 1999, Ken Livingstone was given part control over the future development of transport in London, and hence the London Underground. With his Transport Commissioner, Robert Kiley, he proposed that the Underground should remain in public hands and receive greater investment, but be run in a more efficient manner. Kiley had managed to turn around the New York and Boston subways, so was thought to be competent to do this. The government proposed to split London Underground into four – an operator, which would remain in the public sector, and three private-sector infrastructure companies, which would maintain the network. Livingstone argued that the government plan of a public-private partnership (PPP) would not be efficient and would pose a safety risk.

The government's plan was a compromise between a Labour manifesto pledge not to privatise the Underground, and the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Gordon Brown's determination to see that the full financial burden of regeneration was not carried by the taxpayer (*The Economist*, 7 February 2002). The government's plan was less popular with the public and London's Labour MPs than Livingstone's plan was. Tony Blair knew this, and was not opposed to Livingstone's plan in principle, even if he did harbour suspicions about Livingstone (who ran as an independent mayoral candidate after he failed to receive the Labour nomination). *The Economist*, hardly a propagandist for left-wing ideas, said the government's plan was a fudge. Yet the Treasury, and in particular Gordon Brown, remained firmly opposed to the Livingstone plan.

Blair tried to find a compromise, and used the Transport Secretary to try to convince Brown to find some middle ground. Even if it all went wrong, they could blame Livingstone, and if it succeeded they could take some of the credit. Here is a time where Blair could have overruled the chancellor, thereby establishing his supremacy, and made a decision popular with the public and his backbenchers. Yet he refused to confront Brown. As one commentator noted 'the political benefits were not sufficient for Blair to force the Chancellor to change his mind' (Naughtie 2002: 298-9).

This case tells us something about the distribution of power within the Labour Government. When the Labour party came to government in 1997 it did so on an agenda of reform. Parts of the electorate hoped that after 18 years of Conservative rule there would be significant change in certain policies. Previous Labour governments had found it very difficult to introduce or implement radical reform. In the mid-1970s certain ministers in the Wilson and Callaghan governments complained of being hindered at every turn (see Benn's and Castle's diaries in particular). The left claimed the civil service stopped them introducing reforms, whereas the ministers considered to be on the right of the Labour party felt the unions and others in the cabinet prevented any policy changes. The government eventually collapsed in 1979, following months of appearing unable to deal with the significant crises the UK faced.

In contrast, Tony Blair's government rapidly achieved at the very least a reputation for being active. For instance, the government handed over the right to set interest rates to its Central Bank (The Bank of England). Devolution was introduced to Scotland and Wales. A host of other initiatives were introduced in health, education and transport. Whether these were changes of style rather than substance is debatable, but the prime minister quickly got a reputation in Britain of utter dominance and being able to achieve any policy he wanted (Cowley 2001; Leonard 2005).

What had changed between the 1970s and the time when Tony Blair came to power? In the 1970s, the Labour party was controlled by many different groups; the unions, the national executive, Conference as well as a significant number of heavyweight politicians in the cabinet, the so called 'Big Beasts of the Jungle'. These figures, people such as Tony Benn, Michael Foot, Roy Jenkins, Denis Healey represented distinct factions, or at the very least tendencies, within the Labour party.[1]

By the time the Labour party re-entered government in 1997, the party was transformed. The power of the unions had been severely restricted by the 'one member, one vote' rule changes. The party conference, once a scene of policy debate, became a means to project a carefully choreographed image of the party. The 'Big

[1] Edmund Dell, a cabinet minister at the time says of Foot that 'he could bring down the government at any moment' and of Benn that he devoted himself to 'making a nuisance' (Dell and Tanworth 1994: 456). Jenkins and Healey were on the right of the Labour Party, and so closer to the then Prime Minister, Jim Callaghan.

Beasts of the Jungle' in the Labour establishment had retired during the previous 18 years, and had not been replaced. Of the new government it was said that:

> No Prime Minister since the nineteenth century has spent more time avoiding formal meetings with cabinet colleagues than Tony Blair. When they happen, they are brief. The real deals are done elsewhere, usually in the Prime Minister's study with only three or four people sitting around: and as often as not, with only two...The cabinet structure [gave] way to something close to a dual premiership. (Naughtie 2002: 104, 271)

The Blair-Brown axis dominated economic policy. According to one contemporary historian of British politics, 'the decision-taking circle that mattered on economic strategy was described simply by the bilateral meetings between Blair and Brown' (Hennessy 2000: 480). On the invasion of Iraq, it was recognised 'that Brown [would] be key to any success…If he had encouraged opponents [of the policy] with his support, however tacit, it would have been a genuine number ten crisis.' (Stothard 2003:83)

As the passage on the London Underground reforms indicates, policy changes were impossible to make if either Blair or Brown decided to stop them. Each seemed able to veto any proposal to government, and in many policy issues they were perhaps the only people who could effectively veto policy proposals. Where the two agreed almost any policy change seemed possible. The ability of prime ministers to achieve policy change depends, to some extent, on the number and policy positions of actors who can say 'no'. This idea has been developed and formalised by Tsebelis (1995; 2000; 2002). In this chapter I investigate why this might be the case and empirically test this proposition.

Introduction

The veto has long been recognised as important in politics. In 1789 Alexander Hamilton argued that, though the power of the presidential veto in the US would be difficult to observe, it would have a 'forcible operation'. It is important because it allows certain political actors or institutions to refuse to allow a change in policy. Therefore when an actor holds a veto s/he can decide whether policy is changed or not and as such, may have some influence in what way the policy is changed. The veto is a negative power: it is the power to refuse change, not to effect change. And as

Hamilton noted, it is a power that may be 'silent and unperceived': if one knows that one's favoured proposal will be vetoed, one may adjust one's proposal accordingly. Though no action has taken place the potential veto player has had a real (if conservative) effect on policy. The actions of one set of actors were changed by the expected reaction of another.

As US presidents hold a veto over Bills from Congress, (which two-thirds of both Houses of Congress can overturn) much of the literature that deals with the importance of the veto in politics is on the US (Cameron 2000; Krehbiel 1991; Krehbiel 1998). In parliamentary democracies, on the other hand, constitutionally or legislatively derived vetoes are relatively uncommon.

Yet, even in parliamentary democracies, analysts have noted that the ability to veto is significant to understanding what policies get chosen. Ian Gilmour argued that in Britain,

> 'there are virtually no institutions able to say 'no' to the executive. The Monarchy is above politics; the second chamber has been paralysed; the House of Commons passes the government's legislation; the law has been made subservient to the executive [and] local government has been subjected to Whitehall control.' (Gilmour 1971: 2)

This difference between presidential systems and the parliamentary system highlights the importance of other constraints on veto players and their use of the veto. For instance, the British monarch retains many *de jure* prerogatives, one of which is a veto over legislation. Yet the present Queen, who has sat on the throne for over fifty years, has not been seen to use her veto.[2] It is possible that she is not interested in politics, although this is unlikely (see for instance Hennessy 1995: chapter two). Another unlikely scenario is that monarchs regularly use their veto, but that we do not see its use. In fact Andeweg and Irwin (2002: 13) give many examples of the Dutch Monarch intervening to prevent a policy change including the threat to withhold the constitutionally-required signature, but these have usually been policies directly affecting the Monarchy. Monarchs do not seem to use the veto in the same way a US president does. This is probably because they realise that they retain the right to use it

[2] Tony Benn claims that the Queen intervened to prevent him removing the Queen's head from stamps when he was Postmaster-General in the mid-1960s (Benn 1987: 218-300).

for exceptional circumstances only. Were a monarch to try to involve his or herself in day-to-day politics, s/he would find there were more serious calls for a republic. The use of the veto is not within the bounds of acceptable conduct – legally the use of the veto is possible, but politically it is not.

Some writers have focussed on the veto as a method of political control. Winter (1996) shows that the bargaining power of non-veto members of a committee is negligible. Krehbiel (1998) focuses on the separation of powers in the US. He adds what he calls the 'pivotal' voter's location to the median voter model. In his model, pivotal voters are those voters whose (tacit or explicit) approval is needed for a policy change to occur. The median voter is therefore a pivotal voter or 'veto pivot'. Krehbiel includes the presidential veto in his model of US politics, making the president a potential pivotal voter (Krehbiel 1999: 38).

Tsebelis is most explicit in his analysis of the importance of the veto and has popularised the idea of a veto player. Tsebelis has developed a framework to understand policy stability. He recognises that although political actors in parliamentary democracies often do not have formal veto powers, certain groups often have de facto veto powers (Tsebelis 1995; Tsebelis 2000; Tsebelis 2002). Veto-holding actors can clearly affect the extent to which policy is changed. Tsebelis proposed that additional actors who can veto policy changes in a given political system (veto players) will not make policy change more easy to achieve and may make it more difficult. So one should see a connection between the number of veto players in parliamentary democracies and the ease with which prime ministers can achieve their policy goals.

In this chapter I review Tsebelis's system of classification for political regimes, and explain how his theoretical conclusions can be used to study prime ministerial power. I then identify some of the veto players (VPs) in a political system and attempt to establish their policy positions. This allows me to construct some empirically testable hypotheses concerning the type of prime ministers that should have greater freedom to change policy.

The number of veto players may not be fixed and prime ministers may be able to affect their number. If a veto player's position is in the gift of the prime minister, then the veto player is vulnerable to pressure from the prime minister and ceases to be a de facto veto player. A veto player may only be a veto player if a decision is taken in a certain way or place. Prime ministers may be able to change the method of, or forum for, policy decision-making, thus effectively changing who the veto players are. In chapters seven to ten I look at specific ways in which a prime minister can use his or her prerogatives to make veto players 'vulnerable' or to neutralise them.

Veto player theory

Tsebelis defines veto players as 'individual or collective actors whose agreement is necessary for a change in the status quo' (Tsebelis 2002: 19). So any change requires the unanimous consent of all the veto players. The logic of the model is that if a political system has many veto players, agreement will be more difficult to achieve and hence policy stability will ensue.

This definition of veto players characterises veto players quite broadly, and it does not directly tell us what a veto player should be in real life. Tsebelis (2000) classifies veto players into two types: *institutional* and *partisan* veto players. Institutional veto players are those veto players that are set up institutionally or constitutionally. Veto player theory provides no formula for identifying institutional veto players in different regimes. Many will be obvious. One can best identify the institutional veto players by studying the constitution/ legislative rules of a regime. For instance a second chamber whose support is required for the passage of legislation is an institutional veto player. Equally, in presidential systems a president whose signature is required to pass bills emanating from the legislature is also an institutional veto player. Other examples of institutional veto players are the federal regions or states in federal systems that can reject centrally-produced legislation. A committee that must pass a piece of legislation before it can proceed to the full chamber can exercise a veto.

Partisan veto players are those people or groups of people who have a veto over the legislative process, not because of a legal position they hold, but because their support is politically required to change the status quo policy. In parliamentary democracies

the best examples of a partisan veto player at the highest levels are governments themselves. In many countries few bills pass through parliament which have not been supported by the government. Even in Denmark, whose tradition of minority government makes governments there vulnerable to parliamentary defeats, up to the 1980s there was a norm 'that parliament did not pass proposals that the government advised it not to adopt' (Damgaard 1992: 31). Other examples of veto players are the parties in a coalition government. Indeed, in an early piece on veto players, Tsebelis argued that the number of parties in government is the most important variable to understand variation in policy stability. He could then conclude that 'single party governments (whether majority or minority) have the possibility of introducing major changes in the *status quo*' (Tsebelis 1995: 103).

A number of assumptions are needed to support this theory. First, to set the scene, think of a two-dimensional policy space, and a system with two participants in which both participants have a veto, so unanimity is required to achieve a policy change. Figure 6.1 illustrates this type of scenario. Imagine that the Y or vertical axis represents defence spending, and the X-axis represents social spending. The further north and east from the origin (where the axes intersect) one moves, the greater the desired level of spending on defence and social services respectively. The points A and B are the ideal points of the two actors (ignore C for the moment) and are found at the centre of two indifference frontiers. These show that both actors would prefer considerably less spending on defence than the status quo allows, while A would prefer slightly less, and B slightly more spending on social services than the status quo provision.[3]

Each circle shows each actor's indifference curves, i.e. the points at which each would be as satisfied as they would at the status quo. Both A and B would prefer any point inside their own indifference curve. The Pareto Set, or the set of points which both actors prefer to the status quo, is shaded. This area is also the *win set*, the set of points that can beat status quo in this crude model of a political system. Though the Pareto set and *win set* are the same here, this need not always be the case.

[3] Euclidean preferences are assumed, hence the circular indifference curves.

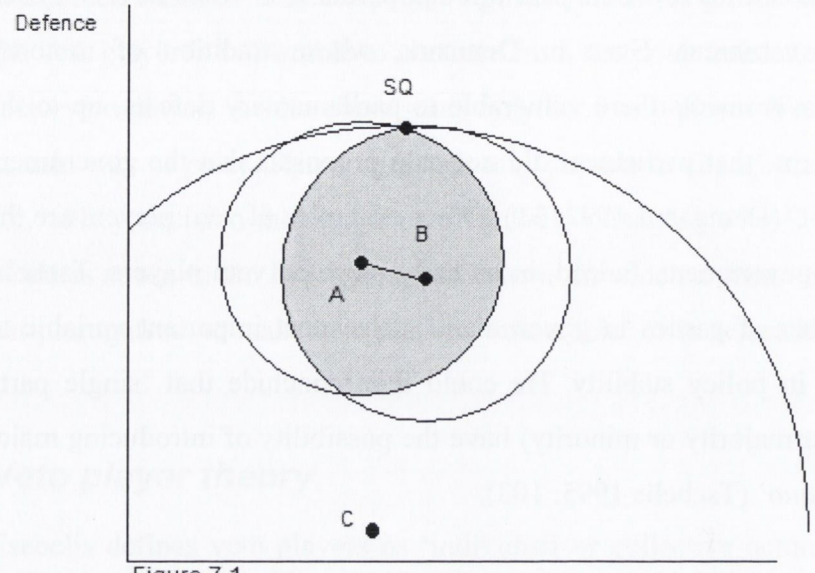


Figure 7.1
Three veto players on a two dimensional policy space (adapted from Tsebelis (2002))

Actors A and B will mutually prefer any move towards the contract curve (the line connecting their ideal points). Once on it, the two veto players will *not* be able to agree any move along or away from the contract curve.

If one added a third veto player, what would happen? A proposition that the greater the number of veto players the more difficult it is to change policy, would suggest that the shaded area, the Pareto set and *win set*, would be reduced. This assumes that the different veto players have policy preferences that diverge around the status quo.

If for instance a third political actor, C is introduced, and its position on the same two-dimensional space is not divergent from either A or B, then the set of points that the policy could be changed to remains the same. Even if C is positioned outside the *win set* or in what may be considered an 'extreme' position, the *win set* may not change, as is illustrated in figure 7.1.

The distance of other veto players from each other is less important than the angle at which the lines connecting each actor's ideal point and the status quo intersect. Each extra veto player will only make a difference if the new veto player's ideal point is outside the smallest 'ray' emanating from SQ that covers the ideal points of the

existing veto players. So, for example, if one draws two infinite straight lines, one from SQ through A to A^{∞} (read A infinity) and the other from SQ through B to B^{∞}, any new veto player whose ideal point is within the boundaries of the region of the policy space $ABB^{\infty}A^{\infty}$ will not change the *win set*, or rather, will not restrict policy change. This is because any change in policy to a point within this area will be an improvement for the new VP. This 'congruence ray' is illustrated in figure 7.2.

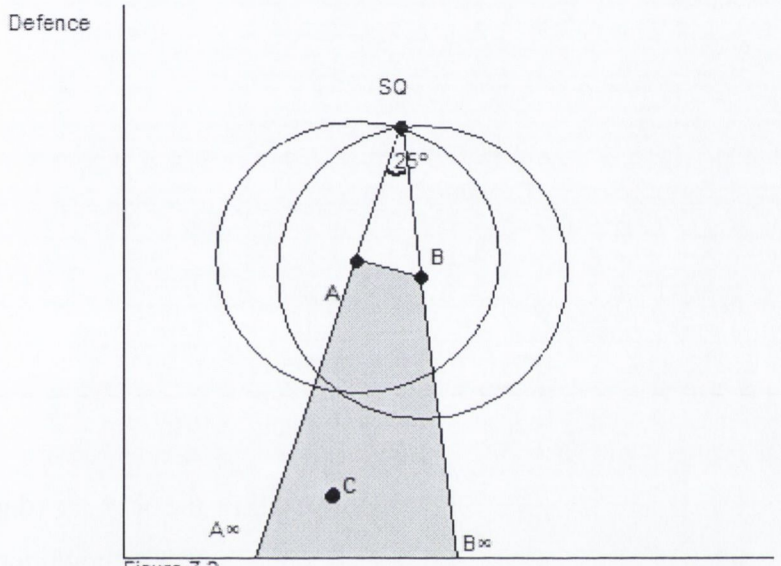


Figure 7.2
'Congruence ray' in policy space
Developed from Tsebelis (2002)

(Of course, it is possible that in the more complex world of real politics, the actor C with an ideal position as per Figure 7.2 would not accept a move from the status quo to a new policy on the line AB even though it would mark a policy 'improvement' for C. This may happen because a political actor that concedes to such an 'improvement' may give its electorate the impression of being satisfied with the new policy. C may veto such a policy move so as to signal its policy credentials to the electorate.)

Figure 7.3 further illustrates that the distance from the existing veto players is less important than the angle at which the lines from each actor intersect through the status quo. Here C is more 'central' than in figure 7.2, but the addition of C in this position has a great impact on the size of the *win set*. The new *win set* is much smaller (the dark shaded area in figure 7.3 compared to shaded area in figure 7.1) and the new

angle of the 'congruence ray' is much larger (angle at the intersection of the lines CSQ and BSQ compared to the angle at the intersection of ASQ and BSQ).

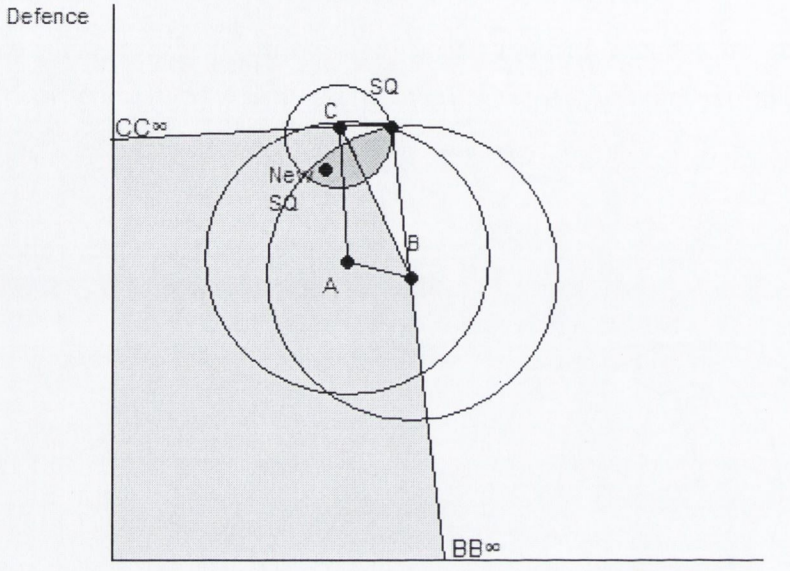


Figure 7.3
Changed win set due to different position of an actor
Developed from Tebelis (2002)

Say, for whatever reason, A, B and C agree a new policy within the *win set* (dark shaded area) in figure 7.3 (shown as 'new SQ' in figures 7.3 and 7.4). The now much smaller *win set* in figure 7.4 indicates that the set of possible changes to policy is much smaller, and what might be perceived as radical change to policy seems impossible. If the new policy were in the triangle ABC, then any further change would be impossible, as at least one veto player would be made worse off by policy change (the *win set* would be empty). Thus one can conclude that any additional veto players whose ideal policies are not covered by the 'congruence ray' (i.e. any additional, incongruent veto players) make it more difficult to effect policy change. Here, an incongruent veto player is a veto player whose ideal point is located outside the space covered by the existing 'congruence ray'. Additional veto players located within the 'congruence ray' are 'absorbed' and therefore have no impact on the possibility of policy change.

So, additional veto players will have no effect if existing veto players are at directly opposite sides of the status quo, i.e. the lines of their indifference curves only touch at the status quo. If this were the case, the angle of the 'congruence ray' would be 180°

and as such every possible new policy would be 'covered'. In these cases the addition of more veto players will not make policy change more difficult because it is already impossible.

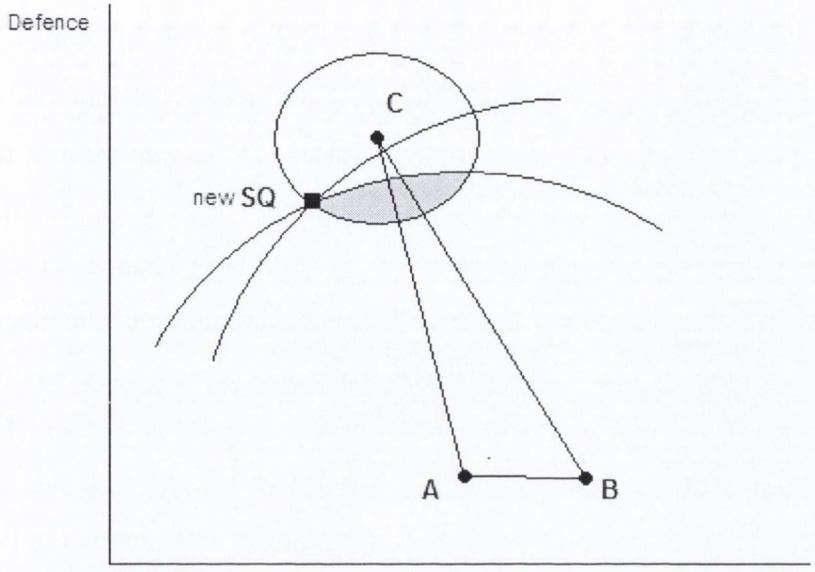


Figure 7.4
Three veto players: Winset of the new status quo
Developed from Tsebelis (2002)

In fact, a possible measure of the extent to which policy *could* be changed – as distinct from whether policy *is* changed – is the size of the angle of the lines making up the 'congruence ray' that covers all veto points.[4] If veto players occupy positions at directly opposite sides of the status quo, then the angle of the 'congruence ray' is 180°. In figure 7.4, the angle making the 'congruence ray' is slightly above 90° (CSQ, SQA). Where the angle of the 'congruence ray' becomes smaller, i.e. the veto-playing actors are close in terms of policy; it becomes easier to make relatively large changes to policy. However, as that angle gets larger, changing policy becomes more difficult. As was noted above, when that angle is 180° or higher, policy change is impossible.

We can also make conclusions about solitary veto players; that is, actors who are the only veto players in the policy-making system. Assuming that the unique veto player

[4] As for any intersection of two lines there are two angles, it is important that it is the angle that makes up the 'congruence ray' that covers all of the veto points.

is not restricted in proposing policies, the sole veto player should be able to achieve whatever policy it desires (Tsebelis 2002: 35). It is completely powerful.

7.01(i) The relevance of veto player theory

So why is this relevant to the study of prime ministers? Veto player theory is useful because we can characterise the policy-making system in parliamentary democracies as a group of veto players and use the conclusions of the theory to apply them to policy making. The main forums for decision in the policy-making process, cabinet and parliament, can be said to be veto institutions. And within these forums certain actors are veto players. With the veto player framework, an understanding of the place and power of prime ministers in the policy-making process becomes more easily achievable. Cabinet decisions are made using an informal system of vetoes. In parliamentary democracies a prime minister must tacitly accept bills if they are to pass. If a prime minister refuses to accept a bill or policy change, it will usually not be passed except with the resignation of the prime minister, and hence the collapse of the government. If the government collapses, the legislative process ends until a new prime minister and government is installed. Consider the former UK Chancellor, Nigel Lawson's observation:

> There is a large area of government where what might be called a mutual blackball system exists. By that I mean that if a Minister wishes to do something within his own field which the Prime Minister profoundly disapproves of, then the Prime Minster has a blackball which he or she can cast…he [or she] will effectively veto the idea (Lawson 1994: 444)

In some countries, such as Italy, Norway and Japan, what is sometimes a de facto but informal arrangement is given constitutional status, as the prime minister must countersign all Government Bills and cabinet orders (Koff and Koff 2000: 135; Strøm 1994: 44-5).[5] However, Strøm (1994: 45) says about Norway that 'the influence of the

[5] Article 74 of the Japanese Constitution states that the prime minister must sign all laws and ministerial orders. It is not clear if the Japanese PM has discretion to refuse to sign. In fact in a number of constitutions any action taken by the Head of State, which include the promulgation of Acts of Parliament into law, need to be countersigned by either the prime minister, government or the relevant minister, thus giving these actors potential iron-cast vetoes on policy. Consider, for example 87 and 89 of the Italian Constitution where they respectively say that;

> 'He [the President of the Republic] promulgates laws and issues decrees having the value of laws and regulations'

and that;

> 'No act of the President of the Republic is valid unless it is countersigned by the Ministers who have submitted it and have full responsibility for it.

prime minister is never exercised in this way', rather the 'decision rule practised most commonly seems to be unanimity'. Of course if unanimity is practised then the prime minister, in fact, *does* have a veto, because without his or her approval, a decision cannot be passed. The difference is that other members of the cabinet also hold a veto. In any case, neither the explicit use of the threat of veto nor the constitutional recognition of vetoes, are necessary requirements to indicate the actual existence of a system of vetoes. Indeed the constitutional provision of a veto may not provide a real opportunity to veto.

Cabinet decision-making can be thought of as a result of an interaction of different veto players. Neither majority rule nor dictatorship seems to be the normal decision-rule in cabinet. Rather 'consensus' is often considered the method for making decisions (Laver and Shepsle 1994a: 299). Unfortunately consensus is a rather uninformative term that merely indicates 'general agreement'. This presumably means that all parties to a decision consent to a decision. The rules of collective responsibility in cabinet are central to this. Under collective responsibility all actors in cabinet must either agree to accept a policy that they may or may not like, or to resign from government. Therefore, those members of the cabinet who are veto players must all agree not to veto a proposal for it to be accepted by cabinet. Even where prime ministers and other ministers oppose bills, they actually give these bills their tacit approval if they do not use their threat of resignation.

Parliamentary majorities are very often fixed and minimal winning (that is, the majority does not change from issue to issue, and the parties making up the majority do not include superfluous members). In these cases, the actors that make up a majority are veto players, because if one or more of those pivotal actors oppose a policy change, no change will ensue. The veto-playing actors may be the party or party faction. Indeed the median voter on a particular issue may be regarded as a veto player on that issue.

Acts having the value of Law and such others as laid down by law have to be signed also by the President of the Council of Ministers [prime minister].'

However, there is no indication in any country specific literature that a minister or prime minister would refuse to countersign legislation coming from parliament even though their constitutions would indicate the possibility.

Furthermore, if a prime minister is a veto player, and is the sole veto player in his or her policy-making system, then it can be demonstrated that, subject to certain agenda-setting assumptions, this prime minister will be able to achieve his or her desired policy outcomes. On a continuum of power (as defined here) this prime minister will be at one extreme. Where many veto players exist with divergent policy goals, power is reduced.

It is unlikely that any policy-making system exists in which it is the case that there is no actor that can prevent a prime minister from changing policy. As I noted above, cabinet and parliament need to approve most policy changes, and relevant ministers must also give consent for changes to occur. So, few prime ministers will able to achieve their desired policies, and none achieve all their desired policies, without difficulties.

However, in some countries the same actors may occupy multiple veto playing positions in, or control, these veto playing institutions. A regime with a single legislative chamber and single party government may have a small number of veto players. New Zealand, before electoral reform in 1993, is a good example of this. The party leader of the governing party in New Zealand would be prime minister, and given the nature of the party hierarchy where the leader could punish dissenting voices, it could be argued the prime minister was effectively the only veto player in the New Zealand policy-making system. In that case he or she should have been able to achieve whatever policy goal they desired. One writer on New Zealand referred to the executive's position there as 'unbridled power'. This writer, Geoffrey Palmer, later went on to become prime minister, and his position changed only slightly. He tempers but does not reject the public's view that within the executive 'the prime minister is much more than first among equals – he or she is regarded as being in charge of the government, as the boss' (Palmer and Palmer 1997: 53).

So, we can see that the use of the veto (whether formal or informal) is important in parliamentary democracies and that veto player theory can be used to analyse power in the parliamentary system. Two factors are important to establishing the level of power over policy that prime ministers have within their own policy-making systems. Firstly, the number and position of potential veto players defines the set of potential

policy outcomes. This relates to the possibility of there being policy change at all. Additional incongruent veto-playing actors in the policy-making system reduce the set of potential policy outcomes. Therefore, it is important to identify the veto players in a system and to discover their policy positions if we are to be able to explain variation in prime ministerial power.

A second important factor determining prime ministerial influence on policy is the ability of prime ministers to prevent other veto players from using their veto. The possibility that one actor can prevent another actor's use of the veto is problematic for the whole concept of veto players, but is an important element of the explanation of prime ministerial power. I now address this and other criticisms of the concept of veto players.

The limitations of veto player theory

The veto player approach is not without criticism. For instance, one criticism that could be made is that none of this is new. Scholars in mainstream political science have long thought about the issues veto player theory raises (see for instance Katz 1980: 2). Katz clearly recognised, and he was not a pioneer in this view, that the UK's ability to change policy easily and the relative inability to do so in Italy was linked to the number of political actors whose support was necessary for policy making. However, veto player theory provides the concept and language to make the point more generalisable. Veto player theory leads one to focus on the differing policy-making systems in Italy and the UK by overtly looking at the number of actors whose agreement is needed to change policy. So while neither the idea of the veto player approach is new, nor the empirical expectations novel, veto player theory does offer a more cogent and efficient method for analysing political systems.

One could also criticise an assumption that was made that governments are centrally located in policy space: the 'party forming a minority government is usually centrally located' (Tsebelis 2002: 97). The assertion about the central position of governments is neither empirically nor theoretically defended. In fact, much of the advantage that Tsebelis claims governments to possess could be due to this central location in the policy space rather than due to being a veto player. However, the assertion of the

central position of governments is unnecessary to Tsebelis' main argument and so does not affect the use of this theory here.

Many of the criticisms one could make about the theory concern how empirically restrictive it is. Tsebelis (1995) assumed that parties were in effect the only veto players in parliamentary democracies, and that parties were unitary actors. Most other criticisms of the veto player approach are connected to this problem, which actually relates to the correct definition and identification of veto players. The next section addresses the criticisms in the context of the framework for understanding prime ministerial power.

Collective veto players

One significant problem with the theory of veto players as Tsebelis constructs it is the use of collective veto players. A collective veto player may be any institution or organisation whose support is needed for policy change. So for instance, parliament is a collective veto player. Whether any or none of the individuals within this institution are veto players is a matter for debate.

If it possible that there are no single individuals within these institutions who can veto policy then there is no single veto point that can reduce or limit the set of potential new policies. The collective group of actors will not then constitute a veto player in the same way that a single actor does, and the theoretical expectation will not strictly hold.

Whether there is an individual veto player within a collective veto player depends on whether there is a single median voter. The median voter on an issue effectively has a veto on that issue. Individuals within a collective veto playing institution are similar to Krehbiel's 'pivotal voter', or veto pivot (Krehbiel 1998). These are the actors whose support is necessary for a change in policy.[6] Where policy is one-dimensional, it is likely that there is a single median voter who in effect becomes the veto player for that institution. In multidimensional policy spaces the likelihood of there being a

[6] This does not mean that the pivotal median voter will achieve their policy outcome; agenda setting and the position of the status quo also determine this.

single actor who is a veto player is smaller. On a two-dimensional space, for a single actor to be a veto player she would have to be the median voter on both dimensions. If this type of actor does not exist then no individual within the institution is a veto player.

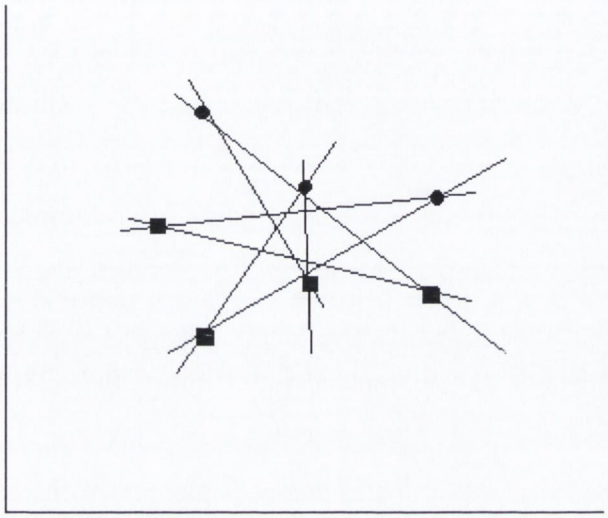


Figure 7.5
Majorities as collective veto players

Figure 7.5 shows a simple model of a collective veto player in which majority-rule is the decision rule. In this example no single actor is the median voter on both dimensions. Therefore none of the actors is completely necessary for a change in policy. Each of the lines in the diagram represents divisions in which four of the seven actors would support a policy on one side of the line. A new majority can be found regardless of the position of the status quo and no single policy position is invulnerable to change or 'covered'.

The veto point of a collective veto player will depend to a great extent on its internal decision-making process, and in particular on the allocation of agenda-setting rights. For instance, it is unlikely in a legislature that each individual member votes solely according to his or her sincere policy desires. More often than not legislators form groups and vote with their groups. The groups' decision-making processes are more instructive in determining the veto point of the collective veto player than the policy positions of the individual legislators. So, collective veto players' veto points may be less likely to restrict policy change, but the analyst using the veto player approach to model collective veto players must be aware that there may be a strictly stable veto

point as a result of the internal decision-making processes of the collective veto player itself or groups that form therein.

The 'vulnerability' of veto player theory

One notable critic focuses on the validity of using the theory to compare presidential and parliamentary regimes. Strøm argued that 'a credible veto player must have both opportunity and motive to exercise his or her veto'; that parties and the institutions within which they operate are in fact highly interdependent, and that a party may have the motive to use the veto, but lack the opportunity. Thus a party in government is technically a veto player insofar as if it refuses to support a proposal then that proposal will fail, but the party is more restricted in its practical freedom to exercise the veto than a president with a constitutionally-guaranteed veto (Strøm 2000: 280).

Strøm does not agree that parties within a government are veto players in the same way a president is, and therefore feels that the same concept cannot be used to compare them. He correctly points out that parties in government may have no desire to use their veto, because it may cause the fall of the government. Therefore, some veto players can influence other veto players, and the comparison between presidential and parliamentary systems becomes more problematic.

Of course in presidential systems, different veto players are also dependent on one another, if not to the extent that they are mutually dependent for their jobs as in parliamentary democracies. They are interdependent for policy formulation. The difference between presidential and parliamentary systems is a matter of degree. Strøm may be right in saying that not all veto players are equal, but their dissimilarity comes from their different abilities to influence each other's motives to veto, not their ability to veto. At a minimal level all veto players have the *opportunity* to veto; they are veto holders.

Tsebelis is therefore correct to discount Strøm's objection that 'partisan veto players have no demonstrable opportunity to exercise veto' (Strøm 2000: 280). Tsebelis points out that partisan veto players can use the veto, but that when other factors are considered it is not always in their interest to do so. Perhaps its greatest weakness is

that the approach assumes that using a veto is costless. This assumption allows veto player theory to retain its parsimony but may make its usefulness questionable. The approach might work when certain players are given a right to veto that is legally binding, as afforded the US president, and where the use of the veto will impose few costs on the holder of the veto. A US president can veto a bill from Congress and unless Congress has a two-thirds majority in favour of change, there is very little Congress can do about it. The president is invulnerable to them.

However, in parliamentary democracies, where there is no separation or powers, or rather no separation of prerogatives, the real world that one must model is more complex, as the panoply of actors interact and influence each others' actions.[7]

So, while a minister may ultimately have the ability to veto a policy, the consequences of using the veto could be grave for the minister. If it is certain that a minister who refuses to implement a certain policy will be forced to resign, and the consequences of that action will be that another minister will be appointed and the policy will be introduced, then the current minister's veto is hardly real.

Arguably the whole concept of veto player theory can only work if the veto players are all invulnerable to removal, or otherwise so many other empirical factors must be taken into account that it makes the theory surplus to requirement. Must the rule that gives the veto player the veto be inviolable for the theory to work? In reality all veto players are vulnerable to removal and rules are subject to change; presidents and governments can be overthrown by coups and constitutions can be changed or replaced. The veto of a president who wants to veto a bill but knows that doing so will damage him or her electorally is also vulnerable. The president may have the opportunity, but not the motive to use the veto. The timescale of incurring costs may be different to that of the minister mentioned above, but costs will be incurred. No actor is an invulnerable veto player. But this does not mean that no actor is able to use a veto.

[7] This probably is one of the reasons rational choice has been less successful in explaining the operation of institutions in parliamentary democracies.

Rather than conclude that the whole concept is useless, one could treat veto player theory as a heuristic that can be used to discover the important factors governing the distribution of power in policy making. Veto player theory makes certain predictions about policy outcomes, but these predictions are sometimes wrong because some actors whom we regard as veto players will be vulnerable. We can identify certain actors who *might reasonably be expected to* be veto players but who do not appear to act like veto players, and through this we can discover the factors that cause vulnerability in veto players. The vulnerability of veto players can be treated as a puzzle to be explained.

Using this approach, I show how prime ministers can affect the decisions of those actors whom we regard as veto players. From chapter seven, I argue that given certain political conditions, some institutional prerogatives can be used to make those who we might think should be veto players vulnerable to a prime minister's influence. The availability of these prerogatives goes some way to explaining the vulnerability of those actors whom we expect to be veto players.

In the next section I discuss and identify those actors who we can reasonably argue would be expected to be able to exercise a veto. It is important to remember that, just because one can think of an example where the actors mentioned have shown few of the traits one would normally assume a veto player to display, this does not necessarily disprove this approach. Here I wish only to identify those actors who could be expected to be veto players or should be veto players in a generic parliamentary democracy. With some indication of the numbers of veto players in political systems I then go on to see if the expectations of veto player theory are supported by empirical evidence.

Identifying veto players

The broad definition of veto players, as 'individual or collective actors whose agreement is necessary for a change in the status quo' does not make it obvious what a veto player will be in real life. The number of veto players in any country will change depending on the policy area. In any case the number of veto players is probably less important than the positions and the policy congruence of the veto

players. Two diametrically opposed veto players can make policy change impossible, whereas 100 veto players who share the same policy ideals will not. In this section I will identify the actors whom we could expect to be veto players, or to be in a position to veto, and attempt to measure their policy positions. I will then develop hypotheses which will be tested in the following section.

There are many prominent actors and institutions in policy-making systems. Looking at parliamentary democracies, one can identify the main actors as; prime ministers, ministers, civil servants, heads of state, legislators, lobbyists, judges, party leaders, journalists, voters, the bureaucracy, interest groups, political parties, courts, cabinet, legislatures, media. Helms (2003; 2005) operationalises 'veto players' broadly to include constitutional courts, central banks, interest groups and the mass media. I take a more narrow view. In chapter four I assumed a policy-making system with just three stages. The first was government proposal, then the parliamentary amendment and approval stage followed by the government implementation stage. I also assumed that all actors have stable policy preferences that are exogenous to the policy-making process. For this reason, many of these actors mentioned by Helms are not relevant here. In any case it is questionable that all would be veto players.

In legislatures, the individual legislators are probably not veto players. As was just discussed, where a collective veto player exists, there is no certainty that a fixed individual veto player exists (unless there is a median voter on a particular issue and that issue is one-dimensional). Legislators influence governments when they indicate their opposition to proposals, and some may succeed in changing proposals through their pressure, but the individuals are not veto players.

Civil servants are often regarded as powerful, and to look at the parody in 'Yes, Minister' one might think they are veto players. Indeed this caricature was probably based on the concerns and complaints of UK politicians. Civil servants may be able to use the implementation stage to block a government policy. However, I have not found any evidence that individual civil servants alone can veto policy, nor that the bureaucracy acts as a unified actor (except maybe in Japan (Hayao 1993; Thayer 1969)). In fact, there are probably deep divisions between bureaucrats from different sectors and different departments.

The consent of a head of state is often required to formally ratify bills, and therefore he or she will have a formal veto on legislation. However, as was noted above, this formal veto power is very often not practically exercisable within the political culture of a country.

Prime ministers, cabinets and ministers

The case for prime ministers to be considered as veto players is strong. Prime ministers are so central to the policy-making process that one might expect that they are veto players. Technically prime ministers hold a veto over policy change, because when a prime minister resigns his or her government falls, and the status quo is retained (however temporarily). Prime ministers are closely associated with the co-ordination of government, and as such, could be given an effective veto in order to carry out this function properly. Empirically, it has also been found that the prime minister is 'a central figure in cabinet politics with an effective veto over many aspects of government decision making' (Laver and Shepsle 1994a).

One of the first duties of a new prime minister is to name a cabinet. The cabinet must approve nearly all major, and in many countries, many minor policy changes. It is the supreme committee of a parliament, which is itself the main legislative body of a country. Therefore one might expect cabinet to be a veto player. It is a collective veto player made up of a number of individuals. Who occupies the cabinet veto points in the policy space depends on prime ministers, as does the internal decision-making process. These are dealt with in chapters nine and ten on cabinet organisation and agenda setting.

Recent empirical and theoretical work suggests that the cabinet may not be so central to policy-making in government as once was thought (Blondel 1997; Jones [1965] 1985; Laver and Shepsle 1994b; Laver and Shepsle 1996). These works highlight a growing 'departmentalism'; that is, a tendency for the policy under the aegis of a specific department to come from that department and to pass relatively unchanged though cabinet. Thus cabinet is perhaps more of a rubber stamp or monitoring institution than a real decision-making body. Policy-making power, according to this

theory, lies with the departmental ministers. Keman (1996: 236) remarks that even in consociational Netherlands, Dutch ministers 'have a kind of veto power' due in part to the convention of non-intervention by ministers in business that is not of relevance by virtue of departmental interest (Andeweg and Irwin 2002: 117). Denis Healey's experience backs up this view for the UK. He found that when he was Defence Secretary, his cabinet colleagues;

> 'were content in the main to let me get on with my job, so long as I did not interfere with theirs. So for some time I played little part in the cabinet discussions in which my Department was not directly concerned'

Healey also noted that departmental ministers could change the focus of a department. Roy Jenkins, Healey felt, 'succeeded in stamping his liberal humanism on a department not noted for that quality' (Healey 1989: 326-27, 329). Jenkins also felt free to set policy without restriction, saying he 'hardly thought of 10 Downing Street as a factor' (Jenkins 1991: 391). As well as being able to set the broad political agenda in a department, the departmental minister also acts as a veto player on issues in the department. Writing about cabinet government under Margaret Thatcher, her former Chancellor, Nigel Lawson felt that ministers have a blackball. He also detected that:

> 'If the Prime Minister wants something done in a particular area, and the minister responsible disagrees with it, then it will not happen because [the minister] will effectively veto that idea: he has a blackball too' (Lawson 1994: 444).

In a European-wide survey of cabinet ministers, three out of five said they were not 'active in cabinet' (derived from Blondel 1993: 185). Given that ministers are probably disinclined to say they are inactive in cabinet as it might indicate that the minister was unimportant there, the real figure might be higher.

So, in some European countries the system of government is called 'government by ministries' (in Italy) or a 'feudal system of Baronies' (about the UK). A number of reasons can be offered for this. One deals with the minister's gate-keeping function. As policy is increasingly complicated, cabinets cannot normally make policy proposals without significant administrative support. Policy proposals must be thought through, budgeted, checked for their legality and whether they are administratively possible. They may come to cabinet in the form of a technical and

detailed document drawn up by experts from a specialist department. Departmental ministers will spend some time mastering the arguments for and against a policy. Bills consume much of the minister's life for a time. It is unlikely, therefore, that other ministers (with their own departmental responsibilities) will have the time or expertise to propose similarly sophisticated policies.

Another cause of departmentalism is the importance of implementation. A policy that is agreed in cabinet may never become effective if an unwilling department slows its progress by instituting 'studies' or any number of other methods to push the Bill into 'the long grass' in the hope that it never emerges. This would effectively allow some departments and the people in control of the departments to veto even solid legislative proposals and cabinet decisions. Ministers have even been known to defy government decisions and use their department to implement their personal policy preferences. The Minister for Minerals and Energy in Gough Whitlam's Labor government in Australia, Rex Connor, engaged in a covert scheme to raise capital to fund Australian mining efforts even after Whitlam and the cabinet explicitly forbade Connor from doing so (Edwards 1996: 119-20).

A third reason may be that because ministers are judged primarily on their own performance in a department, rather than the performance of the government as a whole, they may not wish to do anything to hinder their own project by being difficult about another minister's area (Wass 1984: 25). There may be an implicit agreement between ministers -similar to log-rolling in the US Congress – that each stays away from each other's territory. So if a policy is proposed which does not affect one's own department, ministers will not want to disrupt a Bill's process through cabinet.

Finance ministers

Finance ministers, like prime ministers are special types of ministers. Where prime ministers co-ordinate government policies, the finance minister is charged with balancing the accounts of government. As the manager of the purse strings the finance minister may have a good deal of latitude to withhold funding for certain projects for policies. This is especially so when the departmental ministers compete against one another for scarce financial resources, so it may be unlikely that ministers will unite against a finance minister.

The importance of the minister for finance was recognised by a former Irish prime minister. Seán Lemass noted that 'in effect [the finance minister] does sit at the cabinet table in a much stronger position to criticise or to veto proposals of other ministers than even the Taoiseach because every proposal involves finance of some kind' (quoted in Farrell 1982: 101).

The exceptionalism of the Finance minister is also documented by country scholars. Many of the authors in Blondel and Müller-Rommel (1997) cite the importance of the finance minister in co-ordinating government. Andeweg (1988) argues that the budgetary process gives the Dutch minister for finance 'a crucial co-ordinating role'. Blondel also singles out the finance minister: 'The cabinet system is a network composed of the Prime Minister, the Minister of Finance, the party leadership outside the government, and the ministers individually and in groups, as well as some ministerial advisers.' (Blondel 1997: 14). The minister of finance is also an actor whose objection or obstruction might be able to prevent policy change and can be considered a veto player.

If line and finance ministers are veto players, then the at-times-torturous nature of coalition negotiations to distribute seats makes a good deal of sense. Even a majority in cabinet could be powerless to effect policy change if the minister is opposed to the change, so any agreement may come to naught if the minister is against the change.[8] Another factor to consider is that the individual ministers rarely work on their own behalf; they normally represent a party.

Parties and their component parts

The governing parties in a parliamentary democracy are without doubt important actors in policy making. If a party forming a majority or part of a majority refuses to

[8] This fact was recognised in Ireland where, after previously unhappy coalition arrangements, in 1993 the Labour Party insisted that the government employed a 'programme manager' in each department who monitored and expedited progress of the negotiated coalition agreement. These programme managers met weekly to assess the progress of legislation within departments and iron out difficulties in advance of cabinet.

support a measure it will not normally be passed.[9] Therefore we can say that governing parties are veto players. This is problematic in that parties do not consist of single individuals, but rather a collection of actors. One could reasonably assume that a party is a unified collection of actors and treat it as a single actor. The individuals within parties, while working in their own interests, may be inclined by rules and norms within the parties to act in the interest of the whole party. Perhaps the interests of the major actors in the party (the party leaders) could be assumed to represent the interests of the party as a whole.

So, if one were to look for an individual whose interests a party served, one might choose the party leader. Although the extent to which the leader's and the party's interests coincide will differ according to the type of party – it may be truer of elite parties than mass parties – this assumption is satisfactory if one wishes to choose a single individual. The party leader may have been chosen because he or she represents the interests of the party, but this causal ordering does not matter greatly. We can treat the party leader and party synonymously.

Of course, as Hine argues, 'parties are visible, measurable and comparable, but they are not always the lowest common denominator for policy aggregation' (Hine 1982: 36). Factions exist in many parties for a variety of reasons. Sartori (1992: 109) specifies three roles for factions. One is to make and champion certain policies. A second role is to provide support to a group or possibly to a charismatic leader. The third role is the veto role; this is a faction that can be and is formed to obstruct policy development.

If the assumption of parties as unitary actors is dropped, the potential number of veto players increases. With this addition one can expect that single party majority governments with factionalised parties, such as the LDP governments in Japan, will not be more likely to be able to make significant policy changes compared to coalition governments because any changes require the support of a variety of factions within

[9] In oversized coalitions some parties may be dispensable, in which case they are not veto players, and can only form veto players when they coalesce with another government party to form the balance of power. It is possible for opposition parties to support proposals dispensing with the need of a government party, but changing majorities when the government parties already control a majority are rare.

the party. Therefore, prime ministers of those governments are no more likely, and may be less likely, to achieve their desired policy changes.

Many of the works on parties in Japan and Italy note that some of the parties are highly factionalised (Sartori 1992: 120-8). In Japan the number and strength of the factions, where the *Habatsu* are formally organised (Kohno 1992: 369), is the subject of press comment and the varying fortunes of the factions is closely monitored. Even in the UK the parties undoubtedly have something akin to factions. In the Labour Party following each reshuffle 'the counting [goes] on: how many Blairites in, how many Brownites out?' (Naughtie 2002: 116-7).

However, identifying and counting the number of factions is difficult. Other than in Japan, factions do not publicise themselves in the way that parties do. If one were able to identify factions, measuring their policy positions remains difficult, as factions do not publish policy texts in the same way that parties do. It is difficult to accurately and systematically incorporate factions into the veto player model.

Again the opinions of experts may be useful. Ray (1999) measured dissent within parties on the issue of European integration by using an expert survey, but this is limited in terms of countries and issues. Janda (1980) was the first scholar to quantify factionalism comparatively, and his vast work remains the most prominent in the literature. Janda measures the state of the party organisations in 99 countries from ten regions in the world between 1950 and 1962 (Janda 1980). Despite this impressive number, because Janda took a representative sample of all countries including non-democratic countries this means that just 14 of the countries under study are represented. (Two of these, Portugal and Greece, were dictatorships and have almost completely new party systems).

In this work Janda provides a score of 'ideological factionalism' measured on a 0-6 scale, based on his judgements of the literature and those of other experts. Janda also provides a score for 'leadership concentration' which measures the extent to which power is dispersed in the party (also measured on a 0-6 scale). In the absence of 'real' data on factions this data is useful if admittedly somewhat out of date. The Janda data can also be used to see if the theoretical expectations of veto player theory are

confirmed for the limited number of cases. I now develop and test specific hypotheses suggested by veto player theory

Hypotheses and data analysis

Veto player theory proposes that there will be the same or less freedom for policy movement where there are more veto players (though this is not necessarily related to actual policy movement). If additional veto players are incongruent in terms of policy, then the new policy *win set* becomes smaller, policy change becomes more difficult and hence each veto player has less freedom to determine policy. We should expect therefore, that there is a relationship between the number of veto players, their policy positions and the power of prime ministers to determine policy.

Taking this theory to the level of testable hypotheses one must identify the veto players and their policy positions. For the parliamentary democracies under study, apart from the prime minister, there will be the relevant minister(s), the minister for finance (if the policy requires new funding approval) and in the cabinet, the governing parties.

Hypotheses

The impact of the line minister will depend on the policy in question, and whether the prime minister and the minister agree on the issue. If they disagree the prime minister has a number of strategies that he or she can use to determine the options that the minister must choose from when deciding to propose, support or veto a policy change. These strategies are the focus of chapters seven to nine below. We may, however, expect to see a relationship between the prime ministerial power and the domination of the cabinet by the prime minister. Given the unavailability of estimates of the policy positions of different ministers, and the lack of data on factions and their members, prime ministerial domination of cabinet is best measured by looking at the number of ministers in cabinet from the same party as the prime minister. I expect that the greater the percentage of ministers in cabinet from the prime minister's own party the greater the level of freedom to determine policy.

The minister for finance could decrease the size of the *win set* (that is, the space of possible new policies) if he or she can and wants to refuse to grant funding for a new or changed policy. Assuming all ministers for finance, by virtue of their central position in the policy-making process, are veto players, then prime ministers may be constrained by ministers for finance with different policy positions. How can one distinguish between the different types of ministers for finance and hence their impact on prime ministers' ability to effect policy change? Again the most efficient way to do this is to look at the parties of the minister for finance[10] and the prime minister. One would expect that the average level of prime ministerial power is lower for those prime ministers whose minister for finance is from a different party.

The last two hypotheses on ministers are closely connected to parties. The last important veto player I identified is the party in government. We expect that additional veto players do not make policy change more likely and may make it less likely. Therefore, we expect that additional parties in government will be associated with a reduction in prime ministers' freedom to control policy. It is a relatively simple exercise to measure how many parties there are in government – one can just count them – making testing this hypothesis uncomplicated.

We might think the effect of the number of parties in government to be more subtle than having a purely additive effect; that is, additional parties lead to a reduction of, or preservation of, existing levels of power. It is plausible to argue that the numerical increase in the number of parties in government is not so important as the relative increase. So the unit change from a single party government to a two party government may have more of an effect on the power of a prime minister than the change from five parties to a sixth. To test this one can take the log of the number of parties. The log transformation contracts the scale of a variable, but while maintaining the same order of units of the variable, it reduces higher scores more than smaller ones. So using the log of the number of parties there is a greater difference between the log of one and log of two ($\approx$0.69) than there is between the log of five and log of six ($\approx$0.18).

[10] I use the data from Woldendorp et al (1993, 1998) and the EJPR yearbooks. Where there are a number of economic ministers, I take the most senior. If none is obviously more senior I use the one who has the title minister for finance, and if none has this title, I use the minister who is minister for the budget.

Does party size matter?

Veto player theory looks at the right to veto rather than the level of influence of different actors. One of the reasons for the usefulness of the approach is that it deals with the relatively firm right to veto rather than the more nebulous concept of influence. If veto player theory is a useful approach then the 'size' of the actor should not matter. One veto player right to veto is equal to another's. We can speculate that this may not be the case, and one might argue that for instance the size of the parties in government will also matter. If the relative size of parties in government were a better explanatory variable than simply the number of parties, this would question the usefulness of the veto player concept, and suggest that methods to measure 'influence' (such as party size) would be better.

By looking at the 'effective number of parties' in government,[11] calculated using the formula devised by Laasko and Taagepera (1979), one can test for the effect of size. This measure 'tells us exactly how many parties there are…taking their relative sizes into account' (Lijphart 1999: 68). If for instance there are two, equally large parties in government, the 'effective number of parties in government' is two. But if there are three parties in government with 45, 40 and 15 percent of the government parties' parliamentary seats respectively, then the effective number of parties in government is 2.6. We can therefore test to see if the veto player is a good explanatory concept by comparing its explanatory power with that of the basic number of parties to the effective number of parties in government.

Policy position

If there is more than one party in government, then according to the theory the freedom for policy change depends on each party's policy position in relation to the status quo. If two parties take very different positions on policy in relation to the existing policy, we expect that change is difficult, and that prime ministers who wish for change will not be in a situation to achieve their desired policy.

[11] Effective number of parties in government, ENPG = $1/\sum s_i^2$ where s_i is the proportion of the government's parliamentary seats held by the i-th party.

While it would be difficult to ascertain the position of the status quo policy for a country at a particular time, because one would have to identify a single policy to represent that place and time, one can estimate the position of political parties in a policy space and estimate the distance between parties. Using one of the different measures for party policy one would then expect prime ministers leading governments with parties that are further apart on this policy scale to have less influence on policy than those leading parties that were close together.

Now that we have a number of theoretically derived hypotheses, it is possible to go on to test these.

Data analysis

Does prime ministerial power vary with the number of ministers contained in cabinet from the same party as the prime minister's? It would be surprising if it did not. However, to my knowledge, this proposition has not been tested. This is tested by regressing the variable 'prime ministerial power', which is derived from the expert survey explained in detail in chapter five, on the prime minister's party's domination of cabinet. The prime minister's party's cabinet domination is measured by taking the simple percentage of cabinet ministers who are in the prime minister's party. These data are taken from the *European Journal of Political Research* yearbooks and Siaroff's (2000) data collection. Where ministers are not members of any party and do not hold seats in parliament, then I use Siaroff's data set, which counts these ministers to be members of the prime minister's party. This is most relevant in Portugal where even in single party governments a large number of ministers are not members of the governing party.

Model 1 in table 7.1 below presents the results of an OLS regression analysis,[12] which shows that higher cabinet domination is associated with more prime ministerial influence on policy. A single percentage point rise in the proportion of cabinet seats belonging to a prime minister's party leads to a .017 rise in prime ministerial power, which is measured on a nine-point scale. This means that a prime minister, all of whose cabinet colleagues are from his or her own party, will be about .85 of a point

[12] For an clear, non-technical introduction to this technique see Lewis-Beck (1995).

'more powerful' than a prime minister with only half as many party colleagues in cabinet. This difference is statistically significant.

For a prime minister to have a finance minister who is a member of a different party may limit a prime minister's opportunities to change policy in his or her favour as a finance minister with different policy goals may veto such changes. I run an independent samples t-test on the dependent variable measuring prime ministerial power by the dummy variable, 'finance', where 1 indicates that the finance minister is from a different party. This shows that prime ministers with finance ministers from the same party are about one point higher on the nine-point scale for prime ministerial power.

Table 7.1 Effect of control of cabinet portfolios on policy influence

Model	**1*****[13]	**2*****	**3*****
Constant	4.87	6.34	5.35
Cabinet domination	0.017***	-	0.012**
Finance	-	-.98***	-.52
R-sq. (adj.)	.14	n/a	.15
N	137	137	137

Two issues arise from this analysis. One is a question of causality. It might be argued that only powerful prime ministers can choose ministers from their own party and hence 'dominate' cabinet or that only by being powerful can a prime minister hire his or her choice of finance minister. This is a fair point, but one that misses the objectives of this work. At this stage we are looking at how prime ministers exercise power, as opposed to where that power comes from. Prime ministers cannot directly make policy themselves and therefore can put people into the veto points who agree with them in order to get their own ways. Therefore we can conclude that in order to achieve their policy goals prime ministers should put ministers who agree with them into key veto points in the policy-making system. This may seem obvious, but it is a point that to my knowledge has not been explicitly examined before and is a necessary first step to the understanding of the operation of prime ministerial power.

[13] The stars in the cells in the model row indicate the level of significance of the F-statistic. The F and t-statistic probabilities are indicated by stars; * = p<.05; ** = p<.01; and ***=p<.001.

A second point that one may make is to ask whether the two explanatory variables essentially measure the same phenomenon; that is, the diversity of veto players in cabinet. It is true that the two are related and when both are in the regression model (3), 'cabinet domination' remains significant but 'finance' does not. This would indicate that 'cabinet domination' is a better indicator of the policy diversity of veto players in cabinet than 'finance', but finance is significant on its own and may merely be reflected in the broader 'cabinet domination'.

Parties

The next hypotheses related more directly to parties. Governing parties are veto players in that their support is required to change policies in parliament and probably in government. Therefore we expect that an increase in the number of parties is associated with a reduction in prime ministerial power. When prime ministerial power is regressed on the number of parties the result is significant and in the expected direction. The results of this model (4) in table 7.2 show the coefficient to be -.29, which indicates that each additional party will reduce the policy influence of a prime minister by .29 on the prime ministerial power scale.

Table 7.2 Effect of the numbers of parties on policy influence

Model	**4*** **	**5*** **	**7.6*** **
Constant	6.77	6.6	6.79
No. Parties	-.29***	-	-
ENPG	-	-	-.39***
Log no. parties	-	-.79***	-
R-sq.	.125	.15	0.098
N	137	137	137

It may be the case that the power-diminishing impact of additional parties is reduced as the number of parties increases. An additional party to a five party coalition should have less of an impact than the same party entering government with just one other party. The relationship will be non-linear. To see if this is the case I run a regression with the logged number of parties. The amount of variance explained by the log of the number of parties increases to 15 percent, indicating that the unit change from one to two parties in government is more influential than a unit change in the number of parties from a higher base. The coefficients are not directly comparable.

If party size is more influential in determining prime ministerial power than the actual number of parties – i.e. if additional smaller parties matter less than additional big parties – then if we compare the models using the actual number and the effective number of parties in government, the latter should be a better predictor. Using the effective number of parties in government still gives us a significant result, but the R-squared drops. As predicted, and perhaps contrary to intuitive expectations, the relative size of the parties in government does not explain more of the variation in the policy influence of a prime minister than the simple number of parties.

Policy positions

The importance of policy position in veto player theory requires any full investigation of prime ministerial power incorporating this theory to use policy positional data for political parties. My analysis, developed from Tsebelis, predicts that governments for which the angle of intersection of the lines joining veto playing actors' (two-dimensional) policy positions and the status quo grows larger, then policy change becomes more difficult, and hence the power of a prime minister to change policy will be reduced. To test such a proposition fully one needs firstly to have two-dimensional positional data for the governing parties, and secondly, to know the position of the status quo on these dimensions.

Obtaining systematic, valid and reliable policy position data is a problem to which political scientists have devoted a good deal of attention in the last thirty years. Progress has been significant. While measuring the policy positions of actors is not straightforward, at least some solutions to the problem have emerged.

There are two major sources of data on parties' policy positions; expert surveys and manifesto coding. Expert surveys ask country experts to place parties on scales for different policy dimensions. The estimate is usually based on a number of responses, and by looking at the standard error of the mean one can check the reliability of the estimates. Huber and Inglehart (1995) have most recently provided party position data that extend to most of the countries in the study. They asked respondents to place political parties on a ten-point, generic left-right scale, where one is most left and ten is most right.

Some of the most innovative work on measuring policy positions has been done through the analysis of political texts, such as manifestoes. The Manifesto Research Group (MRG) has, for over twenty years, provided extensive and detailed data on policy positions and movements for parties. Party positional data exists on a number of dimensions for each party in each election from 1945 to the late 1990s in 21 of the 22 countries in this study. This allows one to look at the policy distances between parties in individual governments over time. Unfortunately the reliability of MRG data is open to question as each manifesto is coded by just one coder and because of high costs, few checks are carried out to see to what extent different coders produce different results. However, the data may be valid and reliable, and given the extensive nature of the data and its independence from expert surveys, it provides a useful alternative source of data.

To test the proposition in the analysis precisely, one also needs to know the status quo policy position on the dominant policy dimensions and to know what those dimensions are. Unfortunately neither is available. None of the expert surveys ask the country experts to estimate on a scale where they regard their country's actual policy to be on any dimension. Without this, or some other method to estimate the status quo, it is obviously not possible to estimate the policy differences of veto playing actors in relation to the status quo.

In any case there is no general agreement on what a second dimension might be. Huber and Inglehart (1995: 81-3) claim that there is a broad consensus as to the meaning of the dominant left-right dimension; it is related to 'economic or class conflict'. However, they also find that there is no consensus either between or within countries as to what the second dimension would be. Given these problems one-dimensional data is used here, but this means one cannot take into account the theoretically important position of the status quo.

I use the generic left-right scale in each dataset to derive measures of 'government diversity'. To do this I take the scores for the parties in government and take the difference between the two extreme scores. So, for instance, if there is a three party coalition and the three parties have scores on the left/ right scale of 3, 5 and 7, then

the government diversity score will be 4 (7-3=4). Where there is a single party government the score of zero is assigned.[14]

The 'government diversity' scale derived using the MRG data has a theoretically maximum difference of 200, but the maximum reported difference is 79 and the mean difference for the 85 observations with coalition governments is just 26. Government diversity measured using the Huber-Inglehart data has a theoretical maximum of nine, but the actual maximum is 4.8 and the mean (for coalition governments) is 2.4.

Table 7.3 Effect of policy diversity of parties on PMs' policy influence

Model	**7*** **	**8*** **	**9*** **	**10*** **	**11*** **
Constant	6.38	6.58	6.63	6.71	5.86
Diversity (MRG)	-.019***	-	-	-	-
Diversity (HI)	-	-.37***	-.18	-.3**	-.21
Log no. parties	-	-	-.54	-.24	-.78
Faction (basic and Janda- see text)	-	-	-	-1.71**	.115**
R-sq. (adj.)	.084	.17	.18	.27	.26
N	137	122[15]	122	122	79

In turn I put each measure of diversity in a simple regression model to explain prime ministerial power. Table 7.3 shows that in each model (7 and 8) the measure of diversity is significant and in the expected direction, but that the model using the Huber-Inglehart expert survey data explains much more variance (17 percent compared to eight percent for the MRG data). However, when controlling for the number of parties in government (logged), neither policy diversity measure remains a significant predictor (model 9). In the case of the Huber-Inglehart data, this is probably due to the high (.81) correlation between it and the (logged) number of parties in government.

[14] This will mean that these variables will not be normally distributed. As is pointed out by the writers of a statistics textbook 'some researchers believe that linear regression requires that the outcome (dependent) and the predictor variables be normally distributed…In actuality, it is the residuals that need to be normally distributed. In fact the residuals need to be normal only for the t-tests to be valid' (Chen et al, 2002: section 1.5- http://www.ats.ucla.edu/stat/stata/webbooks/reg/chapter1/statareg1.htm).

[15] No data exists for, Luxembourg, Israel, two Japanese governments and some Second Republic governments in Italy.

The results of the regression analyses show that veto player theory is useful in helping to explain variation in prime ministerial power. Larger numbers of party veto players in a government decrease the freedom a prime minister has to influence policy, and when those parties are more divergent in terms of policy, prime ministerial power is further decreased. However, the R-squares for these models (essentially the number that indicates how much variation is explained) is rather low – at best below 20 per cent. This may be because parties are assumed to be unitary actors.

Factions

A significant problem with this analysis is the assumption that single-party governments are unitary actors. This has the effect of treating all single-party governments as actors with similar political views; that is, with only one veto player. As yet we do not know enough about factions or their policies to model them systematically. The comparative literature on parties is clear that the Japanese LDP and the Italian DC are highly fractious parties (Sartori 1992). In Model 10 a dummy variable is added to indicate these parties, where being a leader of either party will mean that observation is assigned one on this variable. Not surprisingly the coefficient is negative and significant. The overall model is significant and the adjusted R-squared increases appreciably to 0.27. This suggests that if better data were available for the positions of veto players (ministers, parties etc.) one could achieve much higher proportions of variance explained. Also of interest in this model is that when factions are controlled for, then as expected, government policy diversity emerges as a more important predictor variable than the number of parties in government. This proposition, which was developed using veto player theory, is not an obvious expectation. It is tested using completely independent data; therefore, this result is notable.

I also use the data from Janda (1980) discussed above. To form a measure of factionalism I use his measure of 'ideological factionalism' and combine it with a score for 'leadership concentration'. These two should capture the essential elements that are relevant: the degree of policy division in the party and the degree to which the leadership can control or prevent this division from becoming relevant. The 'ideological factionalism' score is inverted to enable the creation of a measure with a possible range of zero to twelve, where zero is most factionalised and twelve is most

unified, around the party leader. Where no information was available on one element of the variable (e.g. 'leadership concentration'), then I merely doubled the score of the other.

The scores are somewhat out of date. For example, the UK Labour party is assigned a score of four (out of twelve) making it among the most divided parties in the study. While this may have reflected the divisions in the Labour party at the time, it is hardly a reflection of the party led by Tony Blair, the one UK Labour party prime minister in the study. The scores for Fianna Fáil in Ireland reflect the apparent dominance of Éamon de Valera, but not the significant restrictions faced by other leaders, such as Haughey and Reynolds.

I have added scores to the twelve countries for which there is already existing data (Australia, Austria, Canada, Denmark, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, New Zealand, Sweden and the UK). I assigned scores for Pasok (when Papandreou was leader) in Greece and for the Japanese LDP and DC in Italy. Pasok was regarded as a party based around one man (Elephantis 1981: 107) in which Papandreou received 'uncritical adulation' from party deputies (Clogg 1987: 143). The DC was and LDP is among the most highly factionalised in the world (Gallagher 1998). Pasok under Papandreou, and the LDP and DC prime ministers, are given the highest and lowest scores in the actual range of scores (12 and 4 respectively).

When this variable is added to the model, it is statistically significant and in the expected direction (model 11 above). Also, the other variables relating to policy no longer remain significant. Given that this factionalisation variable includes an element relating to 'ideological factionalisation', perhaps this is not surprising. The model shows that the most unified party will be almost one and a half points higher on the prime ministerial power scale than the prime minister with a completely divided party. This may seem a surprisingly small effect given the importance of party. However, with fuller and more up to date data on the internal organisation of parties one may see a more accurate reflection of the true effect.

Conclusion

Veto player theory shows why there would be a relationship between the number of incongruent veto players and policy stability. Having set out veto player theory, this chapter went on to explain how policy stability can relate to power.

I noted that prime ministers are by definition veto players, and so this theory is relevant to the study of prime ministers. I went on to argue that parties in government are also veto players. However, discovering who or what the other veto players are is less simple. Strong party factions whose support is required for Bills to be passed are undoubtedly veto players on certain issues, but information is not easily available. Lastly I identified departmental ministers as veto players.

What we can take from this is that the prime ministers who are in single party governments are more likely to be able to change policy, but this is only true where the party is not factionalised, or where those factions are not based on policy. Prime ministers of coalitions are more likely to face more, and more diverse, veto players and as such will find changing policy more difficult, but the prime ministers of some single party governments could find policy change as frustratingly difficult to achieve.

The most basic analysis of the theory would lead one to believe that any change in legislation is unlikely in countries where veto players hold different policy preferences. Yet policy is changed in places where one would expect a veto player to overrule change. One could argue that in these cases the veto players who failed to successfully veto were not veto players at all, and point to the fact that the veto was not used as proof of this. However, it is not controversial to suggest that the actors I name above hold a veto over policy, and where policy change would be deleterious to their position, they *could* have used their veto. We need not get entangled in the effort to debate if they really are veto players. Instead, the more interesting question becomes: why did the actors who should be veto players not use their veto? Does the prime minister have an effect on veto players' failure to act? How would this effect work? Why and when does a veto player choose not to use a veto? The answer to these questions will be addressed in the next chapters.

Chapter 8. Prerogatives and power in parliament: confidence votes and other agenda setting methods

The passage of the Maastricht Treaty, or the Treaty of the European Union, through the UK House of Commons between November 1992 and July 1993 was by any definition an extraordinary piece of policy making and parliamentary poker. European treaties normally have a difficult passage through the House of Commons, in part due to the sceptical nature of the British political elite towards Europe, particularly in the Conservative Party. This event openly demonstrated how an institutional prerogative could help determine the outcome of a conflict between a government and its majority in parliament.

The Treaty contained many provisions. It set the way for monetary union; it added Justice and Home Affairs, and Common Security to the competences of the EU. It made provision for a European citizenship and also contained a Social Chapter that made provisions for working terms and conditions. These included a maximum 48-hour working week and certain rights to maternity leave. This aspect would be expected to be unpopular with all Conservatives, not just Eurosceptics. The then prime minister, John Major, had successfully negotiated an opt-out in the Treaty which exempted the UK from some of its Social Chapter.

Right-wing Eurosceptics in the Conservative Party continually voted against the bill (on 11 occasions) and finally decided to try to scupper the treaty by voting with the Labour Party and Liberal Democrats in an amendment to include the Social Chapter in the Government Bill. Major lost that vote by 324 to 316 votes. He immediately called a confidence motion on the issue and threatened an election if he lost.

This potential election would come just one year after the last general election. The poor support for the Conservative party in opinion polls in 1993 made it seem certain that the Conservatives would lose office, and a Labour government would win power. The likelihood was that if the Labour party gained power, it would reintroduce the Treaty with the Social Chapter included. The choice facing Eurosceptic government backbenchers was to either accept the Treaty and continue in government, or reject the

Treaty, thus causing a general election that would probably remove the Tories from power, elect a left-wing government and get the Maastricht Treaty approved with the Social Chapter. The threat of an election brought even the most hard-line sceptics to support the bill. Thus parliament passed the policy that John Major wanted even though a parliamentary majority was against the policy.

Introduction

In this chapter I look at parliamentary prerogatives that assist prime ministers and governments to make policy gains. The ability to pass legislation through parliament is essential for prime ministers and governments attempting to influence policy. Most major policy changes must be passed by the parliament of a country. The parties or groups that make up *fixed* parliamentary majorities are therefore veto players. In fact, minorities may also be veto players. If Bills automatically fall on the termination of a parliamentary session (six months to a year long), then it is easy to see that an opposition in parliament could prevent government from passing legislation through filibuster or by tabling endless amendments. Thus it is possible for a minority in parliament to prevent policy change by taking up parliamentary time, that is, to veto change. The need to protect parliamentary time and prevent legislative inertia is the main reason that parliaments began to give their governments special privileges in parliament (Cox 1987: 45-51). Prime ministers and governments are now generally well equipped to set choices for parliamentarians and by giving agenda-setting privileges to governments, parliaments allow their governments to control parliaments' actions.

In practice there is a 'bewildering variety of subtle differences' in the control of agenda setting in parliaments (Döring 1995b: 224). However, the different parliamentary agenda-setting mechanisms can be categorised into three types; 'Proposal Rights' – the exclusive right to propose policies for deliberation; 'Gate-Keeping Rights' – the right to determine what proposals get to the forum for decision-making (this is closely linked to the right to veto because a veto effectively tells a group that would otherwise take a decision to change policy in some way that it cannot); and 'Final Offer Rights' – the right to make 'take it or leave it' offers at the final stage of deliberation (Döring 2001: 146).

All governments in the 22 parliamentary democracies studied here can make proposals for policy changes. It is the ability to restrict others' proposal and amendment-proposal rights that tends to differentiate these countries. These are essentially 'Gate-Keeping Rights'. For example, some governments can veto certain types of initiatives such as 'Money Bills'-that is, bills that impose a burden on the public purse – effectively giving gate-keeping power to those governments.

The general effects of agenda setting in parliament have been given some attention (Döring 1995a; Döring 2001). Political scientists now know about the theoretical effects of agenda setting (Black 1958; McKelvey 1976; Romer and Rosenthal 1978). However, fewer academic works look at the detailed operation of specific agenda setting rights in parliamentary democracies.

Heller (2001) argues that one method of parliamentary agenda control, what he calls 'last offer authority', allows ministers to maintain control over their policy area and holds coalitions together by limiting the possibilities of reneging on deals in the legislature. Other methods of agenda control include the right to postpone (veto) decisions through deferral motions, the right to curtail debates through guillotine motions and the right to set a 'final offer' through closure motions (discussed below).

Governments can also use confidence motions to make 'final offers' to parliament. The confidence motion is probably the prerogative that political science now knows most about. Özbudun (1970) was among the first to single out the procedure as a potentially important source of power. Laver and Shepsle (1994c: 134-5) gave some potential reasons for its importance. They called for greater attention to the ease of proposing censure motions, and to who controls the process of the motion. Huber's (1996a; 1996b) seminal work, which I look at in detail below, studies the confidence vote procedure and shows why the confidence vote procedure offers a prime minister considerable policy power, offering evidence from the French case.

Confidence motions allow the government to declare that the question is a matter of confidence in the government, and hence that defeat on this means that parliament has lost confidence in the government. The practical effect of this differs across countries.

In some places this may certainly lead to an election, whereas in other countries the government may be reconstituted after no more than a reshuffle.

Calling a confidence motion is not a tactic that governments use lightly. It often indicates that prime ministers face significant opposition to their policies. Yet it might be considered that it is the ability of a prime minister to achieve policy ambitions in adverse circumstances that shows the existence of policy power. Nor are confidence motions, guillotines and closures used regularly as parliamentary tactics. One need not conclude from this, as some do, that censure and confidence motions are 'instruments of secondary or minor importance' (Mény 1992: 219). Rather, the mere availability of measures such as these might well influence the decisions and actions of political actors, without necessitating the actual use of these measures.

In the next section I look at the different rules, and the sources of the rules that govern the use of agenda setting procedures in the 22 parliamentary democracies. I then introduce the formal (rational choice) literature on agenda setting, and show how agenda setting can assist prime ministers in their attempt to control the decisions of parliament by determining the outcomes from which parliament must choose.

After that I look more closely at the literature on the confidence motion, I analyse this and draw hypotheses from this analysis. I conclude that the confidence motion is a useful tool for prime ministers and their governments to force their parliamentary parties to accept the government's favoured policy, but that 'Final Offer' prerogatives will not help force coalition partners or others in government to accept a policy. I also develop specific hypotheses that are then tested using expert survey and other data.

Parliamentary Agenda Setting in 22 Countries

The many different sets of rules that exist in parliamentary democracies mean that it is difficult to compare rules and be sure that one is comparing like with like. Some, such as the confidence motion, or the right to veto 'Money Bills' are relatively easily compared. However, Döring (2001) identifies fifteen different types of rules from which the structure of the relationship between government and parliament can be analysed.

When there are only 22 countries in a study, one might soon run out of room to make comparisons.

Deferral motions allow the government to defer or postpone a bill. This is a gate-keeping motion, which prevents others (even a majority) from adopting a policy temporarily. Guillotines (or allocation of time motions) allow the government to limit the amount of time each stage of the Bill can be debated (House of Commons Standing Orders 82-3). This does not fit neatly into one of the three categories, but might be advantageous to its holder as it would not give opposition time to make arguments against a bill. Closure motions (in the UK) allows the government whip to move 'That the question be now put' and if at least 100 MPs support the motion, the main question is put and decided (HoC SO 36-7). This motion is a 'final-offer' motion, allowing the holder to ignore previous amendments and force their proposal against the status quo.

Spain is a good example of a country at one extreme in terms of legislative-executive relations. For instance, government bills in Spain automatically take precedence over private members' bills – a feature that exists in many other countries. In fact, the Spanish government has the right to consider and reject all bills from private members (Lancaster 1996: 196-7). The Spanish government can also introduce decree laws. Article 86.2 of the Spanish constitution gives the government the right to introduce a law, which must be either promulgated or rejected within thirty days. Since the reintroduction of democracy about one in four of all Spanish laws were of this type (Sánchez de Dios 2002: 225).

At the other end of the scale might be the Netherlands. Although 95 percent of government proposals are successful, and only five percent of all initiatives come from parliament (Keman 1996: 237), the Dutch parliament is able to set its own agenda and timetable. Dutch parliamentary committees are not restricted by preceding plenary decisions (Döring 1995b). The success of government proposals may have more to do with its willingness to compromise than its strength. Italy is another country in which the legislature is comparatively strong vis-à-vis the executive. A conference of the Italian parliamentary party groups must agree the parliamentary agenda unanimously. This does not mean that the Chamber of Deputies is a classic legislature, issuing directives to the executive. There are complaints that too many 'little laws' are made

and the Government sometimes must use decree powers to pass important legislation (Mény 1992: 204).

While the situation in Spain is unusual, most governments do enjoy some priority rights over parliament in terms of their legislation. Some governments have certain rights over parliament, such as the right to veto 'Money Bills'. This right gives government the clear legal right to veto many bills, which may or may not add to governments' *de facto* ability to veto bills by not providing time or other resources to the bills. Table 7.1a shows the distribution of rights to veto bills of this type.

However, rules are only as strong as the enforcement environment in which they exist. Many constitutional rules, such as cabinet confidentiality, no longer have much real impact.[1] Without an intimate knowledge of the country in question, categorisation of rules for comparative analysis may have the effect of losing the information in which we are most interested. For instance, though committee members are not strictly removable by Irish governments (this is one of Döring's specified rules), in practice Irish governments have shown their ability to remove committee chairpersons. This information would not be shown by a strict legalistic interpretation of rules.

For this reason I chose to use the survey to ask the country experts a generic question on the government's control of the agenda in parliament (see appendix A). This allowed the experts to take into account the rules that they felt were relevant in their country and ignore those which were not.

The results go more or less with the expectations of the comparative literature. This table also has a measure for executive domination of the legislature based simply on cabinet duration. In it higher values (truncated at 5.52) indicate greater domination (see Lijphart 1999: 313). Another is Döring's measure of government control of the parliamentary agenda in 16 European countries. This is an ordinal measure where 1 indicates 'the government alone determines the plenary agenda' and 7 indicates that 'the chamber itself determines the agenda'.

[1] Public displays of dissent rarely occur and this is due to the convention of cabinet confidentiality, but they do happen anonymously through the media. Patrick Gordon Walker (1972: 38-9) argued that cabinet leaks were in fact necessary for the survival of collective responsibility.

Table 8.1a Agenda Setting Rights in Parliament

Country	Right to veto 'Money Bills'^	Government control of the parliamentary agenda~	Government control of the parliamentary agenda (Döring)	Lijphart's executive domination index 1977-96
Australia	Yes- Art. 56 of the Constitution	7.2	-	4.02
Austria	No	7.4	4	5.52
Belgium	No	6.6	4	1.95
Canada	Yes- Const. Act 1864 Sect. 54	7	-	4.17
Denmark	No	6.2	5	2.09
Finland	No	7.4	5	1.49
Germany	No	6.1	4	5.52
Greece	Yes	8	2	2.88
Iceland	No	4°	5	2.27
Ireland	Yes	7.6	1	2.49
Israel	Yes- Rules of Procedure 138a since July 2002	5.8	-	1.4
Italy	No	4.4	6	1.1
Japan	No- Art. 57 II-III and 59 of The Diet Law	7.3	-	2.98
Luxembourg	No	7.5	3	5.42
Malta	Yes- Art 69 S.O. House of Representatives	7	-	5.52
Netherlands	No	5.3	7	2.66
New Zealand	Yes- Art. 25 of Constitution Act	7.3	-	3.68
Norway	No	4.3	4	2.56
Portugal	Yes	4.3	3	2.09
Spain	Yes	7.2	4	4.36
Sweden	No	6.1	5	2.73
UK	Yes	8.1	1	5.52
Correlation with column 2	n/a	n/a	-.56*	.58**

^From Döring (2001: 149) unless otherwise stated.

~This measures control of the parliamentary agenda by government, measured between 1 and 9. 9 indicates that the government has complete control. This data is from question nine in the expert survey, which is shown in Appendix A.

°This estimate has a standard error above 1 and is considered unreliable.

These data confirm that the Dutch, Icelandic and Italian parliaments are relatively strong, whereas the UK, Ireland, Greece and Spain are at the other end of the scale. This

concurs with the other expert-derived measure of the balance of power in government/ parliament relations (Döring 1995b). There is a positive and significant correlation with the government domination index scores that Lijphart (1999) assigns to countries and the expert survey data on agenda control.

It is essential in parliamentary democracies that parliament has confidence in government. In fact, it could almost be described as a defining feature of a parliamentary democracy. Governments are committees selected by the legislature, and as such are agents of the legislature. Legislators are the only political representatives that *must* be elected by universal suffrage for a country to be considered a parliamentary democracy, and governments depend on legislatures' support for their right to govern. For parliamentary democracy to work, the legislature needs to be able to remove the government, and the clearest way of withdrawing support for the government is to pass a no-confidence motion or to reject a confidence motion. One should remember the distinction between the motion of no confidence as proposed by the legislature (or parts of it) and the motion of confidence as proposed by the executive.

The confidence vote procedure exists in most parliamentary democracies. Table 8.1b[2] below shows that apart from Iceland and Austria all countries in this study have *formal* votes of confidence that governments can propose.[3] Of the countries that allow confidence motions, Finland, Greece, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain and Sweden require cabinet approval for a motion to be put forward. All others, through a mixture of constitutional provision, convention and standing orders of the parliament, allow the prime minister to unilaterally put forward a motion of confidence. The voting procedures also vary. Some require a simple majority, while others need an absolute majority, making the passage of these motions more difficult for the side that needs an absolute majority.

[2] This is based on Huber (1996b) with additions and corrections.
[3] By formal I mean that it is politically recognised that a government must resign if it loses such a vote. This does not mean that there must be some formal legal or constitutional recognition of the motion.

Table 8.1b Confidence vote procedure

Country	Source of Authority	Prerequisites*	Voting Procedure
Australia	Convention & standing orders, Art. 111	None, must consult cabinet but the PM can unilaterally declare a Bill an issue of confidence	Simple Majority
Austria	Not available here**	N/A	N/A
Belgium	Standing orders, Art. 91	None	Absolute majority required to defeat PM
Canada	Convention	None	Simple majority
Denmark	Convention and standing orders, Art. 24	None	Simple majority
Finland	Constitution, section 36 of the Parliament Act	Cabinet approval	Simple majority
Germany	Basic Law, Article 68	None	Absolute majority required to defeat PM
Greece	Constitution, Article 84	Cabinet approval	Simple majority of at least two fifths of total membership
Iceland	Not available	N/A	N/A
Ireland	Convention, standing orders Art. 26	None	Simple majority
Israel	Basic Law: The Government Art. 19 & Knesset Rules of Procedure, Art. 36a (a) and 46(a)	None	Absolute majority required to pass motions of confidence or no confidence^
Italy	Constitution Art. 94 & standing orders Art. 116	Cabinet approval	Simple majority
Japan	Constitution Art. 69, 72 & Rules of the House of Representative, 28-III & Cabinet Law Arts. 5 & 6[+]	Cabinet approval	Simple majority
Luxembourg	Convention	Cabinet approval	Simple majority
Malta	Convention & mentioned in constitution art. 76 6(a)	None	Simple majority
Netherlands	Convention	Cabinet approval	Simple majority
New Zealand	Convention	None	Simple majority
Norway	Convention	None	Simple majority
Portugal¬	Constitution art. 193 & standing orders art. 235-237	Cabinet approval	Simple majority
Spain	Constitution art. 112 & standing orders, 173-74°	Cabinet approval	Simple majority
Sweden	Convention	Cabinet approval	Simple majority
UK	Convention	None	Simple majority

* This is the strictest prerequisite given. If the standing orders are more demanding than the constitution, then the standing orders are used. If the two are directly contradictory then the more explicit and stricter demand takes precedence.

** Peter Gerlich and Wolfgang C. Müller confirmed this for me. Votes of *no*-confidence exist and are binding on Austrian governments to resign (Art. 74).

^ See 'Sharon sworn in: direct election law repealed' by Gideon Alon in *Ha'aretz* 8 March 2001.

[+]The constitution and standing orders are vague on the issue. While clearly identifying the prime minister as the head of the cabinet, they also clearly state that the prime minister is a representative of the cabinet in the Diet. The Cabinet Law clarifies this ambiguity by placing clear limitations on the prime minister's personal authority (Shinoda 2000: 46(Shinoda 2000: 46)).

[¬] Huber cites Portugal as a country in which the prime minister has the authority to unilaterally put a confidence motion. However Articles 193° and 200°1.a of the Constitution of the Portuguese Republic (5th Revision, 2001) are unequivocal. Article 193° states that 'the Government may ask the Assembly of the Republic for a vote of confidence on a statement of general policy or on any matter of national interest' and Article 200°1.b states that the Council of Ministers has the power to 'decide whether to seek a vote of confidence in the Assembly of the Republic' in Bacelar Gouveia (2001)(own translation). Unlike elsewhere (e.g. Spain) the standing orders of the Assembly are not at odds with the constitution's provisions. Articles 235-237° on motions of confidence refer only to the government, never mentioning the prime minister.

[°] While Spain's constitution only requires the Spanish prime minister to consult the cabinet, Article 174° of the standing orders of the *Cortes* require the PM to have a certificate from the Cabinet.

These procedures allow governments and prime ministers to set the agenda for other important political actors. It has already been argued generally, that the ability to determine the alternatives from which others must choose can be thought of as a source of power over others. The effects of gate-keeping prerogatives, which the veto effectively is, have already been studied in detail in chapter seven. Next I look at the more formal work on agenda setting to see exactly how the 'Proposal' agenda setting function can assist control of parliament. After that I move on to the specific operation of the 'final offer' agenda setting rights, such as the confidence motion.

Agenda Setting and 'Chaos'

Spatial theorists have found that where a simple majority decision-rule applies, if there is no restriction on proposals and the policy space is one-dimensional, then the policy preferred by the voter who is in the middle (the median voter) will be chosen and no alternative will be preferred by a majority (Black 1958; Downs 1957). The median voter's preferred policy will be the equilibrium outcome. Black's Median Voter Theorem shows that for an equilibrium to exist, the voters' preferences must be 'single-peaked', (single peaked is defined so that voters prefer policies that are closer to their ideal points and are less satisfied by policy further away from their ideal points). In these situations, parties or politicians in search of votes will be best served by setting their policy at the median voter's position.

When the policy space is multi-dimensional, that is, when more than one issue is decided on in any single vote, the median voter theorem does not apply, because there is

not necessarily just one single median voter. Rather, there could be a median voter on each dimension or issue.[4] If there is more than one dimension, then no *Condorcet* winner necessarily exists (a *Condorcet* winner in policy terms is a policy which can majority defeat any other policy) and no policy outcome is stable.[5]

McKelvey (1976) took the work to its logically conclusive and extreme form of 'global cycling' or 'chaos'. His second theorem shows that, given Euclidean preferences,[6] more than one dimension, and pair-wise voting[7] among at least three voters, in the absence of Plott's (1967) unlikely 'radial symmetric' exception, there exists a sequence of legislative proposals such that each proposal is majority-preferred to the previous proposal. That is, if there are no restrictions on legislators to put forward proposals, a situation can exist whereby proposals are continually put to a vote and passed, thereby bringing about a situation of 'chaos' or 'global cycling'. Conversely, given sincere voting, chairmen with control over agenda setting and perfect information about other legislators' preferences, can engineer a situation where a majority votes for any point in the policy space. Skilled and knowledgeable agenda setters can obtain any outcome they wish.

The constant cycling or chaos predicted by the theorems of McKelvey and Plott obviously have little empirical backing. Policies are made and laws are passed by parliaments and are rarely changed soon afterwards. When policies are changed it is more likely that it is as a result of a new legislature (i.e. after an election), and this is a new and different legislature finding its new and different policy.

Shepsle (1978; 1979) proposed a reason why the predicted 'chaos' does not occur. He focussed on the concept of a 'structurally induced equilibrium'. The policy equilibrium is determined not by majority-rule, which is inherently unstable, but by 'organizational conditions, formal arrangements, institutional practices, and their channelling effects on

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[4] Some scholars (Tsebelis and Money 1997) have argued that in some policy areas while the issue space or policy space may be multidimensional, the issues may be effectively on one dimension because the issues are related (ideal points on one issue tend to correlate with ideal points on another).

[5] The extremely unlikely exception to this rule is Plott's radial symmetry. This is a case where the same point or person is not only the median on both dimensions, but the centre of a radially symmetric distribution of ideal points, (see Hinich and Munger 1997; Plott 1967)

[6] Euclidean distances are the straight-line distances between points. The assumption of Euclidean preferences means that actors are assumed to prefer policies that are closer to them to those further away.

[7] Pair-wise voting is putting two options against each other at a time.

the revelation and aggregation of individual preferences' (Sheplse 1986: 52). To predict the policy outcome one should look at the institutions that produce it. In the US it is the committee system that induces policy stability. This system makes the committees 'both *monopoly proposers* and *veto groups*'[8] (Sheplse 1986: 60). Within committees, the chairman can, by using pair-wise decisions, set the agenda to achieve whatever outcome s/he wishes on a multidimensional policy. Between committees, the various chairmen can agree to respect each other's policy domains, either through offering the chairperson an official veto by allowing a closed-rule or no amendment clause when the decision clause to the floor of the house, or informally though a convention of non-interference on the floor (similar to what may occur in cabinets).

The 'structure' of the structurally-induced equilibrium in parliamentary democracies is the party, and the coalition arrangements of political actors which are formed to govern countries. Parties and coalitions of parties agree policies over a range of policy areas, which can sometimes ensure that the component actors do not defect on the agreement, because to break the agreement for short-term gain risks losing longer term benefits. Here too, both institutional guarantees and convention also dissuade defectors.

Proposal Power and the Status Quo

Romer and Rosenthal (1978) discovered that the position of the status quo is crucial to the ability of agenda setters to achieve outcomes different to outcomes expected by the Median Voter Theorem. They created a model with a budget-maximising agenda setter on a single dimension. It demonstrates that the agenda setter's best outcome depends not just on the position of the median voter but also on that of the status quo. The model proves that the voter 'whose preferences are decisive for the setter depends on the status quo' (Romer and Rosenthal 1978: 38). Their model shows that if the status quo is very low or nil, a budget-maximising agenda setter can position a proposal quite high and still expect acceptance of the proposal because of the unattractiveness of the status quo or reversion budget level (the level to which the budget reverts if no new level is agreed). If the reversion budget is nil, even fiscal conservatives who support at least some spending may back a high budget where the agenda is controlled by a budget-

[8] One should note the connection between these two types of actors. All monopoly proposers are veto holders, whereas veto holders do not necessarily have proposal rights. Emphasis in original.

maximiser. The size of the potential budget depends on the shape of the voters' preferences.

Their model depends on certain assumptions, not only that amendments cannot be proposed, but also that policy is made over a single-play game. More realistically, there will be more than one 'play' in a policy-making game and if the status quo is unthinkable to the agenda setter, voters can reject the proposal knowing that another, perhaps more attractive proposal, will be forthcoming. What then becomes important is the 'discount rate', or the patience of the players.[9] If, for instance, agenda setters are anxious to attain their desired results immediately, they may concede policy to more patient actors.

A hypothetical example of the use of agenda setting can illustrate its potential to achieve results which a majority decision-rule would not otherwise have achieved. Figure 7.1 represents a simple model of positions of parliamentary actors on the issue of availability of abortion.[10] This country's policy had been to not allow abortions under any circumstances. Pressure, due to some prominent and extraordinary cases, meant a proposal emerged on the relaxation of that law, which the government put to parliament and parliament accepted. However, the legislation was flawed and led to a legal challenge in which the constitutional court interpreted the legislation in such a way as to rule that abortion should be more or less made freely available. The court called for the government to legislate to set out exactly how this should operate.

As a result of the court ruling the status quo, SQ, which had been to the far right of the dimension, shifts to the far left on the policy dimension, away from the median voter in parliament, M. The government, which holds a more liberal position than the median voter and has sole agenda control in parliament, decides to legislate. The model of this situation has two stages; in stage one, the government proposes a change in policy; and a second stage in which the parliament (or its median voter on this dimension) accepts the offer, thus changing the policy, or rejects the government's proposal leading to retention of the status quo.

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[9] This is how much an actor prefers rewards now to rewards later.
[10] Assume for the moment that this is a one-dimensional issue.

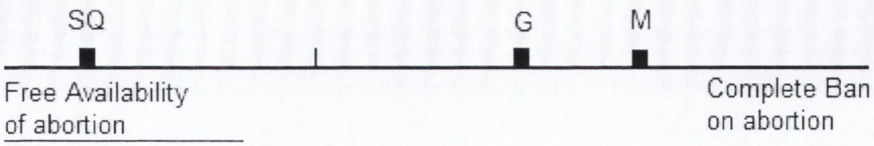

Figure 8.1
Agenda setting effects in a legislature

In this example the government decides to offer parliament a choice between accepting its own ideal position, G, and retention of the (extreme) status quo. The government correctly judges that the median voter, although not completely content with the government proposal, would find it more acceptable than the status quo and therefore would favour the government's proposal. Only those people whose policy preferences are closer to SQ than G (any position to the left of the unlabelled cut point) will reject the government's proposal.

If an agenda setting government and the median voter are not in agreement on the issue, but the government has good information about the attitudes of the parliament and its median voter, then it can design its proposal to achieve majority support for the closest possible outcome to its ideal point. In this case the extreme position of the status quo (related to the median voter's ideal point) made this easier, but in a case where the median voter is between the status quo and G, then proposal power allows the agenda setter to achieve equally impressive gains. If, for instance, M was slightly to the right of the unlabelled cut-point in figure 8.1, G with sole proposal power could still achieve its ideal policy, because given the choices available, M would prefer G to SQ.

A two-dimensional example also shows how proposal power can help the agenda setter influence the actions of others and hence the policy outcome. In figure 8.2 there are three actors, all of whom are veto players, all of whom have the same discount factor of one; i.e. they are equally infinitely patient. It can be established that the outcome should be somewhere on the contract curve connecting points A and B. If the policy SQ were not on this line, a proposal could be made which would make no one worse of and at least one of the two actors, A and B, better off, i.e. a Pareto optimal move. The same is not true when SQ is on the line connecting these two actors. C is not relevant in this case because anything on the line AB is preferable to a SQ 'north' of that line.

Exactly where on that line the outcome would be depends on other factors. But if A is the only actor with proposal rights, then A can propose the point A and no other actor will veto the proposal, as all prefer it to the status quo. The allocation of the agenda setting prerogative has established a stable (equilibrium) policy, and given A power effectively to set policy.

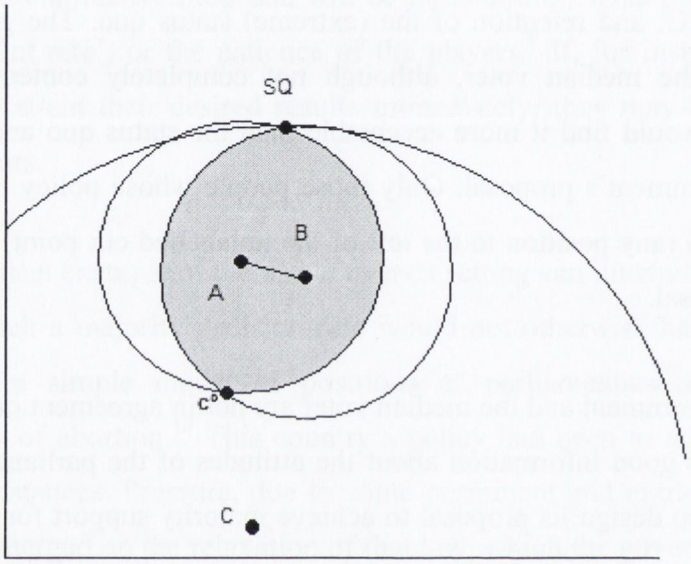

Figure 8.2
Agenda setting with three actors

The agenda setter can achieve its ideal policy because the positions of the veto players are on the same side of SQ. Had one actor been to the 'north' of the status quo, that is, had SQ been more central, this would not have been possible. The substantive point established by Romer and Rosenthal is clear; that where the status quo is at some 'extreme' point from the median voter's preference or median voters' preferences, another (slightly less) 'extreme' policy would be acceptable. As we shall see in this and subsequent chapters it is the ability of agenda setters to *effectively* change the status quo, by changing the consequences of rejecting a proposal, which makes them powerful.

The other major point is that another form of agenda control, 'Proposal Rights', are important, and can give those who possess these rights more influence than the median voter. It is noteworthy that though B and C are the median voters on the vertical and

horizontal dimensions, it is the agenda setter, A, who can achieve a change in policy to its ideal point.

Adapting the generic setter models to the study of prime ministers is relatively straightforward. As could be seen in the last section, in many countries the prime ministers and governments have agenda-setting rights over others in parliament. We should see that *government control of parliamentary agenda setting increases prime ministerial power*. General government control can be expected to assist prime ministerial power given that the prime minister is a prominent member of the government. Before testing this relationship, I look at another type of agenda setting prerogative in parliament; the right to make final offers.

The Logic of Final Offer Rights

As well as granting prime ministers and governments proposal rights and gate-keeping rights to avoid legislative 'chaos', some governments have the right to make final offers to parliament. This can be done through 'closure' motions, or through the right to declare certain issues to be issues of confidence. These procedures allow the government to declare whatever position it chooses to be the last offer, which can either be accepted or rejected.

The logic of the final offer is simple, and very similar to that of the monopoly agenda setter. The monopoly agenda setter, we have just seen, can propose her best available policy. What the best available policy is depends on the status quo and the preferences of the other actors. If there is a fixed majority and each member of the majority effectively has a veto over policy change, the agenda setter will offer the policy within the win set of the status quo that is closest to the agenda setter (that is, the policies that all other actors are indifferent to or prefer to the status quo). In Figure 8.2 above, where C is the monopoly agenda setter, this would be c^{o}. Similarly, if C were allowed to make a single final offer that A and B could only either accept or reject, c^{o} would be that offer, and we would expect A and B to accept (assuming that there are no transaction costs and, everything else being equal, A and B prefer new policies to the status quo).

Confidence motions

The confidence motion works in the same way as the closure motion except for one important factor. With the confidence motion, the prerogative holder may have some control over the status quo. While the reversion *policy* remains the same when a motion of confidence is invoked, the status quo is changed because a rejection of the policy with the motion attached not only keeps the existing policy but also leads to a fall of the government. Rejection then forces the resignation of the government.

Though the procedure is not used very often, it should be thought of as the ultimate agenda-setting tactic by which a government or prime minister can influence parliament. It is like the nuclear option in international relations; though they may never be used, no one would seriously question that the availability of nuclear weapons has an impact on international relationships. Governments may use other, less confrontational methods, but will always have this prerogative as a last resort. While the logic of the procedure is essentially one that gives a certain actor, the prime minister or the cabinet, the right to give parliament a final choice, its potency lies in that it effectively changes the status quo or reversion policy.

Huber modelled the effect of the procedure in four stages. In stage one a cabinet minister, C, proposes a policy which is the prime minister's ideal policy. In stage two the parliamentary majority, M, amends the proposal. In the next stage the prime minister, P, decides whether or not to use the confidence motion and to attach it to P's ideal policy; Huber assumes that P can unilaterally invoke the procedure. In the final stage, the parliament or rather, M decides whether to accept the confidence policy or reject it, causing the collapse of the government and the reversion to the status quo policy (Huber 1996b). Huber assumes perfect information among actors.

If we assume that there is a stable majority and that this majority has some interest in maintaining the current government, then we can assume that there are some costs associated with bringing down the government – 'censure costs'. Elements within the majority would have had the opportunity to choose another majority or to be part of another majority. However, the fact that this majority was chosen must mean that the elements making it up see some advantage of this majority over others. The assumption of a stable majority is defensible, as majorities are often necessary for government

investiture, which ensures that deals are done in exchange for support at investiture, (but Strøm (1990) makes interesting observations about what can happen when this is not the case). Even where M bears no costs for censuring the government per se, the reversion to the status quo and the time delay involved in forming a government, without which policy making is impeded, may convince M to accept P's proposal.

Huber also asks us to assume that M is broken into groups, say parties in a stable coalition or factions in a party, and that each group's (GN) support is required to pass any motion; therefore each member of the majority is a veto player. All other actors and other possible majorities are ignored. Again, this assumption that Huber uses is not wholly unrealistic; government majorities are often fixed, with each component part being essential to policy change. In any case, the other actors that may be used to form different majorities are likely to be more 'unlike' P, for why else would P, G1 and G2 have formed a coalition in the first place?

Consider the situation in Figure 8.3 below. Given these positions, the intersection of G1 and G2's (inner) indifference curves for SQ is an empty set, so G1 and G2 could not agree to any new policy. That is, there is no new policy that both G1 and G2 prefer to the status quo. Therefore, according to veto player theory, P could not be expected to make any policy gains. However, P has a way to change the choice facing the two groups. P can attach a confidence motion to the acceptance of some P-sponsored policy, and create a situation by which the choices facing M are approval of this policy or maintenance of the status quo and censure of the government.

By taking into account the costs of censuring the government, the outcome changes for the two groups that make up M. The outer circles or indifference curves incorporate the extra costs each actor associates with censuring the government. In this case, the outer indifference curves are the larger circles around each actor's ideal point. The smallest difference between the inner and outer circles represents the costs of censure for each actor. The positive cost associated with maintaining SQ expands the indifference curve for SQ, thereby making acceptable previously unacceptable options. So G2 will be indifferent between accepting ρ and avoiding censuring the government (and what this entails), and keeping the status quo. Here the costs are positive and equal for all actors, but this is not necessarily the case.

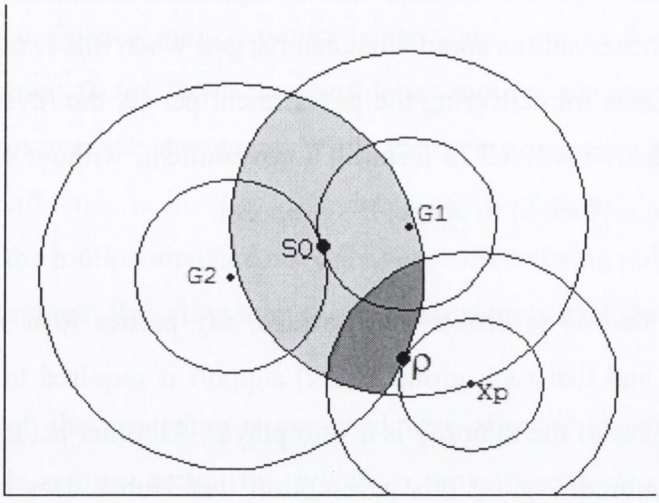

Figure 8.3
The effect of the confidence procedure

Using a confidence motion, P can propose a policy within the intersection of each actor's indifference curve, incorporating censure costs (shaded area). Thus, in this case P can propose ρ and by attaching a confidence motion, will attain this policy. Given their costs of censure, G1 and G2 will prefer to accept a change to an inferior policy rather than censure the government.

Though G1 and G2 will accept this (subjectively) inferior policy because of the costs associated with censuring the government, P does not need to use the confidence motion to have ρ accepted. This can be explained by pointing to the logic of anticipated reactions. If the members of M know that P is capable of achieving ρ then C will propose and M will accept ρ. However, using a confidence motion is not without its costs. Using it highlights both the issue and a split in the government majority with the press and public. In the words of an experienced former Irish minister, Paddy Hillery, 'a vote of confidence is a sure sign you are in trouble' (Collins 2001: 83).

Given the potential costs associated with the use of a confidence motion, members of the fixed majority, M, can anticipate what policies P would accept rather than use the motion. In the example in Figure 8.3 this is the dark shaded area. G1 and G2 could

agree to amend the proposed policy to some point in this shaded area that for them would be preferable to ρ.[11]

When each actor knows the others' ideal policy and censure costs, the use of the confidence motion should be rare, as we observe empirically. Huber points out that the motion may be used 'when position-taking incentives are sufficiently strong', and members of M wish to display their strong policy preferences to their constituents. This will cause P to invoke the confidence motion (Huber 1996b: 280).

In the narrative on the passage of the Maastricht Treaty through the UK parliament, the Eurosceptics were unable to propose a different policy for Major to accept rather than use the motion. This is because the Treaty was agreed by the 12 member states of the European Community. This may have been advantageous for John Major (if the Treaty was his ideal policy, or close to his ideal). It effectively tied his hands, preventing him from negotiating with his parliament. The Commons could only either accept or reject the whole Treaty.

By giving the executive the right to negotiate treaties on their behalf, Parliaments give the negotiators some agenda setting rights. The executive will try to offer the parliament the agreement that is closest to the executive's own position and still acceptable to the parliament. The executive can take into account that rejecting a negotiated agreement may be costly to parliament. Firstly, it may make negotiating future agreements difficult, as the other parties to the agreement may be wary of whether the negotiators are competent to agree a deal. Secondly, there may be built-in costs to rejecting an agreement. If an agreement between more than two parties proceeds even if one subsequently withdraws from the agreement, the reversion position may be changed. The effect of rejecting the agreement may not just be a regression to an earlier position.

This is a point that Tony Blair tried to make to the British people with regard to the constitution for the European Union. He claimed that in the case of a rejection of the EU

[11] The costs of censure for each actor here are symmetrical, i.e. circular, indicating that it does not matter on what policy a government gets censured or M censures. This need not be the case. It may happen that P's censure costs are elliptical and that censure for proposing a certain policy is much less costly than that for proposing a policy equally distant but in another direction.

constitution by the UK, the other members would proceed with and adopt the new constitution and that the UK would find itself left behind. Rejection of the constitution would effectively mean a rejection of membership of the European Union, he argued. Blair effectively tried to associate costs with rejection of the referendum on the EU constitution, by shifting the status quo.

Interestingly, the termination costs for prime ministers do not affect the policy outcome. Again the Maastricht example is illustrative. John Major almost certainly had more to lose by termination than the Eurosceptics in his party, yet he achieved his desired policy outcome. This is because prime ministers, not legislators, set the agenda. If legislators could make the last offer, then the pivotal legislators could choose the policies closest to their ideal positions that prime ministers would prefer to a fall of government. Huber's analysis convincingly shows how the confidence motion can be a powerful tool in the arsenal of prime ministers. We should therefore expect that *prime ministers with the confidence motion at their disposal are more powerful than those without it (Hyp. 8.2).*

The (absence of an) effect on government deliberations

Huber and McCarty questioned the assumption that prime ministers can unilaterally invoke confidence motions, pointing to the variation across different countries (see Table 8.1b above). They argue that the different rules governing how confidence motions are invoked 'profoundly affects the distribution of bargaining power within the government' (Huber and McCarty 2001: 354).

In their models, all of the activity takes place not in parliament but in cabinet. There are two models; one in which the prime minister can unilaterally invoke the motion and another where cabinet approval is needed. The Unilateral model starts with an actor or group of actors in cabinet, G (a minister, a faction or a party), which proposes a policy γ. The prime minister, P, then has a choice between (a) accepting γ; (b) resigning, thereby retaining the status quo policy or; (c) proposing a new policy ρ as a confidence issue. If P chooses to propose a new policy as a confidence issue, G must then choose to accept ρ or force the resignation of the government.

The logic of the unilateral model proceeds along the same lines as Huber's earlier model and depends on the costs of termination for G, and the 'audience costs', i.e. the costs of using the motion for P. They conclude that prime ministers 'never make policy concessions to their partner (relative to the status quo) but the partner often makes policy concessions to the prime minister' (Huber and McCarty 2001: 350). The partner in government can be forced to decide between two unappealing options, in the same way the original Huber model demonstrated the government's ability to force its majority in parliament to do so.

In the collective model G is again a 'pivotal player' whose support is needed for the bill to pass and who can bring down the government in a confidence motion. However, G also needs to approve the use of a confidence motion. In this model, G once again proposes a policy γ. The prime minister can then choose between accepting γ, thus ending the game, and proposing a new policy ρ. But P's proposal is not the 'final offer' available. G can accept ρ thus ending the game, or reject ρ. If G rejects ρ then P has the choice of resigning or allowing γ to be adopted. Whereas in the unilateral model a rejection of P's proposal causes a termination of the government, in the collective model a rejection forces P to choose between resigning and accepting G's original offer, γ.

The specification of the model is problematic as it only allows the retention of the status quo policy if P or G resigns. The opportunity for stalemate -a likely result when two veto players disagree on change – is not possible. If Huber and McCarty's models allowed both G and P to reject each other's offers without resignation, which it should if it was to reflect the reality of parliamentary democracy, then stalemate would indeed be the likely outcome.

As a result, their collective model offers a very different outlook for prime ministers than the unilateral model. In the collective model the partner, G, is given 'first move advantage', and the prime minister is forced to accept a resolute G's proposal or to resign. Thus, in this case 'the partner never makes policy concessions to the prime minister, but the prime minister often makes policy concessions to the partner' (Huber and McCarty 2001: 352). This is odd because the other parties or factions leaders in government have no advantage over prime ministers vis-à-vis the use of the confidence

motion – presumably, both G's and P's support is needed to invoke the motion – yet the bargaining power of G is transformed into one where, if in situations of conflict and G and P are on opposite sides of the status quo, G never loses and P never gains, but stalemate is impossible. According to their analysis, a pivotal group such as a faction or coalition partner 'have the advantage of being able to make the final policy proposal' when the collective rules apply (Huber and McCarty 2001: 354). Thus the advantages predicted for prime ministers to have 'substantial influence over final policy outcomes' by virtue of the availability of the confidence motion is given to the non-prime ministerial faction or the coalition partner even though these groups do not possess this prerogative (Huber 1996b: 279).

Why does G have the advantage that in using its veto it bears no costs, whereas for P to use its veto, she must resign? The collective model gives G a 'first move advantage' whereby γ effectively becomes the new status quo upon proposal. According to this analysis, where the collective rule applies, holding the post of prime minister would be disadvantageous to policy-seeking actors because this model gives G stronger proposal rights than P.

The problem with these models is that they claim that parliamentary prerogative affect cabinet deliberations, and do so by generalising from a one-shot game to an intrinsically multi-stage reality (i.e. government policy-making). Huber and McCarty's models assume that the prerogative holder will be allowed to use the prerogative in a way that is both unexpected and detrimental to the interests of other members of the government and that the other members of the government will be unable to react against this. This would occur through a prime minister using a prerogative against the backbenchers of one party without the agreement of the leaders of that party in government.

It is implausible that in a government of a number of parties, one party, say Party A, will use the 'final offer' rights to force Party B's parliamentary group to abide by a government decision without even the reluctant and tacit agreement of Party B in government. While Party A *could* use its prerogatives in parliament to force a government partner's parliamentary party to accept a policy, it *will not do it* if it values the continued existence of the government. The government decision will only be made if all parties feel they can convince, coax or force their own parliamentary party to

accept the decision. Even if it is legally possible, party A will not use the parliamentary procedure against Party B's parliamentary group without the agreement of Party B's representatives in government. It cannot take on party B as a unified force. There must be some understanding on Party B's part that it is preferable to accept short-term losses, rather than use its veto. Of course Party A may use this tactic to force a collapse of government on an issue.

Once a government decision is made, the use of confidence motions or 'last offer' motions to force a new government position will inevitably cause a breakdown in trust in the government and its collapse. Therefore the confidence procedure or any other 'final offer' procedure will not be used against groups within government. Government leaders will only use the confidence procedure 'against' their *own* party's backbenchers.

The expectations of Huber and McCarty's hypothesis are that *governments in countries using the unilateral rule will be less diverse, in policy terms, than those using the collective rule*. That is, where the rule is collective, more diverse coalitions will be possible as the diverse parties will be confident that agenda setting rules will not be used against them. However, rejection of the hypothesis might be expected given Huber and McCarty's models, as in one case the prime minister's party has an advantage, whereas under the other rule the coalition partner has a significant advantage. Therefore neither should be inclined to trust the other in either case.

In any case, this expectation was arrived at through a poorly specified model. The expectations of this hypothesis may not hold because the motion will not be used against government partners and without their tacit agreement where the partners expect to continue in government together. Within the relatively unregulated government setting there are only a few simple 'negotiating chips' that can be used in government deliberations. The first and most obvious is the threat to veto; that is, the threat to vote against the proposal in parliament and thus to bring about the resignation of the government (or more immediately, to just resign from government). This threat is implicit in any negotiations, and each actor -the prime minister and the leaders of the other groups (parties or factions) – has some idea of the likely consequences of using the veto and, therefore, its usefulness and credibility in any given situation. The use of

the veto, i.e. resignation from government will have different consequences in different situations, something I discuss in detail below.

The immediate conclusion we can come to is that the confidence motion and all 'Final Offer' procedures are highly potent methods to set the choice for parliament in the way that best suits governments' ideal policies (however derived). However it is less clear what effects (if any) 'final offer' rights have on policy-making within government.

Why is it not the case that backbenchers in a party will also revolt at having a confidence motion used against them? Firstly, it is unlikely that the prerogative is needed to convince *all* backbenchers. The prerogative will be needed to influence the actions of certain groups within the backbenches. While backbench factions can threaten to veto the government proposal, by bringing down their own government in parliament, they do not know whether they would be successful. If they failed they could be punished through de-selection or some other mechanism. In any case, this action would probably split a party. The parliamentary party will try to avoid public splits as this might have a deleterious effect on the party's electoral prospects. It is more likely that the discontented backbenchers will have representatives in government who can negotiate their case in government. Ultimately, if there is serious discontent, the backbenches may be able to remove the party leadership and install a new leadership without the need to bring down the government in such a public way.

Hypothesis Testing

1. We should see that government control of parliamentary agenda setting increases prime ministerial power.
2. That the ability to veto money bills will be associated with increased policy influence for prime ministers.
3. That prime ministers with the confidence motion at their disposal are more powerful than those without it.
4. That governments in countries using the unilateral rule will be less diverse, in policy terms, than those using the collective rule.

The hypotheses set out here have been developed using the existing theoretical literature on agenda setting and final offer prerogatives. In this section, I test these hypotheses

using the data from the expert survey and similar data independent of the survey. The first hypothesis predicted that, given the influence that proposal, gate-keeping and final offer rights give agenda setters in theory, there should be an association between the level of agenda control that countries' governments have in parliament and the power of the prime ministers in those countries. Moving to one, specific agenda setting right, we expect that prime ministers leading governments that have the right to veto 'Money Bills' will be more powerful than their counterparts leading governments without this right. Another specific prerogative, the confidence motion should also be associated with the power to influence other veto holding actors and hence policy outcomes. A fourth hypothesis is a negative one. I argue that Huber and McCarty's hypothesis that governments with the collective confidence rule will be more policy diverse should not necessarily hold. In fact there should be no significant difference between governments of the two types (prime minister or cabinet nominated confidence motions) as the confidence motion will not be used 'against' government partners just against rebels in parliament.

When testing for causal effects of certain prerogatives the most direct (and arguably convincing) way to proceed would be to look at these procedures in action, and sample cases where these are in action and form a general conclusion on their effectiveness. However, a problem with this approach is that the prerogatives may be rarely used. Yet this does not mean that they do not inform negotiations between relevant policy-making actors at all times. The law of expected reactions is at play in policy-making, in that one actor can predict that another actor will use a prerogative against him, and as such does not force the issue. It would be difficult to study these non-events. Yet just like the nuclear bomb, these prerogatives are not 'meant' to be used, but their effect is still real. For this reason the types of tests one can use for these hypotheses must remain quite general. Also, 'unreal' data must be used, such as those from the expert survey and similarly derived measures.

Hypothesis 1

The first hypothesis is very general and using results from the expert survey on government control of the parliamentary agenda reported in Table 8.1a, one can see whether government agenda control is positively associated with prime ministerial

power to set policy. The scores for agenda setting freedom in parliament are based on the responses to the following question in the expert survey;

> In some countries the government has little control over the agenda of parliament. In other countries the government seems to have complete control. What do you think is the situation in [country]? Please place an X on the scale below to indicate the control the government has over the parliamentary agenda where 1 indicates very little control and 9 a great deal of control.

Agenda setting rules normally differ at the country level and this question is asked at the level of country. However, the data on prime ministerial power introduced and described in chapter five is on the level of the individual prime ministerial term of office, so to adapt these to the country level I use the mean of the mean scores for each prime minister by country. Both the agenda setting freedom score and prime ministerial power scores are measured between 1 and 9, with 9 indicating most government control of the parliamentary agenda/ prime ministerial power, and 1 indicating least control/ power.

To test the bivariate relationship between the variables I use the OLS regression technique, regressing the dependent variable, prime ministerial power by country, on 'government control of agenda setting' from the expert survey. The relationship is highly significant. As Table 8.2 shows, agenda control of parliament accounts for a third of the between-country variation in prime ministerial power. While the scales of the measures are not intrinsically meaningful, the results show that a unit increase in agenda control gives a country's prime ministers .4 of a unit increase in the prime ministerial power scale. We can therefore say that prime ministers of governments with greater control of the parliamentary agenda will be more powerful than their counterparts without it.

An objection could be put that these variables are not independent of each other as they were derived using the same survey. Although I believe that the data from the expert survey are superior to other data measuring government control of the agenda and executive-legislative relations, in order to ensure a rigorous test for the relationship between agenda control and prime ministerial power exists, I also use other, completely independent data. Using Döring's (1995b: 225) measure of agenda setting control for 16 European countries (scaled ordinally between 1 and 7, where 1 indicates 'the

government alone determines the plenary agenda' and 7 indicates that 'the chamber itself determines the agenda') a similar result was found. With Lijphart's index of executive domination the result too was both significant and in the expected direction. The variables account for a quarter and a fifth of between-country variation in prime ministerial power respectively (see models 8.2 and 8.3 in Table 8.2). Given that all three measures of executive control of parliament make similar conclusions, we can be more certain that the theoretical assertion that agenda setting rights positively contribute to achieving one's policy-making goals is correct.

Table 8.2 Effect of agenda setting rights on PMs' policy influence

Dep. Variable: PM power	**1****	**2***	**3***	**4*****	**5*****
Agenda Setting Control	.41**	-	-	-	.27*
Agenda control- Döring	-	-.25*	-	-	-
Executive dom. -Lijphart	-	-	.28	-	-
Veto of 'Money Bills'	-	-	-	1.2***	.91**
Constant	3.5	7.06	5.2	5.58	3.9
(Adj.) R-squared[12]	.35	.25	.20	.42	.50
N	22	16	22	22	22

Hypothesis 2

It is also expected that the ability to veto 'Money Bills' should assist governments and their prime ministers to control parliament, and hence be more powerful. The veto right is measured as a dummy variable (1=veto available). I use the ANOVA procedure to compare prime ministerial power in those countries with the Money Bill veto available and those without it. The ANOVA procedure compares the means of different groups, so here we can discover if prime ministers in governments with the prerogative available are more powerful than those without it. The results (of model 5) are statistically significant and as predicted. The availability of the measure gives prime ministers an extra 1.2 units on the nine-point scale.

I next ran a regression with both the 'Money Veto' dummy variable and the agenda setting control variables. Taken together both are still significant predictors of variation in prime ministerial power, although to some extent one ('Money Bill' veto) is an element of the other. The model accounts for half the variation in the dependent variable. These models demonstrate that not only is the expert-derived measure of

[12] ANOVA is closely related to regression and offers an R-squared statistic.

government control of the agenda a significant predictor of prime ministerial power, as are other, independent measures of the same phenomenon, but that (at least one) specific constitutionally derived prerogatives are also associated with levels of prime ministerial power as the theoretical models predict. These models (1-5) provide empirical evidence for the assertion that agenda setting prerogatives in parliament are significant predictors of prime ministerial power.

Hypotheses 3 & 4

Next we move on to the hypotheses relating to the confidence motion. Huber has shown that the availability of the confidence motion offers prime ministers and their governments a way to overcome the blocking ability of reluctant backbenchers. The availability of the procedure is expected to be associated with more prime ministerial power, because it offers ways through which prime ministers' governments can control the majority in parliament. The data support this expectation.

Model 6 in table 8.3 reports the results of a one-way ANOVA analysis of country level prime ministerial power, by availability of the confidence motion. Using this technique one can discover if prime ministers with the confidence motion available to them are more powerful than those who do not. This analysis shows that there is a significant difference in means of prime ministerial power between countries with the procedure and those where the procedure is not available. However, as only Icelandic and Austrian prime ministers do not have the confidence motion (and the Icelandic score for power is questionable because of divergence among the experts on three prime ministers led to these being dropped) all this tells us is that these countries' average power is lower than the other twenty countries. That said, the results are significant and in the expected direction.

Huber and McCarty argue that the relative availability of the confidence motion to prime ministers will make a difference to government decision-making. However, they rely on questionable assumptions about the nature of cabinet deliberations to come to this conclusion. In fact, I have argued that the confidence motions and other 'Final Offer' rights should have no effect on cabinet deliberations.

Hypothesis 3 states that *governments in countries using the unilateral rule will be less diverse, in policy terms, than those using the collective rule*. Given that there are solid reasons why the collective rule will not be used against one's coalition colleagues, I expect that the policy diversity of governments with the unilateral and collective rules is not significantly different. Huber and McCarty test this hypothesis by using a prime minister's party's position as the prime minister's policy position. They then calculate the overall government position by using the weighted average[13] of the different parties, and take the difference between the prime minister's position and the government's position. So if there were a single party government, this difference would be zero. They then do a difference of means test between all prime ministers' positions and their Governments' positions by the confidence motion rule. That is, are governments with the unilateral rule less diverse than those with the collective rule? Huber and McCarty (2001: 353) find that there is a significant difference in the diversity of governments between governments using the two rules.

However, in their analysis they include single party governments which by definition will have a zero score. It is possible that the countries with the unilateral rule are also less likely to have coalition governments, and that this likelihood is not related to the confidence motion rule; for instance Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the UK. If countries with the unilateral rule were also more likely to have single party governments then including them would lead to bias. When the same analysis is carried out using just the 188 coalition governments in their study, the difference is not statistically significant (Huber and McCarty 2001: 353).

Table 8.3 Effects of confidence motion on PMs' policy influence

Model	**6***	**7***	**8**	**9**	**10**
Dependent variable	PM power	Policy diversity (HI)	Policy diversity (MRG)	PM power	PM power
Confidence Motion=1	1.7*	-	-	-	-
Unilateral=1	-	-.73*	-6.75	.48	.12
Constant	4.6	2.09	n/a	6.02	6.16
R-squared	.28	.09	.02	.09	.002
N	22	61	74	20	125

[13] Huber and McCarty weighted the different parties according to their parliamentary size.

I carried out a further analysis with similar policy-position data to that used by Huber and McCarty (from Huber and Inglehart 1995). I first measured the 'policy diversity' of the governments (as per chapter six) by taking the greatest policy distance between the parties in a government. So if Party A=2, Party B=1 and Party C=5 the total distance, or level of diversity is 5-1=4. Treating all parties in government equally may be a better approach than the approach used by Huber and McCarty because the size of each veto holding party should be irrelevant.

A t-test of the difference of means of 'policy diversity' within coalition governments by confidence motion rule (unilateral and collective) shows that there is a statistically significant difference in the government policy diversity of the two types (Model 7). This is contrary to my expectations. However, using Manifesto Research Group (MRG) data to measure policy, no significant difference was found using the 74 cases of coalition government from this thesis. This MRG data has a theoretical maximum scale of 200 as opposed to the theoretical maximum diversity of nine for the Huber and Inglehart data and hence the coefficient in model 8 are much larger than in the other model. There is certainly no conclusive evidence that the two types of procedure rules lead to different types of governments.

Applying the effects of the different rules allowing the confidence motion to be invoked to explain the power to determine policy, I expect that *there is no significant difference in prime ministerial power between countries where the procedures are available to prime ministers unilaterally and where they are available to governments only on the agreement of the whole government*. This is hypothesised because prime ministers will not be able to use the procedure against reluctant and cohesive partners in government, who would question the fruitfulness of remaining in government where this procedure is likely to be used against them. As I expected, an analysis of variance carried out on the country-level data fails to detect a difference between the two types. One should note that as there are only twenty cases (Austria and Iceland are excluded as they do not have the confidence procedure) confirming a difference is difficult. Yet no statistically significant difference is found using a one-sided t-test. Using the larger, prime ministerial level dataset there is still no significant difference in prime ministerial power between prime ministers with the confidence motion unilaterally at their disposal and

those who needed to consult cabinet. In fact the difference in mean levels of power between the two types is just 0.12 on a nine-point scale (Model 10).

While there is some evidence to support the claim that the different confidence motion rules will affect cabinet deliberations, it is indirect (policy diversity does not necessarily mean less prime ministerial power) and not consistently in favour of this claim. Furthermore it is weakened by the existence of contradictory evidence in other tests on data collected specifically for this purpose. On the other hand there is evidence to substantiate the expectations of the analysis above, that prime ministerial power is linked to the availability of the confidence motion, and other agenda setting rights.

Conclusion

Thus far I have argued that agenda setting rights in parliament help governments and their prime ministers to define the alternatives from which the veto-holding majority in parliament must choose. This broad conclusion receives empirical support. However, arguments suggesting that proposal rights in parliament can influence government decision-making are based on dubious assumptions and the conclusions of these models are therefore dubious. This scepticism was corroborated by an analysis of relevant data.

The effectiveness of the confidence motion in the parliamentary setting relies on the assumption that rejection of the motion is somewhat costly for the parliamentary groups at which it is targeted. The more costly rejection of a confidence motion is, the greater the potential gain for the holder of the prerogative.

Obviously each potential dissolution will cause different potential costs for different political actors. Thus it is difficult to theorise about costs. However, it is possible to expect that there would be some empirical regularities in the costs of rejecting a confidence motion. For instance, the confidence procedure is associated with the right to dissolve the parliament and call an election. The two are logically separate; one refers to the right of the government to make the last offer to parliament and associate that with the collapse of a government, while the other only deals with the right of the government to call an election. The government can then claim the bill to be a confidence issue and commit itself to resigning if its proposal is defeated. An election

does not necessarily occur. If, however, we know that the prime minister can and is likely to call an election following a confidence defeat the costs of rejecting a motion are likely also to increase, a topic I move on to next.

Chapter 9. Prerogatives and power in parliament: Calling elections

In late 1994, after a series of disagreements on issues of policy and appointments to certain positions, the Irish Labour Party left its coalition government with Fianna Fáil. Fianna Fáil had made demands on the Labour Party regarding some judicial appointments, which Labour was resisting. The subsequent stand-off ended when Labour indicated it would support a no-confidence motion in the government. A new government was formed soon after, of which Labour was a member. The Taoiseach, Albert Reynolds found himself out of government, and resigned his leadership of Fianna Fáil, effectively ending his political career. An argument can be made that the rules regarding the calling of elections were central to this outcome, and that Reynolds' misreading of the situation led to his political demise.

There are different accounts of what happened from various biased and more neutral view-points (Collins 2001; Duignan 1995; Finlay 1997; Kavanagh 2001), but certain facts are established. The government had been formed just under two years previously, and with its large majority, it could have expected to go full term. The Labour Party was seen by the media to have been making significant policy gains. Yet Labour's popularity dropped from its high in the 1992 general election. In January 1993, just after the government was formed, an opinion poll put Labour's support at 22 percent making it the second most popular party in the state. In early November 1994 during the crises in the government that caused its collapse, its estimated support among the electorate had fallen to ten percent.[1]

This was not a situation in which the Labour Party would have been expected to want to bring down the government. Common sense dictated that Labour should stay in government and hope that time and its continued success in some policy areas would help it regain some of the lost support. Fianna Fáil and the Taoiseach, Albert Reynolds, on the other hand, should have been in a commanding position. The government had

[1] Both are IMS surveys for Independent Newspapers. They are available from the *Irish Opinion Poll Archive* maintained at www.politics.tcd.ie/staff/mmarsh.

been credited with smoothing the way for an IRA ceasefire, and a long-term settlement in Northern Ireland, the Holy Grail of Irish politics, looked distinctly likely. Reynolds was leading a relatively popular government, with an unpopular junior coalition partner. He could have been expected to use Labour's weakness to make policy gains, as the threat of an election should have been enough to force the Labour party to accede to his demands. So Fianna Fáil's leadership would have felt in a strong position to make demands on Labour, and it did.

A number of seemingly small but important factors probably influenced Labour's decision to leave the government, one of which may have been that Taoisigh cannot automatically call general elections. The President dissolves the Dáil on the advice of the Taoiseach but can refuse to dissolve the Dáil where the Taoiseach has lost the support of the Dáil.

A second point was that the Taoiseach, Albert Reynolds, might not have had much incentive to call an election, making an implicit threat non-credible. This could have encouraged Labour not to compromise in their negotiations as the Labour strategists may have considered it unlikely that Reynolds would risk the government's collapse. If Reynolds' government had collapsed, it would be the second collapse in two years. On both occasions the public tended to blame him[2] and a majority of the public did not want an election (Marsh 1995: 381).

Also crucial in the decision to bring down the government was a change in the political landscape. A series of by-elections meant that a coalition of the small Democratic Left party, Labour and the moderate right-wing Fine Gael was a viable coalition (unavailable after the previous election). In this coalition Labour would be the centre party and had quite a large proportion of the seats among government parties.

The new government's investiture was still not a foregone conclusion. A new government had never been formed before without an intervening election, except as a result of the change of a party leader. Any request for dissolution by the Taoiseach to

[2] Fianna Fáil's support by late November 1994 had dropped to 28 percent, from 43 percent the previous January (MRBI polls for *The Irish Times*). At the previous election Fianna Fáil's support had also dropped while their former partners maintained their vote despite contesting fewer constituencies.

the President had been acted on in the past. However, the President had indicated that she was considering refusal by publicly letting it be known that she met with the Chairman of the Bar Council to consult on her constitutional powers. In the end Reynolds resigned as Taoiseach and leader of Fianna Fáil without asking the President for dissolution, perhaps foreseeing a refusal. He had also been forced to backtrack on the judicial appointment that had provided the proximate policy cause for the crisis.

Arguably Reynolds thought that Labour had little option but to accept his demands, but Labour knew that because there was no automatic recourse to a general election on the collapse of the government, the President might refuse dissolution if there were the possibility of forming a new government. In this chapter I look at the prime ministers' dissolution prerogatives. This case shows the importance of slight variations in the rules regarding dissolutions, and the potential threat that dissolutions pose given the right circumstances. Had Reynolds had the automatic right to call an election, his demands, and the implicit threat associated with his demands would have been more potent. In this case it seems that the Taoiseach had not thought through the implications of his demands and the other options available to the Labour party. This mistake cost him his political career.

Introduction

For some, that a legislature can be dissolved before it has run its full term is a defining feature of parliamentary democracy (Verney 1959). Where presidential regimes separate the powers of the executive and legislature, in parliamentary democracies they interact, as the executive and legislature are dependent on each other for their survival. While the legislature can remove the executive through confidence and censure motions, the executive often has control over the life of the legislature through its ability to call elections.

Dissolution is sometimes possible when the majority of legislators prefer it to the status quo. This is only rarely the way dissolution occurs, because often the right to dissolve is based upon the proposal of a single individual (the prime minister) and the acceptance by a non-partisan head of state.

Though the right to call elections is cited in literature on prime ministers as a source of their power, little attention has been given as to why this is the case. For most authors the prerogative is a source of power because it gives prime ministers the ability to choose the best time for an election. However, some have argued that the prerogative is of no benefit to prime ministers individually, because if the choice is a good one, the whole party benefits, but if it is a bad one, the prime minister suffers more than most. Nor, it is argued, can the prerogative be used as a threat against backbenchers to support the leadership as the threat is not credible when the party is weak (King 1991: 33; Mackintosh 1968a: 451). Others argue that the notion of dissolution being a prerogative that can be used against prime ministers' own parties for prime ministers' gain is false and 'should be forgotten' (Brazier 1999: 94). A recent textbook on cabinet government in the UK does not mention the right to call an election in the eighteen pages it devotes to prime ministers' formal prerogatives (James 1999: 101-18). Even less attention has been given to the effects of this prerogative on the ability of prime ministers to achieve policy goals.

Arguably there are three ways in which the right to dissolve legislatures can assist prime ministers. The first is connected to the confidence motion. If an election is likely to be called following a government defeat on a confidence motion, this will have an impact on the 'censure costs' facing actors making up the majority in parliament. Secondly, the right to dissolve parliament should affect negotiations within government. Given certain circumstances, the threat to resign and call an election on an issue could inform debates in government, especially between parties. Finally, the right to dissolve gives prime ministers the choice to call elections at the time most beneficial to them and their parties.

Only the third aspect has received much attention from political scientists. This research (discussed below) seeks to explain the relationship between election timing and election outcomes. Here I examine how the right to call elections aids prime ministers in policy making. Election timing and policy-making are not unconnected. The right to dissolve gives prime ministers the choice between this parliament and the parliament anticipated after an election. Prime ministers might anticipate that the next parliament will be more sympathetic to, or even share their policy preferences. Prime ministers can time dissolution to coincide with popularity and hence increase chances of re-election.

The presence of the dissolution prerogative is also important in day-to-day policy making as it can be used in other ways; attaching the threat of dissolution to the confidence motion and by using the threat to inform government policy negotiations. By attaching the election threat to a confidence motion, the prime minister can significantly increase the costs of defeat for the prime minister's opponents (either within or outside their party). When one takes into account the confidence motion, the point made by King and Mackintosh (that a prime minister would suffer more than anyone else from electoral defeat and that as a result the prerogative is of no benefit to a prime minister) is not relevant. The confidence motion turns the relationship between a prime minister and their backbenches into a game of chicken where both sides know that the prime ministers is committed to stay the course.

The ability to dissolve and to threaten to dissolve parliament may also be useful in the bargaining process against other parties in the government. Prime ministers can structure choices for other parties in government by attaching an election threat to proposals. As bills often live or die with a parliamentary term, prime ministers can veto bills by calling an election (though this is not normally used as governments have other ways with which to veto bills). When prime ministers have the unilateral right to dissolve parliament, they can choose to use this (or threaten to use it) on issues on which they have popular support compared to coalition colleagues. When the opposite is true, prime ministers can act to avoid elections on these issues. These are the factors I analyse below, but first I look at the different rules of dissolution in different countries.

Dissolution Rights in 22 Countries

Early dissolution is a facility to break deadlock. In some parliamentary situations government cohesion and policy making effectiveness becomes difficult to achieve or maintain and an election serves as a release on the political system. In most countries in this study it is ultimately the Head of State who formally dissolves the parliament. However, Heads of State, whether partisan or not, rarely have much discretion to refuse the requests put to them. On some occasions, a Head of State can explicitly refuse a request to dissolve, but refusals are likely only where there is clearly an alternative government.

Table 9.1 Dissolution rights in parliaments*

Country	Type of power and sources of that power (parliamentary term in parenthesis)	Ease of dissolution[o] and ELI[a]	
Australia	Prime Minister has right to propose dissolution. Constitution Act section 5 and Convention (3 years)	6.9	.72
Austria	Cabinet proposes dissolution to Head of State or parliament can call for an election. Constitution Art. 29. (Müller 2000: 34) (4 years)	5.1	.77
Belgium	Cabinet proposes dissolution to Head of State who has other restrictions. Constitution Art. 7, 46 & 56(4) (Fitzmaurice 1996: 95). (4 years)	4.0	.48
Canada	Prime Minister proposes dissolution of the House of Commons to Head of State. Section 50 Constitution Act 1867 and convention (5 years)	7.5	.8
Denmark	Prime Minister unilaterally dissolves the *Folketing*. Constitution Section 32.3 (4 years)	8.1	.7
Finland	Since 1994 Prime Minister proposes dissolution of the *Edescunta* to Head of State. The current constitution (2000) removes much of the semi-presidential nature of the system. This may not be reflected in the expert survey result, as the legal change may not have had led to a political change. Constitution Art. 26.1 (Arter 2000: 61; Paloheimo 2000) (4 years)	2.0	.39
Germany	Prime Minister has right to dissolve or propose dissolution of the Bundestag. Basic Law Art. 68. The Chancellor must have lost a vote of confidence, making early elections relatively difficult to secure (Schweiter 1995: 177). That said, it is also very difficult to remove a Chancellor due to the constructive vote of no confidence. (4 years)	2.0	.59
Greece	The Cabinet propose dissolution to the Head of State, but the Head of State can also dissolve the *Vouli* unilaterally under some special circumstances. Constitution Arts. 37 and 41 (4 years)	7.2	.8
Iceland	Cabinet proposes dissolution of the *Alltingi* to President. Constitution Art. 24 (Arter 1999: 225-7) (4 years)	6.0	.73
Ireland	Prime Minister has right to propose dissolution. The President can refuse the request of a Taoiseach who has lost the support of the Dáil. Constitution Art. 13.2.2 (5 years)	7.0	.75
Israel	Prime Minister can propose dissolution of the Knesset to the President (Basic Law: The Government Art. 29) but the Knesset can veto this request if it can propose a new government, and the Knesset forces an election if it cannot agree to a new Government (Basic Law: The Government Art. 11). Between 1996 and 2001 the directly-elected prime minister could dissolve the Knesset but only by also submitting himself to election, the Knesset was also able to dissolve itself (4 years).	5.9	.42
Italy	Head of State may dissolve the Camera unilaterally. Constitution Art. 88 (Koff and Koff 2000: 143) (5 Years)	2.3	.25
Japan	The Prime Minister proposes dissolution of the Diet's lower House. Constitution Arts. 7.3 & 72 (Curtis 1999: 3; Hayes 1992: 54) (4 years)	5.9	.45
Luxembourg	Cabinet proposes dissolution to Head of State, who can unilaterally call elections. Constitution Art. 74. (5 years)	6	.65
Malta	Prime Minister proposes dissolution to the President. Constitution Art. 76.5 (5 years)	6	.88
Netherlands	Cabinet proposes dissolution to the Monarch, but only for reasons of stability or governance, not for electoral reasons. Constitution Art 64 (Andeweg and Irwin 2002: 113) (4 years)	1.9	.83
New Zealand	Prime Minister dissolves parliament unilaterally. Convention and Constitution Act (2000) Art. 22 (2) (Palmer and Palmer 1997: 54) (3 years)	6.2	.75

Norway	The *Storting* has a fixed term (Rommetvedt 1992: 56) (4 years)	1	.52
Portugal	Head of State can dissolve unilaterally with some time restrictions. Constitution Arts. 133(e), 136(b) & 172 (Magone 1997: 42-3) (4 years)	2.7	.88
Spain	The Prime Minister can propose the dissolution of the *Cortes* to the King. Constitution Arts. 62 & 64 (Sánchez de Dios 2002: 215) (4 years)	6.6	.88
Sweden	Cabinet dissolves the *Riksdag* unilaterally, though some minor restrictions exist. Constitution Ch. 3, Art. 4 (4 years)	3.4	.66
UK	Prime Minister asks the monarch to dissolve the Commons. Convention, Parliament Act, 1911 (Brazier 1999: 205) (5 years)	6.9	.75

* In many countries constitutional amendments can be used to dissolve parliament, but because these would only be used in exceptional circumstances I ignore this method here.

O This figure is derived from responses to a question in the expert survey, where 1 means that the prime minister has no ability to dissolve parliament before the end of its term of office, and 9 means that the prime minister has complete freedom (see question in Appendix B).

a This is what I call the 'election likelihood index'; the overall empirical likelihood of an election following a fall of government measured between 1945 and 1995. The Italian figure of .25 means that on average an election occurs in Italy after the termination of four governments.

Though in some countries, such as Germany and the Netherlands, the freedom to dissolve is strictly limited, only in Norway is there no possibility of dissolving the legislative chamber. In most countries, the government, by way of the prime minister unilaterally or the cabinet collectively, proposes dissolution to the Head of State. Exceptions to this are Italy and Portugal where the Presidents remain the most important political actor in the dissolution of parliament (for example the Portuguese election in early 2005 was forced upon a prime minister who hoped to continue in office). Even in these countries the President must take into account political realities, and would find it difficult to dissolve against the wishes of a functioning government.

To estimate the ability of prime ministers to call elections, one should not solely take into account whether a prime minister can ask for an election, or even the number of times a prime minister requests a dissolution. Whether prime ministers request dissolutions will be conditioned by the likelihood of a positive response. One could also look at the overall, empirical likelihood of an election, or election likelihood index – ELI – reported in table 9.1. That is, how likely is it that there is an election after a government resigns in each of the 22 countries? This was calculated taking the number of elections a country has had in a period of time, divided by the number of governments the country had in the same period. The range of the result is between 0 and 1. Zero is an impossible score in a democracy as it means that elections never follow the termination of a government. A score of 1 means that dissolution always follows the termination of a government.

There is a good deal of variation in the ELI. Elections rarely occur following the termination of Finnish, Italian, Israeli or Japanese governments, whereas elections are almost certain to take place when the government resigns in Spain, Portugal and Malta. The Norwegian score is low as might be expected given that the *Storting* has a fixed term.

Heads of state usually formally dissolve parliaments. There are different types of heads of state. Some are politicians or retired politicians with political preferences of their own; others are monarchs who are expected to have no policy preferences except for the desire to maintain the stability of the state. The type of head of state might influence the likelihood of heads of state to refuse a proposed dissolution. Refusal may be more likely where heads of state are partisan, although Strøm and Swindle find no evidence for this proposition. It is possible that heads of state take the importance of impartiality seriously. It is therefore likely that dissolution would be refused (and therefore not requested) at times when the formation of a new government is possible without an election.

Another factor affecting the ability of prime ministers to use the dissolution prerogative is the length of the parliamentary term. If, as in Australia and New Zealand, the term is just three years, the incentive to dissolve parliament early is less than in those countries where the term is five years, such as Canada or Ireland. The rewards of re-election when one has two years to run in parliament are much greater if one can gain five years in office than if one can gain just three.

As many countries have quite specific constitutional clauses that are not easily comparable or quantifiable, I also include the results of the expert survey on how much freedom the prime minister has to dissolve parliament. The following question was asked of the experts.

> In general, how much practical political freedom does a [country's] prime minister have to call an election when he/she wants to? Please place an X on the scale below where '1' means the [country's] prime minister usually has very little freedom to call an election when he/she wants to (and is constrained by constitutional or political factors) and 9 means the [country's] prime minister usually has a great deal of freedom to call an

> election when he/she wants to (and is not very constrained by either constitutional or political factors).

As expected the Norwegian score on this question is 1 (indeed the validity of the survey would have been seriously questionable had it not been). Table 9.1 shows that other low scores are those of Germany, Italy, The Netherlands and Portugal. There are formal constitutional reasons why German, Italian and Portuguese prime ministers are restricted in their ability to dissolve parliament. Dutch governments must agree to dissolve parliament and there is a convention that they do not do so for electoral reasons. By contrast, Canadian, Danish, Greek and Irish prime ministers are judged to be quite unconstrained in their ability to dissolve parliament.

The uses of dissolution

The right to dissolve affords its holder the power to choose between the current parliament and the parliament expected after an election. The most obvious advantage that this choice gives is that a prime minister can choose to call an election when the next parliament is likely to be closer to the prime minister's policy position. One might expect that elections will occur when prime ministers' parties are popular. Prime ministers can use information about the likely make-up of the next parliament, and their right to call an election, as a threat against their own party and other parties.

Dissolution timing and election outcomes

Mackintosh (1968a: 449) recognised the dissolution prerogative as a way 'to decide the best moment to hold an election, [as] a further period in office or defeat may hang on his calculation'. Balke (1990) models election timing as an opportunity for a unitary party to maximise its time in office. Thus, he expects that elections are more likely when that party is more popular, and towards the end of the statutory term of office. Smith (1996) characterises elections as a decision by the public over the competence of the government and opposition. He argues that elections will be called when the government is popular and when the opportunities of future office are greater than the current value of holding office, for instance, when a government is a minority government.

There is an extensive literature on economic cycles and election outcomes (Lewis-Beck 1988; Nannested and Paldam 1994; Powell and Whitten 1993). It offers convincing evidence that government popularity is significantly affected by economic conditions. This led to the proposal of the hypothesis that when governments can choose the timing of an election, elections will be held when economic conditions are favourable. Though evidence of this proposition is less extensive, Palmer and Whitten (2000) offer some to show that better economic performance will make governments more likely to call early elections.

Lupia and Strøm (1995) model dissolution in coalition politics. They begin with an exogenous event like an opinion poll or local or regional elections, which causes a reappraisal of the electoral landscape. In response, parties are expected to demand and/ or offer a reallocation of political resources, like cabinet seats. If no agreement can be made, the government collapses and new elections are held. Lupia and Strøm find that dissolution is likelier when the parties' electoral costs are small, expected benefits are large, non-electoral changes of government composition are costly and benefits from existing arrangements are low. They predict that premature dissolution is more likely towards the end of the parliamentary term. Laver and Shepsle look at different types of exogenous 'shocks' – public opinion, agenda, policy and decision-rule shocks – to account for government terminations. They found that prime ministers' right to call elections means that public opinion shocks are more likely to effect a termination in cases where prime ministers' parties benefited (Laver and Shepsle 1998: 52).

Strøm and Swindle (2002) build on these and other works to propose a model in which the prime minister has agenda control of the dissolution process. A coalition partner may oppose (but not veto) and a (non-partisan) head of state can veto the request for dissolution. Their model predicts that refusals to dissolve should not happen in equilibrium, because prime ministers will not request one when they think that the request will be refused (as in the example at the beginning of this chapter). Empirically they find that minority governments are much more likely to dissolve parliaments early and that there is a clear relationship between early dissolution and electoral success. They find, contrary to their theoretical expectations, that in systems where the prime minister is the sole agenda setter for dissolution, there is no significant relationship with early termination and electoral success. Of course it may be difficult to uncover that

relationship because of the influence of other factors. For instance, early termination may be forced upon prime ministers as much as being of their choosing. Also, prime ministers confident of electoral success in the future may see no reason to call early elections, as this would shorten the likely time in office.

Apart from the ability to time dissolution for the electorally most advantageous moment, the dissolution right can also be used in two ways that structure the choices of others in parliament and government. One is by attaching the likelihood of dissolution (which is connected to freedom to dissolve) to a confidence motion. The other is through negotiations within a government majority or with the parliament in the absence of a government majority.

Attaching dissolution to the confidence motion

The literature on prime ministerial power is divided on the impact of the right to dissolve parliament on policy outcomes. The English-language literature on the issue of the effects of the dissolution threat on prime ministerial power relates to the UK more than any other country. Few writers have listed the dissolution right as a source of power, and none has discussed in detail the reasons for its potency. Most writers, even some on the 'Prime Ministerial Government' side of the debate on prime ministers' power, have questioned the usefulness of this prerogative regarding policy-making in parliament or government.

However, Harold Wilson was among those to use threats of dissolution as a weapon against recalcitrant backbenchers (see Mackintosh 1968a: 591). Crossman was almost alone among academics in seeing the dissolution prerogative as a way for the prime minister or cabinet 'to become master of the assembly that created it' (Crossman 1963: 22). Crossman argued that a cabinet decision will not be rejected 'unless the Commons are prepared to face the resignation of the whole Cabinet and the threat of dissolution' (Crossman 1963: 22).

Most scholars of prime ministerial power in the UK have dismissed this argument. Mackintosh said that party discipline and not the threat of dissolution causes members of parliament to vote with their party leadership, and that prime ministers' survival

instincts will cause them to settle or smooth over a rebellion (Mackintosh 1968a: 591). Jones ([1965] 1985: 205) is unequivocal: 'neither the actual use of nor the threat to use the power of dissolution are the means of enforcing discipline on MPs'. If it were the case that MPs were likely to be influenced by dissolution threats, then, Jones argued, MPs with safe seats (large constituency majorities) would be more prone to rebellion. The fact that there is no correlation between MPs' majorities and propensity to rebel is offered as evidence against the influence of the dissolution prerogative. However, this assumes that MPs' choice or allocation of constituencies is independent of their likely voting behaviour, whereas safer seats may be reserved for party members who are closer to the party orthodoxy. A more careful analysis of constituency selection and voting records would be required to come to Jones' conclusion.

Jones ([1965] 1985: 204) argued that dissolution is useless against one's own party when that party is weak because the prime minister has more to lose than others in the party. Following a poor election performance, others may remain in parliament and have the opportunity to increase their influence within the party, whereas the prime minister will no longer be prime minister and his or her influence within the party may have diminished. While this argument is plausible, it assumes that the prime minister's costs of censure are relevant. I argue that, in concert with the 'Final Offer' structure of the confidence motion, the threat of dissolution may be quite a powerful tool to achieve one's policy aims.

In the models on confidence motions outlined in the last chapter, prime ministers are given the opportunity to offer veto players with whom they disagree a choice between either accepting the prime minister/ government proposed policy or the termination of the government. All of the potency of this 'final proposal' prerogative depends on the costs of a government collapse for the elements of the parliamentary majority. It is not difficult to see that by adding the cost of dissolution to other costs, the prerogative could be more potent. Prime ministers and governments can use the extra cost of rejecting a confidence motion for the parliamentary majority to extract policy concessions up to the value of those costs from the parliamentary majority (or the median voter in parliament).

Elections are costly to MPs because there is a risk of losing one's seat. In an election caused by a rebellion against one's own prime minister, there is the additional risk that voters or the party might punish the MPs. It is possible that voters are wary of supporting a split party; voters may be unsure what policies they are voting for. The other risk is that the party punishes the MP who rebels by de-selection, by placing the MP lower on the party list, or by withdrawing campaign support. Elections may be financially costly for MPs, as they may have to assume some the costs of campaigning. Even for MPs in safe seats, elections are at the very least an unwanted distraction. MPs' (possibly) increased censure costs will give prime ministers greater leverage to extract policy concessions using the confidence motion.

Most importantly, a prime minister's censure costs are irrelevant because the prime minister makes the final offer and makes proposals based on a parliamentary majority's costs of censuring the government. So one should expect that *where governments hold the right to declare bills to be issues of confidence and when elections are likely to be called following government termination, prime ministers and their governments are better placed to have their policy demands accepted by parliament, and hence will be more powerful*. This is because the right can be used to pose awkward choices.

One might argue that the likelihood of elections after a government collapse (ELI) is not linked to prime ministers' ability to dissolve parliament. However, when dealing with confidence motions, what matters is prime ministers' ability to dissolve where policy-making has deadlocked. ELI probably measures this well. For instance, though the expert survey indicates a lack of freedom to dissolve the Bundestag on the part of German Chancellors, they can dissolve if they have lost a vote of confidence (the opposite to Ireland). This actually occurred three times. In 1972 Willy Brandt organised defeat for his government after six months of regular defeats in the Bundestag (Southern 1994: 30). In 1982 Helmut Kohl took over as Chancellor through a constructive vote of no-confidence. He wished to receive a mandate from the people for his new government and so engineered a defeat on a confidence motion so as to enable the dissolution of the Bundestag (Schweiter 1995: 176). Chancellor Schröder was able to force an election in 2005. The relatively high ELI score is a better reflection of the ability to dissolve the Bundestag when it is needed for policy-making as opposed to for electoral purposes, than the very low expert survey result.

The ELI may also be criticised for conflating the very different causes of a government termination. While some terminations occur because of disagreements within or between the government party or parties, many others do not. Many terminations come at the end (or near the end) of a government term. Others are the result of a smooth transition between leaders, and it may be wrong to use these to generate an ELI statistic. Of course it is sometimes difficult to take at face value mid-term retirements (as they may in fact be forced), and it is actually difficult to empirically distinguish the various causes of a government termination. And as one can see it correlates with the expert survey, and where it does not, it may be seen to be superior.

Where prime ministers wish to overcome the potential veto of their own backbenchers prime ministers will use the confidence motion, and it is strengthened by a strong likelihood of an election. In this way prime ministers can use their parties' own unpopularity to force acceptance of a government-sponsored policy. The unpopularity of government parties gives awkward choices to governments' backbench MPs, because voting against the government will eventually lead to a new parliament of which the MPs may not even be members, and another party with very different policy goals may be in office. Indeed mid-term unpopularity may in some circumstances make policy-making is easier for governments, as potential veto players – the pivotal members of its majority in parliament –may be less willing to vote against the government on issues of confidence in these circumstances.

This does not mean that one should expect prime ministers of single-party governments to be strengthened by unpopularity. While times of unpopularity and electoral vulnerability for political parties may cause them to unite behind the 'prime ministerial will' so as to avoid the 'electoral will', parliamentary parties may also unite behind a popular leader who is expected to bring the party to electoral victory. Popular leaders are more likely to be needed and retained. Popular party leaders, therefore, can threaten to resign their leadership in order to force others in their party to accept certain policies. If the leader is valuable to the party prime ministers are able to exercise other prerogatives more freely. This is the subject of chapter 12 below.

Equally a popular prime minister could threaten to call an election against his or her party in order to get a mandate on that issue. The backbenchers may wish to avoid an election on that issue where they are seen as in competition with the popular leadership. Also the prospect of an election caused by a split between the leadership and the backbenches when a party is popular may cause a decline in that party's popularity, as voters will be unsure what voting for that party means. Therefore, one may not see a link between unpopularity and prime ministerial power, but prime ministers leading single-party governments should be able to use unpopularity to extract policy concessions from backbenchers by linking dissolution to defeat on a motion of confidence as John Major did in 1993.

One may reasonably point out that this model ignores a major and influential institutional structure that will limit prime ministers' use of this prerogative: their party. If a prime minister attempts to use a confidence motion and the implicit election threat against one's own party, in the medium to long term the party has another option than to either accept the prime minister's proposal or face a general election. The party can remove the prime minister as leader of the party thereby de facto dismissing him or her as prime minister and allowing the party to choose another leader who may become prime minister (this would depend on coalition arrangements). The parliamentary party, then, need not sit hopelessly in the face of this prime ministerial threat. It may remove the prime minister/ leader and install a preferable leader. So arguably the prime minister's ability to set a confidence motion and force an election can be trumped by the party's ability to remove him or her.

As will be discussed in chapter 12, the relationship between the party (and in particular the parliamentary party) and the leader/ prime minister is one of exchange for mutual benefit. The party will not keep a leader who offers nothing in return for support. Parties can, and often have, removed party leaders and prime ministers in mid-term without an election because they felt the benefits from trade were no longer sufficient. The most famous example is the downfall of Thatcher. Her party removed her when enough of its members felt the relationship was no longer useful. The issue that can be identified with her departure is probably the Poll Tax, which many in her party felt would lead to electoral defeat.

However, the prime minister still has a number of advantages over his/ her party. Firstly it will have to be a major issue for the party to consider removing its leader. Removing a party leader is an important and very public move, especially when that leader is the prime minister. It is not an easy option for the party, and certainly not one that can be considered easy compared to accepting a prime ministerial policy. Therefore the prime minister can make an offer to his or her party that gives the options of taking the prime ministerial proposal, removing the leader or a general election. It would have to be a prime minister who expected to lead the party to electoral defeat, or a major policy disagreement.

Where a party is being asked to continually accept policies that it would not otherwise support, the party may be inclined to seek a new leader, and parties have done so in the past. A prime minister has another advantage in that the party may only be inclined to do this if it has a good idea as to who the new leader might be. The prime minister was chosen presumably because s/he was popular within the party and it may prove difficult for the party to agree on an alternative. Given the uncertainty attached to removing a leader, elements within the party might be reluctant to change leader. The other difficulty a party has is that it cannot be seen to change its leader very often, as this would increase confusion with the electorate as to what a party stands for, which may reduce its electoral appeal.

The party then might be forced to unwillingly accept prime ministerial proposals because the prime minister and the government can set the agenda. The party must react to the prime minister's proposal. This enables the prime minister to make an offer that s/he knows or has a good idea that the party will accept. The government (and sometime just the prime minister) can also make the threat of election unilaterally. The parliamentary party will be a much larger group of people, which operates in a much more public way than the government, and for which agreement may be more difficult to achieve. The parliamentary party may not have full control of the replacement procedures as ordinary party members may also have a role. This makes any replacement even less predictable, and reduces the attractiveness of the option of removing a leader.

Indeed the prime minister and the government do not have to do anything per se, as the threat of election in countries with high ELI is implied. In many countries with motions of confidence the threat of an election is implied. So the fact that we do not see many cases of government backbenchers bringing down one's government does not necessarily mean that the threat is empty. The ELI still approximates well for the consequences of bringing down a government, even if it does conflate the many different reasons for the end of a government. The internal party route (i.e. replacing the leader) allows the party to choose a new government without an election, but this is neither a risk free strategy, nor a strategy that the party can continually imply, as it needs the collective action and agreement of many within the party.

The dissolution threat in cabinet

I argued above that the confidence motion is not a mechanism that will be used against groups (factions or parties) within government. If these government groups have clear and cohesive parliamentary support bases, prime ministers will not use the confidence motions against them even when unilaterally available. To do so would destabilise the government in the medium term.[3] Group leaders will not remain in government if they feel that the confidence motion (or the threat to use it) will be continually used against them in policy making. Government backbenchers, on the other hand, are less likely to have either the forum or organisation to negotiate directly with government leaders or the incentive to withdraw support from their government, so the implication is that the confidence motion can be used to extract concessions from them.

On the other hand, will the threat to call an election be used against other parties in government? In this section I introduce a simple model that shows why it will. However, its availability will only be beneficial to prime ministers given specific electoral circumstances. Where the government is a coalition and the coalition partners expect to do well in an election, the threat of an election is an empty one. Where prime ministers have dissolution rights and have positive electoral expectations – which would

[3] Few factions can rely on their members to vote against their own party, especially when that party can punish the members of the faction for their actions.

lead one to rate highly one's likelihood of re-entering government after an election – prime ministers can exploit these situations to make significant policy gains.[4]

The dissolution threat is sometimes one that others can also exploit, because coalition partners may be in a position to force prime ministers to call elections by pulling out of government. Where prime ministers have the sole right to dissolve, these efforts could be resisted for prime ministers' benefit. For instance, a prime minister may continue to lead a minority government until a more opportune time or issue presents itself on which to call an election. Nor is the dissolution threat one that needs to be explicitly made by either side. Rather, it informs the relationship between the parties at all times. It is the ultimate sanction, and one that has fairly clear consequences.

We can model the effect of the dissolution threat in cabinet negotiations. If we make the reasonable assumption that cabinet decision-making is *not* rule based (discussed fully in chapter 10) then proposal rights in cabinet are relatively open. Assume there are two actors, the prime minister, P and another group in government (a party or a faction) G, with respective ideal points *P* and *G*. Both P and G are veto players. In the first stage of the model G proposes *G*. P can then either accept *G*, or propose another policy, attaching to this proposal the threat that an election will be called if its proposal is rejected. G can then accept P's proposal; reject P's proposal and cause a termination of government; or propose some new policy, *G1*. P and G could then make further proposals (including the retention of the status quo) until such time as an agreement can be found or there is a realisation that there will be no agreement, whereupon the collapse of the government would ensue. Of course none of these threats needs to be made explicitly, but it is implicitly understood that either party could leave government, and that an election could result.

To make their decisions G and P must consider the effect of an election at that moment. The policy outcome is a function of the two actors' electoral expectations, which are common knowledge. This assumption of complete information seems reasonable given the prevalence of opinion polling. If P has positive expectations and G has negative

[4] Improved election results do not necessarily lead to increased chances of entering or re-entering government. A party's relations with other parties are vitally important. But, everything else being equal, one would expect that improved electoral support will increase a party's chance or entering government.

expectations of a new parliament following an election, then P can exploit G's negative expectations to extract policy concessions. Of course, were a government termination actually to happen, potential voters might revise their judgements of the parties in the light of this, thus creating some real uncertainty.

An example, displayed graphically in Figure 9.1, will help to illustrate how this operates. Here, P and G are at either side of the status quo. The intersection of their indifference curves for SQ is an empty set, so there is no policy that both would prefer to SQ, making policy change impossible in normal circumstances. In this example G has negative expectations about a new parliament following dissolution, and the line *O*SQ represents G's expected electoral costs.

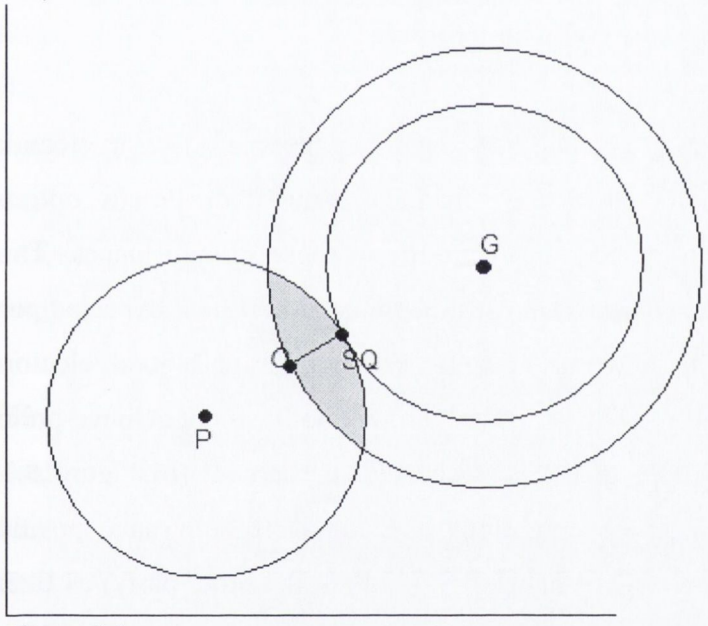

Figure 9.1
The effect of an election threat

P can exploit G's known aversion to dissolution by proposing a policy in the shaded area. P will propose *O*, the policy closest to P that G prefers to an election. Here P is indifferent between the current and the future parliament.[5] If P had positive electoral expectations this would have been represented by another indifference curve within the indifference curve for SQ (and a position on this indifference curve would have been the minimum policy gain that P would have accepted, otherwise an election would be called). Given that P's indifference to dissolution is common knowledge, G will accept

[5] As such P's dissolution cost curve covers her existing indifference curve.

the policy *O*, which becomes the new status quo policy. Obviously in the real world there will be some uncertainty as to another actor's attitude to dissolution, thus creating the potential for bluffing and risk-taking.

Had P had positive expectations of a new parliament following an election, it would seem reasonable to suggest that P should demand a policy even closer to *P* than *O*. There would be an indifference curve within P's SQ indifference curve to indicate this. However, high electoral expectations on P's part would not have led to even further policy concessions by G. G will have conceded as much as it is willing to concede at *O*. G would prefer to take its chances with an election, than to concede more policy ground. Had P's electoral expectations been so great that even this policy concession would not be preferred, dissolution would occur so that P could attain the new parliament in which a preferable policy could be achieved.

If the partners in government, P and G, both had negative expectations of an election, then neither would be likely to allow any changes other than Pareto optimal improvements. Policy change might be more cautious in these circumstances. They would both know that the other would not risk causing an election if both expected poor results from an election and its new parliament. Where both had good electoral expectations they may both want to dissolve, and given that both cannot achieve policy gains given their mutually exclusive goals in the current parliament (in Figure 8.1), dissolution is likely to occur in these conditions. Of course if both have positive electoral expectations, both may consider themselves (and not the other party) as likely to form, or form part of the next government. Mistaken expectations and the expectations of what coalition government would be formed then become important determinants of the outcome.

The partner need not be another party for the dissolution threat to work. A popular prime minister can threaten dissolution against members of his or her own party in government. An election at this time, where the party polls well under the prime minister, may have the effect of sidelining a competing faction.

When dealing with separate parties, the right to dissolve parliament will only have an effect on policy when one or more of the prime minister's coalition partners has poor

expectations of the outcome of an ensuing election. What about the case where the prime minister's party has poor electoral expectations and the coalition partner has neutral or good expectations? Can a coalition partner exploit this for policy gain? This very much depends on the ability of a prime minister to prevent the dissolution of parliament. If, by pulling out of government, a party knows it can cause an election, then this coalition partner will be able to exploit the prime minister's negative electoral expectations in the same way that a prime minister or a prime minister's party can do this to its government partners.

In these cases prime ministers' right *not* to allow an election is pertinent. Other parties in a coalition may be dissuaded from making demands on a prime minister's party because the election may not necessarily occur, and the prime minister's party could continue as a minority government until a more opportune time for the prime minister. This gives prime ministers the opportunity to choose an issue on which to face the electorate. Prime ministers may only need to postpone an election for a short time. It may offer the prospect for a prime minister to introduce some measure that is electorally popular, engineer a situation in that the prime minister's party is defeated and call an election on this issue.

The potency of the right to dissolve parliament as a policy making tool is always conditioned by electoral expectations. The prerogative can only be fruitfully used where there are significant differences in electoral expectations for parties or there is a significantly different expected government following an election.

Is the legal prerogative necessary?

It is questionable whether the legal right to call an election is necessary at all. Circumstances sometimes create the situation in which prime ministers have the de facto ability to dissolve parliament. It may be the case that the prime minister's party is crucial to any possible government within an existing legislature. Such a prime minister can ensure an election will take place if he or she refuses to form a new government. An example will serve to illustrate how the dissolution threat operates, and that the legal right to dissolve may not even be necessary.

In his second term as prime minister of Italy, Silvio Berlusconi seemed to be more dominant and more successful at achieving policy goals than most if not all of his predecessors. His attempts to change laws regarding media control succeeded despite the opposition of the President of the Republic. Berlusconi's attempts to achieve immunity from prosecution on corruption charges were foiled only by the courts, not by politics. He successfully went against public opinion and political opposition to change Italian foreign policy to a much more clearly Atlanticist outlook. Berlusconi successfully overcame opposition to accelerate construction of his pet projects – a high-speed train line and other similar public works. He also pushed through an unprecedented tax amnesty against the advice of economic officials.

Though the Italian prime minister possesses no legal right to call an election, in this case Berlusconi had a *de facto* ability to cause one and this assisted him in achieving significant policy gains. Berlusconi had the ability to force dissolution of the Italian parliament because if his government were brought down, no other government would have been likely without an election.

Therefore it is not expected that there is a relationship between the availability of the *legal* right to call an election and the power of prime ministers. Of course, this is not to say that the ability to threaten an election is not important, but the ability to threaten an election is not necessarily connected to the legal right to do so. The potency of the prerogative to influence policy negotiations depends more on electoral expectations of the relevant actors. When the electoral circumstances are such, it is unlikely that a 'strong' party[6] can be refused.

Unfortunately, 'noise' disrupts the link between the ability to dissolve parliament, electoral expectations and policy outcomes, making it more difficult to uncover strong empirical evidence using 'real' data. There are circumstances where poor expectations can be used to achieve policy goals. Measuring expectations is not straightforward. Given that the relevant actors may change from policy area to policy area and that electoral expectations change over time it may be that illustrative cases, such as those of Berlusconi and Reynolds, are most informative and revealing.

[6] Here, a party that must be included in government due to its legislative strength and/ or policy position.

However, we might expect to see that when electoral expectations for prime ministers and their parties are more positive, and especially when the likelihood of an election following defeat is higher, prime ministers are more powerful. This is the case because the electoral expectations and the likelihood of an election should combine to dissuade MPs in the prime minister's party or in other parties from causing an election.

Hypothesis testing

It is now possible to test the hypotheses developed from the analysis of the uses of the dissolution. The first hypothesis proposes that *where governments hold the right to declare bills to be issues of confidence, prime ministers and their governments are better placed to have their policy demands accepted by parliament, and hence will be more powerful when elections are likely to be called if the confidence vote is defeated.*

The first analysis in table 9.2 tests this proposition. It regresses prime ministerial power on the empirical likelihood of an election for those countries (ELI – described above) where the confidence motion is available (i.e. all except Austria and Iceland). Iceland and Austria are excluded because without a confidence motion, the government of these countries do not have the opportunity to attach the threat of dissolution to a 'final offer' in parliament. The results show that the likelihood of an election is a strong predictor of prime ministerial power. If Austria and Iceland are included in the analysis (not shown), the ELI coefficient remains significant but the R-squared more drops greatly.

Table 9.2 Dissolution effects on PM policy influence

Model- PM power	**1***	**2**	**3**
ELI	2.95***	-	-
Freedom to dissolve	-	0.15	-
PM dissolve	-	-	.62
Constant	4.34	5.44	5.80
R-squared	.45	.19	.11
N	20	20	22

The second and third models in the table show simple regressions of prime ministerial power measured by country average on two measures of the legal right to dissolve parliament. Recall that there is no expectation that the legal right to dissolve will predict

prime ministerial power. Using the two measures of the ability to dissolve separately, neither is found to be significant (although in the case of model 2, this is marginal). The first (freedom to dissolve) is a measure from the expert survey reported in table 8.1. The second measure is a dichotomous variable indicating whether the prime minister can or cannot *initiate* dissolution unilaterally or not, where the ability to do so is given the score 1, and all other types of initiation are scored 0.

The theoretical models and the discussion of these also propose that the dissolution threat is important in negotiations within and between parties. Where prime ministers' parties' electoral expectations are positive, and there is a high likelihood that a collapse of government would cause an election, then prime ministers are in a position to force other actors to choose between accepting a prime ministerial policy and an election. Measuring future expectations is difficult as expectations change over time. One would need to look at each case of a policy decision and look at opinion poll data from that time to estimate the effect of the implicit dissolution threat on the relevant actors. Given that the unit of analysis in this study is the prime ministerial term, the eventual seat changes (in percentages) for the prime ministers' parties are a useful (if imperfect) gauge of electoral expectations through a term. Seats are a better indicator than votes, because after policy (or maybe before it) what MPs worry about is the safety of their seats. However, how the party interprets a change in its percentage of seats depends on what it held in previous elections.

For instance, the 19 percentage point drop in seats held by the New Zealand National Party in the 1993 election may not have been perceived as a huge loss for the party given the enormity of the jump in support that brought the party to power (39 percent). For others small gains may be regarded as poor results given a low base. Parties have what they might call a 'normal' level of support. If a party rose significantly above it or fell well below it would cause some reassessment of itself (perhaps its policies and its leader). Operationalising this idea is tricky. One probably needs to take into account the overall percentage of seats held by the prime minister's party, the change in seats experienced at the previous election and the change in seats at the subsequent election.

One could combine these by adding the percentage point gain (or loss) in overall seats by the prime minister's party entering a term in office with the gain (or loss) on leaving

that term in office.[7] This is then divided by the overall percentage of seats held by the prime minister's party on entering office. This resultant figure takes account of the size of seat changes relative to the size of each party's parliamentary strength. For instance, if a party makes a gain of five percent in seats on entering parliament to hold 30 percent of parliamentary seats, and maintains that at the next election, the electoral success figure will be .166 ((5+0)/30).

However, this measure will underestimate the success of a prime minister who leads a party to an absolute majority but only gained a small percentage of seats in achieving this. For this reason I combine these three figures (all measured in percentages) simply by adding them together, which should give an overall figure that relates to electoral performance that includes an element of future success. Future success can act as a proxy for expected success. Expected success will effect how government MPs deal with the government.

The figure for a party that gained five percent in seats in the election at the start of the term to bring it to 50 percent and lost one percent in the election at the end of the term would be 5+50+(-1) =54. In model 4 this is how 'electoral success' is measured. To ensure that the element of expectations is important, and that the actual proportion of party seats is not, on its own, the most important element of this measure, I control for percentage of party seats by adding it to the model. Model 4 reveals that the measure of electoral success that takes into account gains and losses in seats is a highly significant explanatory variable for prime ministerial power, and that the proportion of seats held by the prime minister's party is not significant.

I contend that the electoral performance will be more important in determining policy negotiations when threats of dissolution are real, that is, when elections usually occur following the collapse of a government. To test this, I interact the electoral likelihood index with the measure of electoral success, and if this variable is positive and significant this would indicate that electoral success is a better indicator of prime ministerial power when elections are the likely result in the break up of the government.

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[7] If the prime minister comes to office in mid-parliamentary term, but was party leader at the time of the election, I use the party's seat change at that election. If another person was party leader, I use zero. The same rule applies on leaving office.

I also include ELI, electoral success and the prime minister's party's percentage of seats in the model. The results, of model 5 shown in table 9.3 above support the theoretical contention. Only the interaction term is statistically significant and in the expected direction (although because it is an interaction, the magnitude of the coefficient is not easily interpretable). But the standardised coefficient or beta coefficient shows that a one standard deviation change in the interaction term leads to a greater than one standard deviation change in prime ministerial power.

Table 9.3 Effect of electoral factors on prime ministerial influence on policy

Model- PM power	**4*** **	**5*** **
ELI	-	-1.57
PM party seats	-.008	-.016
Electoral success	.031***	.041
ELI*electoral success	-	.081*
Constant	5.38	5.74
R-squared	.20	.25
N	135	135

Given the immensely complex way in which factors interact to influence government policy-making, it is difficult to gather comparable data that reflect this and are relevant across systems. It is usually necessary to provide detailed narratives outlining and discussing each of the important factors to do justice to and explain policy-making decisions. Given that winning and exercising policy power may lose one electoral support, the relationship between electoral success and policy influence is probabilistic rather than deterministic. Therefore it is remarkable that we see the general theoretical expectations supported by the general data that was gathered when one might expect that so many countervailing factors may disguise such effects.

Conclusion

Despite the arguments of many scholars in the prime ministerial power literature, the dissolution prerogative is an important one in the armoury of the prime minister. In single-party governments it strengthens the potential of the confidence motion to extract policy concessions from those veto players who otherwise would use their veto. However, in coalition governments the government, rather than the prime minister alone, is strengthened by the confidence motion.

In coalition governments the threat to call an election is potentially a strong warning to other parties that are considering rejecting prime ministers' policy offers. Prime ministers sometimes have the advantage that if other parties choose to leave the government, prime ministers can continue governing as a minority administration and engineer an election around an issue most advantageous to them. However the potency of the dissolution prerogative is conditioned by electoral expectations.

While it might be expected that the policy benefits from the use of the confidence motion, and the threat of the use of the dissolution prerogative against one's own party, are strengthened by poor electoral support for the party, there are other situations in which strong party support can give prime ministers power. Where the dissolution threat is used against other parties, strong electoral prospects (or rather the other parties' poor electoral expectations) strengthen prime ministerial bargaining power.

Chapter 10. Prerogatives and power in government: Appointing, dismissing and reshuffling ministers

In the summer of 2001, the Japanese minister for Foreign Affairs, Makiko Tanaka was reported to have refused to carry out an order from the popular Prime Minister, Junichiro Koizumi. Mr. Koizumi wanted to remove the Japanese ambassador to Washington, and Ms. Tanaka initially resisted. After a day of frantic telephone calls Tanaka obeyed the prime minister, but only after it was made clear to her that she would be fired if she did not accede to his demands (*Asahi Shimbun* (internet edition in English), 4 August 2001).

The outspoken Ms. Tanaka perhaps thought she could get away with disobeying Mr. Koizumi as, according to one analyst, 'about half of the prime minister's popularity was attributable to the foreign minister' (*Financial Times*, 2 August 2001). Therefore Tanaka may have thought that the prime minister could not afford to fire her. But the prime minister's hand was somewhat strengthened by recent successful election results. Ms. Tanaka, though publicly popular, was unpopular within the ruling LDP. Nor was she a prominent member of any faction. Japanese prime ministers are arguably among the least powerful premiers in the world, yet because of his own personal popularity and Tanaka's isolation, Koizumi managed to threaten to use one of his prerogatives in order to attain his desired outcome.

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During the early to mid-1970s various senior Labour ministers in the UK expected and were preparing for an eventual leadership election. To this end the senior candidates for the leadership wooed MPs and other ministers with similar policy goals in the hope that those MPs and ministers would support them. One such senior minister was Roy Jenkins who, by his own admission, was 'full of ambition to succeed [Harold Wilson]' (Jenkins 1991: 423).

By 1975 Wilson was preparing for his retirement. Any movement in ministers was seized upon as the strengthening of power of one group in Cabinet over another. If Jenkins were to succeed in taking the leadership, he would have to have been seen to

have a number of cabinet ministers behind him. In a reshuffle in the summer of 1975, Wilson informed a minister in Jenkins' 'Group', the Education Secretary Reg Prentice, that he was to be demoted *out* of the Cabinet to Overseas Development. Prentice was considered by Wilson to be a troublemaker prone to making broad political speeches (Jenkins 1991: 420-1) and inactive in his own Department (Donoughue 1987: 109). Jenkins had earlier assured Prentice, one of Jenkins' most unhesitating allies in cabinet, that he would not allow Prentice to be removed from cabinet, that he would resign from the cabinet if this were to happen, and he had indicated this to the Prime Minister's Private Secretary in February of 1975. Jenkins sought a meeting with Wilson and conveyed to him that he would resign. Wilson knew that if Jenkins had resigned, at least two other cabinet ministers would also resign (Harold Lever and Shirley Williams). Wilson would have been aware that this would have amounted to a serious split in the party with uncertain, but probably disastrous, consequences. As a result Wilson was forced to back down. Prentice was moved to Overseas Development, but remained in the cabinet, although Jenkins believed that had they held out the Jenkins Group could have ensured that Prentice was not moved at all (Jenkins 1991: 423). This was probably unnecessary for Jenkins, however, as the new Education Secretary, according to another minister at the time, was a right-wing pro-European just like Jenkins (Castle 1990: 609).

The first episode shows the inability of a minister popular with the public to veto a prime minister's orders. Tanaka was forced to accede to the prime minister's demands on the threat of dismissal; Koizumi eventually removed Tanaka in a move that was welcomed within the LDP. By contrast Prentice, though without a public profile and not very popular within the Labour party, was able to protect his position in cabinet to some extent, and as such cause further trouble for Wilson. Prentice's ability to do so was based on the fact that he was associated with a loose faction that hoped to protect its members in order to advance its policy preferences in cabinet.

Introduction

King (1994a: 154-7) identifies prime ministers' function as controller of the careers of other politicians as one of the more significant methods prime ministers have to influence other politicians. He argued that the prime minister who 'has the most control

over the careers of other politicians within that political system' will have 'most influence within his or her system of government' (King 1994a: 154).

In chapter seven I said that prime ministers have some ability to influence who what individuals hold certain veto posts in a policy-making system. The policy preferences of those who occupy the veto points in a system will have an impact on policy outcomes. One potential influence over what actors become veto players, and in what policy areas the actors have a veto is the prime ministers' prerogative to select their cabinets. Therefore the greater a prime ministers' freedom to choose who goes to cabinet and where they go, the greater influence on policy the prime ministers should have. This is because those political actors who are more likely to veto a prime minister's policies will either be excluded from government, or given portfolios where their opinions coincide with the prime minister's.

However, the prime minister's freedom to choose who goes where depends on a number of factors, not least the legal restrictions on who can become ministers. Another important factor giving a prime minister freedom to choose, and reason to expect that those whom he or she chooses will accept the offer, is the attractiveness of cabinet membership for politicians. Where, as in some countries, a politician 'who did not aspire to govern would be a contradiction in terms; he would be a meaningless figure' (Enoch Powell quoted in Alderman 1976: 107), then the prime minister may have greater freedom than in those countries where there are other real career options in politics, such as chairman of a parliamentary committee, mayor of a city, or regional premier. In the former case, ambitious politicians may see little option but to accept whatever is offered them as government membership is the primary goal of politics.

Probably the greatest restriction on prime ministers' freedom to choose and place ministers is the dependency on achieving enough support in parliament to govern effectively. This requires prime ministers to ensure support in their own party and perhaps from other parties for their appointment. This gives other parties, and certain figures or groups within prime ministers' own parties, the ability to restrict their freedom to choose.

So prime ministers are not always able to exclude certain ministers or to put them in portfolios where they will be less obstructive to their policy goals. Prime ministers may also make 'bad' choices (adverse selection). In any case, even with a 'good' choice, ministers will not *always* agree with their prime minister. Where ministers and their prime minister find they disagree, the prime minister's prior ability to choose a cabinet will be ineffective to influence the present actions of ministers.

Happily for many prime ministers, they are constitutionally permitted to dismiss and to reshuffle cabinet ministers. This right not only gives prime ministers the ability to remove veto players for offences committed or intended against prime ministers, but it conveys a 'potent psychological threat' (James 1999: 104) to ministers that if they act in a manner harmful to the prime minister's interests they could be removed at an unspecified time in the future. Where ministers, as veto players, disagree with the prime minister on policy, the ministers will act to avoid their own removal from cabinet. Removal would have both policy costs and office costs.

There is no obvious empirical connection between the actual dismissal of ministers and power to set public policies. I found no significant relationship between regularity of reshuffles in a country and the power of its prime ministers to set policy.[1] It is not difficult to understand why: a well-known example illustrates this. Harold Macmillan reshuffled his government in July 1962, removing a third of his Cabinet in an event that became known as the 'Night of the Long Knives'. Macmillan moved the Chancellor, 'Selwyn Lloyd, largely so that the Treasury brief against rapid reflation could be re-written' (Butler 1973: 233). Macmillan did not achieve rapid reflation as he had hoped (in the short term at least): Critics at the time branded the new Chancellor, Reginald Maudling as 'Dawdling Maudling'. Eventually poor health and scandal forced Macmillan's resignation, but the 'Night of the Long Knives' is generally thought to have weakened rather than strengthened his premiership (Hennessy 2000: 69).

Rose (2001: 157) says that 'appointing ministers is about matching individuals to posts where they can do the most good (or threaten the least harm) to the prime minister'. So the freedom to remove and reshuffle ministers is conditioned by the likely consequences

[1] Using reshuffle data taken from Laver and Hunt (1992) I took the correlation of this and prime ministerial power, both measured at the country level.

of doing so. Prime ministers will not dismiss or reshuffle ministers if doing so is likely to be costly to them. For instance, though John Major could have fired some ministers who had created difficulties in the passage of the Maastricht Treaty, and continued to defy him in other policy areas, he was disinclined to do so. At the time Major noted that most of the trouble in his party came 'from the dispossessed and never possessed…ex-ministers who are causing all sorts of trouble. Do we want three more of the bastards out there?' he asked (Major 1999: 343).

Risk averse prime ministers will do nothing that would jeopardise their support in parliament. John Major may have been disinclined to dismiss his troublesome ministers,[2] not because they could defy his policy directives (they were already doing this to some extent), but because they would be a focus for rebels. Together the ministers formed and led a group of Eurosceptic MPs. Freed from the strictures of collective responsibility they could openly organise and lead revolts against government policy. Thus these ministers' strength (their ability to act against the prime minister without being dismissed) lay in their presumed ability to lead a group or faction of MPs and to organise and to focus disaffection among them.

Just as Roy Jenkins ensured that ministers who supported him remained in cabinet, parties in coalition government do so more formally. The greatest enemy of prime ministers is the collective action of those individuals sharing interests against the prime ministers. Well-organised factions limit the choices of prime ministers. The ability of parties to organise and co-ordinate their opinions and actions, and to enforce this through punishing dissenters, gives these groups of MPs their strength. Therefore we can expect that prime ministers' freedom to choose, move and remove ministers will be conditioned by the extent to which adversaries can act collectively.

In this chapter I first look at the freedom prime ministers from different countries have to appoint, dismiss and reshuffle cabinets. Then I model the situation showing how the dismissal prerogative (and its threatened use) can influence the policy choices of ministers and convince ministers, as veto holders, not to exercise their veto where they otherwise might. I argue that prime ministers' freedom to use this potent prerogative

[2] John Redwood, Peter Lilley and Michael Portillo are assumed to be the ministers to whom Major referred.

depends on how organised policy groups (parties or factions) in government are, and to what extent prime ministers can divide these groups. Finally I test the relationship between the ability to hire and fire and prime ministerial power over policy.

Hiring and Firing in 22 Countries

There are a number of factors involved in determining who become ministers, and how ministers are appointed and removed. Firstly, there are legal restrictions as to whom a prime minister can appoint. Then there is the question of who officially appoints ministers and whether this is different from who actually chooses ministers. Also one must consider whether other actors, such as the parliament, need to approve the appointments.

In most countries ministers need to be citizens of the state and eligible to become members of parliament. The latter condition sometimes imposes restrictions due to age, financial solvency and lack of criminal convictions. Ministers are also normally restricted from holding any other executive or judicial function in the state.

In most countries in this study prime ministers are obliged to nominate names of potential ministers to the Head of States who then formally appoint those people chosen by the prime ministers. In a few countries, all of which are monarchies, the prime minister is not named in the constitution. These constitutional differences are of little importance, as the head of state will normally appoint whomever the prime minister nominates in any case. Potentially more significant is that in some countries – Denmark, Luxembourg, Italy, Iceland and Norway – the prime minister is given no constitutionally-derived right to remove ministers. Again the absence of the formal right may not reflect the *de facto* circumstances, as these countries' prime ministers may be able to remove ministers should they wish to. In table 10.1 below I give the constitutional sources of authority to appoint and remove ministers, as well as the legal restrictions as to who may become a minister.

Table 10.1 Constitutional rules regarding hiring and firing ministers

Country	Sources of rules regarding ministerial appointments
Australia	The Governor-General appoints the government and its ministers, who must be members of one of the Houses of Parliament (Section 64). The prime minister is not mentioned in the Australian constitution, but the prime minister de facto determines the appointment of ministers, although in the Australian Labor Party, the caucus makes recommendations that are adhered to.
Austria	Ministers are appointed and removed by the President on the recommendation of the Chancellor (Art. 70)
Belgium	The King appoints and dismisses ministers (Art 96). The cabinet should be balanced between French and Flemish speakers (Art. 99.2)
Canada	Ministers are appointed and dismissed by the Governor-General (Sect. 11) In practice this is done on the advice of the prime minister.
Denmark	The King appoints and dismisses ministers, who can be whomever the king chooses (Sect. 14). In practice the King takes the advice of the party leaders and the prime minister allocates functions among the ministers (Schou 1997: 199).
Finland	Governments and ministers are appointed and dismissed by the President, on the proposal of the prime minister (Sections 58, 61, and 63)
Germany	Ministers are appointed and dismissed by the President on the proposal of the Chancellor (Art. 64)
Greece	The President appoints ministers on the recommendation of the prime minister (Art. 37)
Iceland	The President appoint and dismisses ministers (Art. 15) and the Althingi (parliament) can impeach ministers (Art. 14).
Ireland	All but two ministers must be members of Dáil. The minister for Finance, the Taoiseach and Tánaiste (Deputy PM) must be members of the Dáil (Art. 28). The Dáil must formally approve all ministers before appointment by the President on the Taoiseach's advice (Art.13).
Israel	Knesset members must resign their seats on appointment as minister (Basic Law: The Government (1996) Sect. 16) At least half of ministers must come from the Knesset. The prime minister may dismiss ministers as can a super-majority of the Knesset (Sect. 34). Since 2001 the restrictions are only that ministers be approved by the Knesset, but the prime minister alone removes ministers.
Italy	The President appoints ministers who are proposed by the prime minister (Art. 92) The parliament must formally approve a new government (Art. 94). The constitution does not provide for the removal of ministers, but effective dismissals are possible if a powerful prime minister refuses to give political support to a minister.
Japan	The prime minister appoints ministers, the majority of whom must be Diet members. The prime minister can dismiss ministers (Art. 68). However, in practice factional politics severely limits the freedom of prime ministers to select and deselect ministers.
Luxembourg	MPs must resign their seats on nomination as ministers (Art. 58). The grand Duke appoints and dismisses ministers (art. 77)
Malta	Ministers are appointed by the President on the advice of the prime minister. Ministers must be members of the lower house (Sect. 80)
Netherlands	May not be a member of parliament (Art. 57) ministers are appointed by the Monarch on the advice/ approval of the prime minister (Art. 47)
New Zealand	Ministers must be members of parliament (Sec 6.1). The Governor-General appoints governments. In practice the prime minister appoints ministers and the prime minister is the leader of the largest party or of the largest of the parties that can form a majority.
Norway	King appoints and dismisses ministers at his pleasure. There should be a minimum of seven ministers and more than half must be members of the official state religion. Close relatives may not both be members of government (Art. 12). Members of parliament may not be simultaneously members of the government (Art. 62)
Portugal	Ministers are appointed by the President on the advice of the prime minister (Art 190.2). Members of parliament may not sit in parliament while they are ministers (Art. 157)
Spain	Ministers are appointed and dismissed by the Monarch on the proposal of the prime minister (Art. 100).

Sweden	The prime minister appoints and dismisses ministers (Ch. 6, Art. 1). MPs appointed as ministers must take a leave of absence (Ch. 4, Art. 9). Parliament can dismiss ministers or the government through the Speaker (Ch. 6, Art. 5)
UK	The Monarch appoints and dismisses ministers on the advice of the prime minister. Ministers must be members of one of the Houses of Parliament (convention).

Table 10.2 includes the results of the expert survey as to how much freedom the prime ministers of these countries have to appoint and dismiss ministers from their own party and from the parties of coalition partners. I also include the results of another expert survey as to how regularly reshuffles occur. Reshuffles are usually considered to be the change of more than one member of the Cabinet at one time (Budge 1984). All the results are measured on a 1-9 scale where in the case of the first four variables, 9 indicates complete freedom for prime ministers. In the reshuffle variable, the higher the score, the more common are reshuffles estimated to be in that country (Laver and Hunt 1992).

As one might expect prime ministers have little flexibility to choose or dismiss ministers from other parties. To some extent ministers gain and lose office at their party's will. Ministers in a junior coalition party will not be removed by the prime minister without the permission of the minister's party leader. For instance, the Minister for Health in Ireland's first coalition government, Noël Browne, was forced to resign by his party leader using a motion to the party executive, rather than by the Taoiseach (Browne 1986: 185). Due to coalition politics, the Dutch prime minister 'has no influence on the nominations of ministers other than from his own party. The prime minister lacks the power to dismiss ministers, and cannot even reshuffle his cabinet by assigning ministers to other portfolios' (Andeweg and Bakema 1994: 59). The mean scores in prime ministers' freedom to appoint and dismiss ministers from other parties (2.9 and 3) make it clear that prime ministers who have to deal with formally organised parliamentary groups are less able to choose which ministers occupy different portfolios, and less able to threaten dismissal of ministers who disagree with them.

Table 10.2 Freedom to appoint and dismiss ministers

Country	Appoint ministers from own party	Dismiss ministers from own party	Appoint ministers from other parties	Dismiss ministers from other parties	Frequency of reshuffles
Australia	6.1	6.6	2.5	3.3	5.8
Austria	7.1	6	1.5	1.1	4
Belgium	6.4	4.5	3.6	2.4	4.6
Canada	7.8	8.1	-	-	5.6
Denmark	8	7.6	3.2	3.5	5
Finland	6.6	4	2.4	2.3	3.9
Germany	5.7	6.4	2.3	3	4.1
Greece	8.0	7.8	-	-	8.4
Iceland	6	2.5	1	1	2.4
Ireland	6.7	6	2.3	2.1	4.4
Israel	6.2	4.4	1.9	2.5	2.6
Italy	5	4.4	2.6	2.6	4
Japan	4.5	5.0	2.7	4.1	6
Luxembourg	7	7.5	3.5	4	3.2
Malta	5.3	5	-	-	3.8
Netherlands	6.9	2.9	2.6	1.5	2.3
New Zealand	4.3 (Lab) 7.1 (N)*	7.3	3.2	3.8	5.4
Norway	7	5.7	4.1	3.5	4.5
Portugal	8	6.9	4.6	5	5.8
Spain	7.8	7.1	-	-	2.4
Sweden	8	7.4	3.6	3.7	5.1
UK	6.8	6.7	-	-	6.3
Mean	6.8	6.0	2.9	3.0	4.5
N	22	22	17	17	22

* Four of the nine respondents to the New Zealand survey differentiated between the ability of prime ministers from the Labour Party and those from the National Party to appoint their preferred MPs from their own party as ministers. The difference is because the Labour party caucus (parliamentary party) elects the cabinet in New Zealand. In the dataset I have taken the two values from these four responses to create two values for this case based on all nine responses. Of the four responses the average value for the Labour and National parties are 2.25 (.47) and 8.5 (.28) respectively (standard errors are in brackets). The standard errors of the mean for the two values in the dataset are .78 and .59 respectively. This is also the case in the Australian Labor Party, but only one respondent mentioned this.

By contrast, prime ministers seem comparatively free to influence who is in the cabinet from their own parties. The exceptions to this are Italy, Japan, Malta and the New Zealand Labour Party. In the NZ Labour Party, the parliamentary party or caucus votes on who enters cabinet. However the New Zealand prime minister has some scope to allocate portfolios among this group (McLeay 1987; Palmer and Palmer 1997: 55, 122). The LDP in Japan and the DC in Italy are the most highly factionalised parties of the

parliamentary democracies studied here. These parties effectively function as coalitions within the party structure. Since the transition to Italy's 'Second Republic', some commentators have suggested that the party system there remains essentially the same, but that small fluid parties have now replaced small fluid factions (Daniels 1999: 90).[3] This may mean that it remains difficult for Italian prime ministers to select their cabinets, but the parties may be becoming more stable, giving their leaders more security and control with which to choose ministers from their own parties. However, even after the electoral reforms designed to eliminate factions, the Japanese prime minister must still negotiate with factions in determining the composition of the cabinet (Mulgan 2000: 190).

There is a notable difference in the freedom prime ministers have to appoint party colleagues as ministers in Belgium, Finland, Iceland, and the Netherlands compared to the actual restrictions on dismissing these ministerial colleagues. While in Belgium, the Netherlands and Iceland there is no constitutional provision to allow prime ministers to fire ministers, this is probably due to the age of the constitutions in those countries, and do not reflect the real freedom the prime ministers of those countries have to select and dismiss ministers. In fact, internal party democracy may be one cause for the variation in freedom to appoint and dismiss ministers from one's own party.

There is some acceptance that prime ministers place ministers in their positions for policy reasons and that this has an impact on policy outcomes (Laver and Shepsle 1994b; Laver and Shepsle 1996). The inclusion of data on prime ministers' rights to dismiss ministers presupposes that ministerial dismissals (or threats of dismissal) are also used for policy-making. Are dismissals linked to policy-making or are ministerial resignations merely the results of 'events'? The proximate cause for dismissals/ resignations[4] is often a scandal of some type – these include not just sexual and financial scandals, but also scandals resulting from ministerial or departmental error.

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[3] Italian MPs still change parties and form new parties with comparative ease. Between December 1996 and December 1998, 91 out of 630 Deputies changed party groups. However, these changes may have eased off.(derived from Hine and Vassallo 2000)

[4] It is very unusual for a minister to be fired. Normally the minister offers a letter of resignation. However, this is usually after a request from the prime minister. It is also unusual (but not unknown) for a minister to resign where the prime minister does not want to accept the resignation. Even in cases where no request for resignation was made, prime ministers might dismiss by inaction, for instance by not publicly defending a minister, or refusing to grant concessions to a minister (Berlusconi's effective dismissal in January 2002 of the pro-European Foreign minister Renato Ruggiero who was not publicly

Dowding and Kang's (1998) systematic analysis of ministerial resignations in the UK since 1945 found that the most common proximate cause for resignation is policy disagreement (with the Prime Minister/ Government). This accounts for a majority of resignations during the time studied (36 out of 71 resignations). Ministers are also much more likely to be forced to resign in cases where a call for resignation (in the press or the House of Commons) is a result of policy disagreement within government than with most other causes of calls for dismissal. Policy disagreement caused 36 dismissals from 60 requests in the House of Commons (usually from the opposition), compared to 35 dismissals from 110 requests for dismissal due to other factors (Dowding and Kang 1998: 420-21). This shows that prime ministers (in the UK at least) are more likely inclined to dismiss ministers over publicised policy disagreements than other factors, such as sex scandal. This makes sense, because prime ministers are aware of the policy benefits available from dismissal, whereas the benefits to be gained by dismissing a minister enveloped by controversy are less clear.

Even where dismissals are seemingly as a result of a scandal, this may hide the true nature of a resignation. Prime ministers might use a scandal to remove a minister who could not be moved for policy purposes. For instance, Alfonso Guerra, the powerful deputy prime minister of Spain from 1982 to 1991, was forced to resign by party leader and prime minister, Felipe González. The scandal was over the use of a state office by Guerra's brother, Juan, and the implication that Juan Guerra was selling access to government. There is no evidence that the deputy prime minister had received any bribes, but there was a general feeling in Spain that corruption was rife in the government, so a resignation of a very senior minister would indicate that the government was serious about tackling corruption. Guerra's departure offered González another advantage. Over time he and Guerra had split on economic policy. González became more attracted to business-friendly reforms whereas Guerra remained more traditionally leftist. While Guerra had never been able to change economic policy (Heywood 1995: 249), he was an uncomfortable reminder of the abandonment of socialism. Guerra was also the left's most likely candidate for the future leadership of the PSOE. Guerra resigned following almost a year of pressure, and it is clear that he

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supported in his attempts to rebuke cabinet colleagues for their anti-European comments is a good example). Therefore I consider it more accurate to use the term 'dismissal' where others use 'resignation'.

was in fact sacked by González (Prego 2000: 277). González used the opportunity to relieve the pressure of public opinion and relieve policy pressure from a certain wing of the party.

Though there is a shortage of data and work on ministerial dismissals, it is reasonable to argue that many dismissals that are not forced upon prime ministers by demands from others are in fact policy related.

One might argue that rather than study freedom to dismiss ministers, it is necessary to study actual resignations/ dismissals to observe prime ministerial power in action. Then, for instance, one might conclude that many countries' prime ministers are either weak or that the right to dismiss ministers is not relevant. For instance, ministerial reshuffles are rare events in Ireland that usually only occur when a government is in crisis. However, one former Taoiseach has said that the prerogative to dismiss ministers, although not used, was 'a must' in maintaining control over his governments.[5] It is a prerogative that is not needed because it is available. Therefore if one were to study actual dismissals one would be misled as to the importance of the prerogative in informing policy outcomes. For this reason it is useful to study ministerial dismissals theoretically. Next I look at how dismissals and threats of dismissal can affect policy outcomes.

Modelling ministerial selection

For an existing policy to change and a new policy to become law and be implemented it is necessary that the cabinet minister in whose department the responsibility lies supports the policy throughout the process. Without the proposal and support of the political head of the responsible department it will be difficult, if not impossible, for a prime minister to oversee the change in policy.

An example serves to illustrate this point. In 1980, not long into Margaret Thatcher's premiership, she was anxious to introduce reform to trades union laws to make it potentially more costly for unions to call strikes. Yet she found it difficult to initiate or achieve the changes she wanted until she changed the responsible minister.

[5] Private interview, November 2004.

Her choice of Secretary of State for Employment caused some surprise a year earlier, not least to the minister himself, Jim Prior. However, at that stage Thatcher may have felt that she did not have the strength in the Conservative party or the country *not* to appoint the former opposition spokesperson. Though she subsequently justified his appointment by saying that 'Jim [Prior] was the badge of our reasonableness', a minister who could show the trades unions that they could deal with the government (1993: 28), Thatcher made it clear to Prior that she had little confidence in him. When Thatcher appointed him she told Prior that she wanted 'someone with backbone' as his junior minister (Prior 1986: 114/ 154).

Prior proceeded to introduce an Employment Bill, of which the prime minister and other ministers on the right, including the Chancellor of the Exchequer, were openly critical. The Chancellor, Geoffrey Howe, made a speech in which he criticised the conservatism of the Bill (Howe 1994: 166). Yet Prior was determined that his bill would be one that the unions could support. He felt that if the unions were against it, the new law could not function. Hugo Young argued that the Act was;

> 'in its final form the measure Prior had always wanted. It made no concessions to extreme opinion. At the price of much public slanging, and despite numerous manoeuvres designed to divert him, he overcame the prime ministerial instincts which, had he not resisted her, would have been ineluctably converted into the prime ministerial will.' (Young 1991: 198)

Prior did not want a policy as far from the status quo as the prime minister, who desired a radical change. This example shows that ministers can stand up to even the classically powerful prime minister to protect their own turf, and that prime ministers have very little option but to accede. Thatcher preferred Prior's bill to none at all, so would not exercise a veto, but she could not force him to go further.

The policy-making effects of the selection and de-selection of ministers are modelled below. The structure of the model is quite similar to the model of dissolution threats. If we assume for the moment that the government has a reliable majority in parliament, and that cabinet accedes to policies that are agreed to by both the line minister and the prime ministers, then the two-dimensional model of policy making consists of two main players, the minister (M) and the prime minister (P), both of whom have a veto. Both P

and M can make proposals, but for a proposal to be successful, both P and M must accept it. As these negotiations are conducted privately, for the moment we can assume that there is no public cost to using the veto.

M will only propose a policy that makes M better off and does not make P worse off.[6] If the intersection of the two actors' indifference curves for the status quo is a non-empty set (e.g. the shaded area in Figure 10.1), then the policy outcome will be on the part of the contract curve linking P and M within the intersection of their indifference curves. Where the relationship between the two actors is one of equals, the outcome depends on the patience or discount rates of the actors. If M is much more patient, he could achieve the policy *B*.

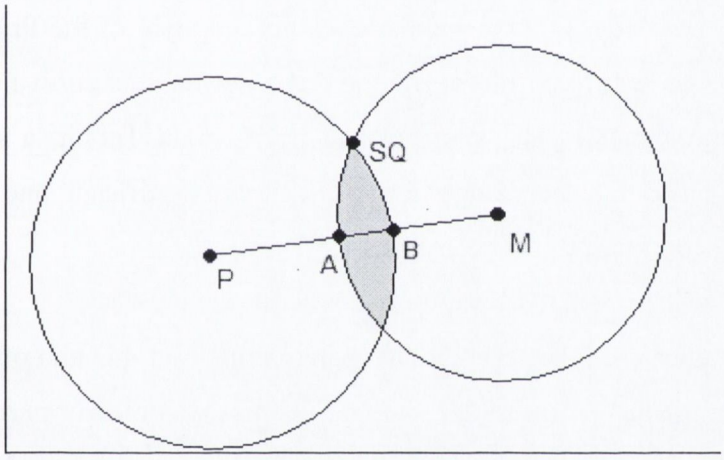


Figure 10.1
Policy outcome with two actors

Of course this simple model omits an important feature of the relationship between prime ministers and cabinet ministers: prime ministers can dismiss ministers. In the last example, Thatcher, though unable to force Prior to introduce the radical bill she preferred, did have some control of Prior's career. Had she been unable to dismiss ministers, she would have had to be content with the policy Prior proposed. This is because '[w]hen one man shares authority with another, but does not gain or lose his job upon the other's whim, his willingness to act upon the urging of the other turns on whether he conceives the action right for him' (Neustadt 1960: 34).

[6] This ignores the possibility that proposals are made, not for their likely adoption but for some audience, such as M's voters.

By common consent Thatcher achieved policy control of her Government early in her premiership through the strategic placement and replacement of ministers in key departments (Hennessy 2000; James 1999; Young 1991). In Autumn 1981, Thatcher was probably at her lowest ebb in terms of popularity – the Conservatives were third in the polls behind the SDP and the deeply-divided Labour party (Jenkins 1987: 150). Prior's Bill had become law at a time of industrial unrest. The Bill was designed to end this disruption. Tory backbenchers were anxious for a change in the economic climate and equally anxious to avoid an election. As Prior's cautious approach was not working, Thatcher decided to reshuffle her cabinet and to introduce more radical ministers. Making an analogy to the Falklands campaign, Peter Kellner said these 'lightning raids' on the 'wets' in her cabinet left her in 'secure command of Mount Conference and Cabinet Ridge' (*New Statesman* 18 June 1982). An editorial in *The Times* (15 September 1981) said that the reshuffle left 'the indelible stamp and style of the Prime Minister herself'. James Prior was sent to Northern Ireland – the UK cabinet equivalent of a posting to a Siberian power station. He was replaced by Norman Tebbit, a self declared 'Hawk'. Tebbit recognised that the change in personnel was significant, and he was instructed to change the pace of union reform (James 1997: 59).

The evidence is clear that Thatcher used the reshuffle to change policy on this and other occasions. Indeed, the prime minister's right to demote and dismiss was clearly part of Michael Heseltine's decision to resign in 1986. He felt that if he had compromised on the Westland Helicopters issue his 'reputation and power base would have been eroded until, with both safely destroyed, I would have found myself pushed out altogether' (Heseltine 2000: 339).

When prime ministers can control ministers' careers, this may affect the policies that ministers propose and agree to implement. If ministers believe that prime ministers would remove them, demote them, overlook them or be generally less supportive were they not to propose or agree to some policy position favourable to prime ministers, ministers might be convinced to act in a way that they would not otherwise have wanted to. One former UK minister is uncommonly open about the impact of the prime minister on policy choices.

> 'More intervention was what the Prime Minister wanted. And since I was more afraid of Jim Callaghan than I was of the whole administrative civil

> service, more intervention is what they were going to get' (Hattersley 1995: 167).

In a private interview one former minister in Ireland, admitted that he would have conceded spending cuts to the Taoiseach had that Taoiseach ever said 'we don't care where you find the cuts, just make them, and if you don't want to do it, resign'. As the Taoiseach never explicitly or implicitly made this threat, the minister fought on.

While it is rare that one sees a case made as publicly as Koizumi's threatened dismissal of Tanaka, described at the beginning of this section was, it is clear that prime ministers threaten to and do dismiss ministers for policy reasons. Ministers will be acutely aware of the possibility of being removed from their post if prime ministers see a benefit can be reaped from their removal. Thus ministers are unlikely to wish to give their prime minister an obvious benefit of their removal, and may change their behaviour in order to avoid dismissal.

If the right to dismiss is added to the model depicted in figure 9.1 this could lead to a new equilibrium. P can remove M as a veto-playing actor and replace M with a new minister (M^1) with an ideal policy on the relevant policy that is closer to P's.[7] P may even just dismiss M, and not replace him. For instance, Silvio Berlusconi took over the Foreign Affairs portfolio for almost a year following the effective dismissal of the Foreign minister over policy disagreement.[8]

However reshuffles and resignations are relatively rare events. This will often be because prime ministers and their ministers are in agreement on most important issues. But, at times, the dismissal prerogative may help to set the equilibrium policy close to P on the line connecting P's and M's ideal points without actually being invoked. The equilibrium policy depends on the costs associated with dismissal. We can reasonably assume that dismissal will have some cost to M. M will lose a job and influence over

[7] This is not as unrealistic as it may seem. Of the many tens of people, including existing ministers, who may be possible government ministers, it is likely that the prime minister will be able to identify someone with similar opinions.

[8] While some ministers are dismissed and others resign, the likelihood is that all resignations are avoidable by prime ministers and as such the distinction between the two is not usually meaningful. That said it is certain that some resignations occur for the stated reasons- ill-health, spending more time with one's family – but it is not easy to discern whether the stated reason is sincere or a cover for some other problem in government.

policy. Dismissal may end or limit M's ministerial or even political career Dismissal will rarely provide a benefit to M. If dismissal does provide some benefit, M may just prefer to resign (unless M prefers dismissal, so as to impress an intended 'audience').

On the other hand, dismissal can provide guaranteed benefits to P. If M is unwilling to agree to a policy that P wants, P can dismiss M, hire M^1 and achieve her preferred policy *P*. P can force M to choose between P's policy and losing M's career. Where P can do this, and M knows P can do this, then the relationship between the two actors is fundamentally changed. If the possibility of dismissal is added to the model, M is significantly weakened and M will adapt his proposal to act to prevent dismissal. M in this case can either propose *P*, or M will be dismissed with the result that *P* becomes the new policy. Policy-driven actors who are given the choice between policy *P* with dismissal and policy *P* without dismissal should choose the latter option (assuming there is some cost to dismissal for the actor). Therefore the policy outcome will be at the prime minister's ideal policy, *P*.

This means that, even under the unrealistic assumption of a one-shot policy-making process, ministers have the incentive to concede on policy to save their jobs because to do otherwise would risk dismissal *and* the introduction of a less favourable policy. Where the policy process occurs in many stages, and ministers have influence on many policies, the desire to remain in office is even easier to appreciate.

However, ministers will have limits as to what they can accede to, and dismissal is not costless for prime ministers. At some stage the damage to the minister's reputation (or own conscience) will be so great that resignation or dismissal is preferable to conceding ground on policy. In abstract terms, this is the policy point (or curve) for M where one preserves or loses one's reputation. The 'reputation limit' will define the maximum limit to which M will concede policy. M will prefer to resign or be dismissed than accept a policy beyond that line. If M's reputation curve includes PM's ideal point, then no resignation should take place. Compromise beyond their reputation limit would damage their reputations, which could affect politicians' chances of reelection or reappointment, and hence the likelihood of attaining their preferred policies in the future would be affected. The limit may also be self-imposed by one's conscience. An example of someone publicly displaying her 'reputation limit' is Clare Shot, who was

the UK's International Development Secretary up to 2003. Short had criticised the UK's policy toward invading Iraq, but remained in the Cabinet despite this. She apparently stayed in her post because she was promised that the United Nations would be given influence over the rebuilding of Iraq. After the invasion had taken place, and it became clear that Tony Blair had either no intention or no ability to allow the UN to influence the rebuilding process, she resigned. There was some limit to the policy to which Short could accede.

Why did Jim Prior not accede to Margaret Thatcher's wishes? It is clear that she explicitly told him that she was unhappy with his policies. Prior's objections to Thatcher, judging by his memoirs, were only policy related. So maybe he feared what it would do to his reputation and/ or self-esteem to yield on this issue. It is possible that Prior felt he had some time for his policy to work. He felt that if he treated the unions with respect, they might reciprocate in some way. Unfortunately for Prior the policy did not work (or did not work quickly enough). While he did have time – Thatcher was not going to dismiss him immediately – he did not have an indefinite amount of time and in the end Thatcher removed him in a reshuffle.

Given the possibility that ministers do not automatically submit to the prime ministerial policy on the implicit threat of dismissal, prime ministers may actually have to act to dismiss or force a resignation of ministers in order to achieve their ideal policies. Dismissals or resignations of ministers are not without costs for prime ministers. James Callaghan told his policy adviser, Bernard Donoughue, that the use of the dismissal prerogative might be costly.

> 'In search of revitalisation before the difficult parliamentary year, I also proposed that the Prime Minister effect a Cabinet reshuffle…The Prime Minister politely declined…He shrewdly pointed out that the problem with reshuffles is that the people who are favoured no longer have to behave well in anticipation, while those who are dropped or ignored are made enemies for life!' (Donoughue 1987: 169)

Nor does dismissing ministers reflect well on prime ministers. It exposes either poor judgement for making the earlier appointment, or division within the cabinet so deep that it can only be solved by resignation/ dismissal. Therefore dismissal may impose a cost on P. Prime ministers will consider the effect of a dismissal on policy-making in other areas. The most important potential cost is the loss of a parliamentary majority,

which would jeopardise one's continuation in government. The resignation of Geoffrey Howe as Margaret Thatcher's Foreign Secretary was one of the factors causing the removal of Thatcher as party leader and prime minister (Jeffreys 2003: 232-58; Leonard 2005: 320).

A dismissal could, in certain situations, be the best possible outcome given the potential policy benefits. Dismissal may 'draw a line in the sand' for a particular political difficulty, and so might offer a positive solution to a problem. It is for prime ministers to analyse the costs and benefits. Firing a minister will not be the favoured strategy. It could be easier to extract concessions from minister who feel under pressure than from newly appointed ministers full of self-confidence. Even though when John Major became Thatcher's Chancellor, he did start his tenure by adopting the Thatcher line on European Monetary Union, Major was keenly aware that she could not afford to lose another Chancellor so soon after Lawson's departure (Young 1991: 565, 570). Thus, Major was able to make the UK far more involved in deliberations on a European economic policy than Thatcher's instincts would normally have allowed.

The model with P's costs of dismissal and a reputation limit is depicted graphically in figure 10.2. Will P's positive costs of dismissal make a difference to the outcome, and if so, how? In this model, either M or P can propose new policies, which must be acceptable to the other for the policy to be approved by the government. Both M's and P's costs of dismissal are relevant, as are the reputation curves or limits of the two actors. No policy outside the reputation limit of either actor will be acceptable, and so no policy outside this area will be adopted without either a dismissal or resignation. This model assumes that each actor knows the other's ideal points, costs and the limits to which each actor will go. While I do not claim that this is literally true, in elite level politics it is more likely to be true than in most other areas of human interaction.

Where both have high costs of dismissal, say MB and PA for M and P respectively, the outcome should be somewhere on the line AB. If dismissal is highly costly to P, and M's costs are low, ministers' vetoes remain effective and M should be able to extract policy concessions from P to the value of these costs (M can make P worse off, as M could threaten to resign if P vetoes a particular change). However if P's costs of dismissal are nil, the outcome should be the prime minister's ideal point, as using his

veto will be costly to M. Whether M will accept P's ideal point depends on whether this point is within the reputation curve of M, otherwise M may choose to resign.[9]

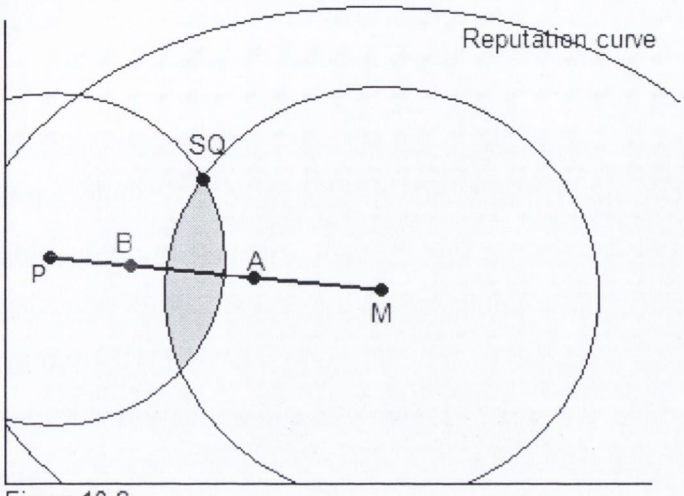


Figure 10.2
Outcomes with different prime ministerial 'costs of dismissal'

In the example shown in figure 10.2 the minister's reputation is not relevant as the reputation curve covers all points on the line connecting the two relevant actors. P's costs for dismissing M are relevant. Here I represent two possible costs as examples. These are the lines PB and PA where P's costs of dismissal are low and high respectively; each could also be represented as circles with the radii PB and PA and a centre P. Where P's costs of dismissal are low (as represented by the line PB, that is, the prime minister is unconstrained in use of her right to fire a minister), M and P will agree policy B. M knows that any policy that is less favourable to P would lead P to prefer to dismiss M and achieve P's ideal policy, *P*. Any policy closer to P than B will not be proposed or accepted by M as he knows that P will prefer to accept B than to dismiss M and achieve *P*, so M will hold out for B.

If P's costs of dismissing M are higher, for example, as represented by the line PA, the outcome will be A unless the veto can be invoked. We should only expect a resignation where the minister's reputation curve does not cover the policy that P would prefer to accept than to dismiss M. As both actors can propose any policy M's costs of dismissal (that is, being dismissed) are also relevant. If MA and MB are M's low and high costs

[9] The reputation curve is an ellipse when the policy dimensions have different saliencies. P will also have a reputation limit represented by a curve, but I assume it is not relevant here.

of dismissal respectively, P can propose the point closest to P at which M will prefer accept that be dismissed.

Discussion

These models theoretically establish that prime ministers can achieve policy goals by using the threat to dismiss ministers, and that prime ministers' abilities to achieve policy goals depend on their own costs of dismissing others, their 'reputation limit' and the costs of dismissal and 'reputation limits' of ministers. In the real world these decisions will be unique and nuanced, perhaps ill-suited to generalisation. However, there may be factors that generally affect these concepts; costs of dismissal and reputation curves.

As well as the ideals and conscience of the political actor, the reputation limit probably depends on the competitiveness of the electoral system. Where it is easy for new parties to enter a system, and where it is relatively easy to gain representation, then M (or any other political actors) will have less freedom to compromise without incurring some electoral penalty, and prime ministerial power is reduced as a result. Where electoral entry is easy, continued electoral support is more susceptible to policy movement. If Party A moves its policy position, and it is relatively easy for another party to successfully enter parliament by taking up the vacated policy space, then Party A will be less inclined to compromise in policy as this would entail vacating policy space for others to take. Political systems with deterrents to electoral entry will have political actors that feel 'protected', and are more willing to compromise.

One way to measure the ease of electoral entry might be the effective threshold of a country. One might expect that *countries with low effective electoral thresholds allow veto players to be more flexible in negotiations and give the veto player with certain negotiating advantages, such as the right to dismiss, an opportunity to use those advantages to their benefit* (hypothesis 10.1). Where a minister or party has to decide whether to compromise on a policy, whether they can be easily punished for this compromise will be important in their decision.

For prime ministers, the major factors affecting the cost of dismissing ministers are the likely reactions of other actors in the political system. If MPs belong to groups that act

collectively to protect each other's positions and interests, and prime ministers rely on these groups for parliamentary support, then prime ministers find it more difficult to appoint and dismiss ministers from these groups without the support of these groups. If ministers represent parliamentary groups in cabinet (either informally or formally), the reaction to the removal of a minister from Group A and his replacement by someone from Group B will annoy others in Group A. However whether the reaction becomes anything more than mere annoyance depends on the extent of the solidarity within the group. This solidarity will be strongest when it is institutionally enforced. If the minister's group is organised and can co-ordinate its reaction, this makes it difficult for prime ministers to split the 'opposition' by offering incentives to parts of the group. Ultimately the group that M belongs to can react to this sacking by withdrawing or maintaining support for the government.

Where the group's solidarity is institutionally guaranteed, because, for instance, it is a separate political party, then prime ministers' costs of dismissal are likely to be significantly higher. Dismissal may cause a withdrawal of support, leading to a termination of the government, and its further consequences. Prime ministers will find it difficult to appoint or dismiss ministers from other parties without the agreement of the group (as is shown by the data in table 10.2). Prime ministers will have less control over policies under the control of ministers from other parties.

Dismissals of ministers from prime ministers' own parties should be easier to accomplish (as table 10.2 clearly shows), and therefore control over policies emanating from these departments should also be easier to control. The level of freedom to dismiss ministers from within a prime minister's own party also depends on the level of organisation of factions. At the start of the chapter I outlined an example where Roy Jenkins, as the de facto leader of a faction in the Labour government, moved to prevent the dismissal of one of his supporters.

Prime ministers, however, have an advantage in dealing with their own parties in that prime ministers can divide rival factions by offering some members of those factions positions that they would be disinclined to refuse. Factions cannot usually offer similar incentives or penalties to their members, such as candidate selection or funding election expenses, that parties can. The attractions prime ministers have to offer are often too

great and faction leaders rarely have the same patronage capacity necessary to ensure loyalty. Prime ministers dealing only with groups within their own party have the distinct advantage that they alone have knowledge of the full process of cabinet building and reconstruction. By acting swiftly prime ministers can ensure that the faction does not have time to organise a co-ordinated response to dismissals.

So for instance, though 'wets' made up a majority of Thatcher's early cabinets, she successfully removed them over time. At each stage she weakened that side of the party. Thatcher never had to face unified opposition from this side of the party because by keeping some 'wets' in cabinet she effectively split this group. By 1983 only two cabinet ministers were easily categorised as 'wets'.

The expert survey questions asking the level of freedom prime ministers have to hire and fire ministers from their own and other parties captures this information well. We should expect to see that *prime ministerial power is a function of the proportion of cabinet seats controlled by prime ministers' parties and the level of freedom prime ministers have to dismiss ministers from their own parties and those from other parties* (hypothesis 10.2).

Hypothesis testing

According to the analysis above, the right to dismiss ministers will enable prime ministers to make the vetoing of policies favoured by prime ministers less attractive for veto players. The important factors determining whether ministers will accede to the prime minister's policy demands are the costs of dismissal for both actors and their reputation limits. The reputation limit may be larger where competition for votes at any policy point is less severe, that is, parties are free to occupy large spaces in the policy spectrum without fear of it being invaded by a new political competitor should the party move.

The first hypothesis proposes that *countries with low effective electoral thresholds allow veto players to be more flexible in cabinet negotiations and give the veto player with certain prerogatives, like the right to dismiss ministers, a chance to use those prerogatives to their benefit* (hypothesis 10.1).

I take the effective threshold of an electoral system in a country to reflect the ease of entry to the political process and hence the electoral competition. Lijphart (1999: 153) proposes an empirical method for estimating the effective threshold (T) which is 75%/ district magnitude[10] +1. This measure uses this formula based on the median legislator district magnitude, taken from Cox (1997: Appendix C). Effective threshold, measured between 0 and 1, should be associated with the policy influence of prime ministers. However, Taagepera (2002) points out that Lijphart deals with district level thresholds rather than national thresholds, so it is not the case that where a district threshold is 20 percent that a party needs to poll 20 percent nationally. While table 10.3 shows the results of a test of this hypothesis in which the threshold explains almost a fifth of all variation in country scores, a better proxy for the freedom for parties to move in policy space without fear of severe electoral punishment might be disproportionality.[11]

If one takes Gallagher's Index of Disproportionality (Gallagher 1991) as a proxy for party system rigidity – the freedom established parties can move about the policy space without punishment – this factor is also a significant predictor of prime ministerial power at the country level. The data, which represents the average index from 1971 to 1996, is taken from Lijphart (1999). The index has theoretical limits of 1 and 100, where 1 is pure proportionality. One therefore expects a positive relationship between disproportionality and prime ministerial power, which is sustained in model 10.2.

Table 10.3 Modelling cabinet dismissal effects on PM policy influence

PM power	**1***	**2***	**3*****	**4****	**5*****
Constant	5.73	5.57	5.00	3.80	4.37
'Cabinet Dismissal'	-	-	0.24***	-	0.25*
Effective Threshold/ disproportionality	2.97*	.11*	-	-	-
Fire own ministers	-	-	-	0.38**	0.07
(Adj.) R-squared	.19	.22	.21	.45	.20
N	22	22	131	21[12]	131

[10] District Magnitude is the number of legislators elected from the constituency.
[11] A test using Taagepera's data is insignificant.
[12] Portugal is removed from the analysis because the standard error of the estimate for 'Fire own ministers' is above 1 (see Appendix C). The results are not changed drastically if Portugal is kept in the analysis.

To test hypothesis 10.2, that *prime ministerial power over policy is a function of the proportion of cabinet seats controlled by prime ministers' parties and the level of freedom prime ministers have to dismiss ministers from their own parties and those from other parties*, I take the proportion of cabinet seats controlled by a prime minister's party and multiply this by the score on how free the prime ministers are to fire ministers from their own party (at the individual level). This should control for the extent of factionalism in parties and the control of the leader over those factions. I then take the proportion of ministers in other parties and multiply this by the freedom of the prime ministers (by country) to dismiss ministers from other parties. Adding these two components creates 'Cabinet Dismissal' which measures freedom to dismiss ministers on a scale of 1 to 9, where 9 indicates absolute control over ministers' removal and 1 indicates no control. Model 3 shows that over a fifth of the variation in prime ministerial power to set policy can be explained by the ability of prime ministers to dismiss cabinet ministers alone. The percentage of ministers in cabinet from a prime minister's party is significant on its own, but explains less variation. If the variable measuring the freedom to fire ministers from one's own party, which is significant on its own at the country level, is added to the regression model, 'Cabinet Dismissal' is still significant (Model 5).

When the policy-making power of prime ministers is regressed on their freedom to fire ministers from one's own party, as expected this is significant (accounting for 45 per cent of variation in prime ministerial power). The data analysis shows that there is a clear link between the freedom prime ministers have to dismiss ministers and the policy-making power of prime ministers. This link was not wholly obvious. Recall that there is no connection between the frequency of reshuffles and policy power. Dismissing ministers is not making policy. However, the model explains how prime ministers use the threat to dismiss ministers to set the alternatives from which veto-playing ministers must choose. In fact, the threat to dismiss is as, if not more, important than the actual dismissal of ministers in determining prime ministerial power.

Conclusion

Firing a minister is a very public way of solving a policy problem. But it may also be an effective way of solving the problem if a new minister can cause a change of policy

relatively quickly. However, the act of dismissal is not always necessary: the psychological threat may be enough. The idea of his or her once promising political career ending prematurely might convince most ministers to make a deal with a prime minister. For this reason studying actual dismissals is not very helpful. Non-resignations are also relevant, but studying non-events empirically is problematic. Thus, one is restricted in the data one has to test propositions relating to ministerial selection and deselection. The data analyses show that, as one would expect, there is a connection between the freedom to dismiss cabinet ministers and prime ministerial power. Electoral competition is also important in determining the freedom that ministers and government parties have to concede in negotiations, as is demonstrated by the importance of the effective electoral threshold.

The psychological threat to remove ministers must also be credible. By far the most important factor enabling prime ministers to have the freedom to threaten dismissal is the extent to which the minister or ministers threatened with dismissal can organise to resist the prime ministers. Organisation is most strongly institutionalised through political parties, but within parties such as the Japanese LDP and the Italian DC and PSI, deep factionalism allows (or allowed in DC's case) the heads of the factions to prevent prime ministers from forcing changes in government. In the examples used we can see that unlike Jenkins and Prentice, Tanaka was not a member of a faction, and thus had no protection.

Chapter 11. Prerogatives and power in government: Chairing the cabinet

On 25 March 1993 the Irish cabinet was in one of its weekly meetings when the then Taoiseach and leader of Fianna Fáil, Albert Reynolds, called the next item. The Minister for Finance, Bertie Ahern brought a memorandum (proposal) to government relating to a tax amnesty. After Ahern presented the proposal, Reynolds apparently pushed the proposal through cabinet more quickly than was expected, and the decision on the tax amnesty passed through the Fianna Fáil/ Labour cabinet without much debate as the Labour Party ministers in the coalition government sat in silence. A few weeks later Bertie Ahern introduced the amnesty to the Dáil.

This account is surprising because the Labour Party, which had recently made large electoral gains, had achieved those extra seats through its effective criticism of Fianna Fáil's policies. Specifically it had criticised the previous Fianna Fáil-introduced amnesty as a reward for tax evaders. The new amnesty would do exactly the same, and indeed it was worse in Labour's eyes because it would reward tax evaders who had not used the previous amnesty. Nor did the second amnesty require full disclosure of liabilities. In any case, the first amnesty in 1988 was sold as a 'once off'. The credibility of the tax system would have been undermined if it were thought evasion was something one could make good every few years. Worse again, the second amnesty not only waived interest and penalties to those who availed of it, as in 1988, but required those availing of it to pay only 15 per cent of the principal owed.

The Minister for Finance, Bertie Ahern, his Department, the Revenue Commissioners, the Attorney General and two out of three independent experts were thought to oppose the amnesty (*The Irish Times,* 29 September 1999). The Revenue Commissioners apparently 'was on the brink of taking some very big players in the golden circle for a lot of money', including IR£101m from one individual alone (*The Irish Times*, 8 October 1999). This was the 'golden circle' that Labour had successfully accused previous governments of working for. It is therefore puzzling how this policy was passed in cabinet.

There are conflicting views of the making of this policy. A contemporary account from one of the Taoiseach's advisers reported that the Reynolds was warned he would lose a vote in cabinet by 13-2. Reynolds' reaction was that he could 'carry the cabinet if I want' (Duignan 1995: 91). His confidence was based on the simple logic of a deal that was struck with Labour, in which Labour got IR£200m to spend on their pet projects. If they wanted the money, they would have to accept the amnesty (Collins 2001: 265). This may not be plausible as arguably much more money may have been available if the amnesty was not used.

According to Labour sources, the Taoiseach outmanoeuvred Labour in cabinet. Labour ministers were taken by surprise, hence their silence (Finlay 1997: 172). Though they had known of, and been involved in a debate about a new tax amnesty, they had thought the line minister opposed it. Ahern allegedly had asked a Labour adviser to guarantee the Labour ministers' support for opposing it in the early hours of the morning. It was assumed that Ahern was only bringing the item to cabinet so that it could be formally rejected. In the cabinet meeting Ahern did not put forward the objections of his own department or the revenue commissioners as the Labour party had expected. Somehow the Taoiseach prevailed and objectors to the policy were not given time in cabinet. The Taoiseach, had he wanted to look at the policy again, could have reopened the debate, but as he was in favour of the amnesty, Reynolds was never going to do this. Cabinet decisions, once made, are government policy (Connolly and O'Halpin 1999: 255) and Labour had to publicly support this one. Reynolds suggests that Labour were in fact out-manoeuvred by Ahern if anyone.[1]

We know more about this decision than most other cabinet decisions because of a recent inquiry into the operation of the tax system in the 1980s and 1990s. However, it remains unknown what was said at the cabinet meeting. Ahern's explanation of his actions casts little light.[2] What could be described as the 'official' Labour version points to a prime minister using his position as chair of cabinet to force the measure through cabinet (Finlay 1997). Indeed it is unlikely that had Dick Spring, the Labour party leader, been chairing the cabinet that this policy would have been passed.

[1] Interview, 22 November 2004.
[2] Evidence to the Public Accounts Committee investigation into DIRT.

Introduction

Cabinet is the apex of government. A description by a former New Zealand minister about cabinet in his country adequately describes the tradition in most countries studied here. Talboys (1970: 3) said that 'all the major decisions are made by Cabinet whether or not they involve more than one department. In fact, it is Cabinet which governs.' It is not an exaggeration to say that for most major politicians in parliamentary democracies, arrival at cabinet is either the culmination of one's career, or for the most ambitious, a necessary juncture to that point.

It is not surprising, then, that the right to chair cabinet is cited in many country specific pieces on prime ministers as a source of prime ministerial power to set public policy. The fact that prime ministers 'chair Cabinet meetings, establish Cabinet processes and procedures, set the cabinet agenda [and] establish the consensus for Cabinet decisions' gives prime ministers a hand on 'an important lever of power' (Savoie 1999: 72). Where prime ministers are traditionally seen as weak, as in Italy, the task of chairing government meetings gives prime ministers some impact on policy-making (Barbieri 2001).

This conclusion is hardly surprising. Rational choice accounts of agenda setting show that it has the potential to allow the agenda setter to achieve *any* outcome given certain conditions. The agenda setter can veto any proposal by leaving an item off an agenda. The agenda setter can structure the decision making process in such a way to maximise his or her chances of success. So, for instance, in the mid-1960s, the UK prime minister, Harold Wilson refused to allow cabinet discussion of the possible devaluation of Sterling, even though some ministers wished to consider it (Radice 2003: 148). Wilson was against devaluation and maintained discussion about the issue with just two senior economic ministers (Callaghan and Brown). When this group was split, with only Wilson remaining adamantly against devaluation, he brought discussion to cabinet. Even then, a package worked out by Callaghan and Wilson was offered to cabinet as a *fait accompli* (Ponting 1989: 198). One minister felt that that day's 'Cabinet was a desultory affair' (Crossman 1975: 578).

Empirically, the right to chair cabinet meetings is one that is given to all prime ministers. There is no variation. Therefore it would be unpersuasive to argue that chairing cabinet is significant in explaining the variation in power *between* prime ministers. However, the role of chairman could give prime ministers an advantage over other members of the cabinet. It might explain how prime ministers are more powerful than other actors in the policy-making process.

In this chapter I investigate in what ways prime ministers can use their role as cabinet chairmen to further their policy interests. As chairmen of cabinet, prime ministers are likely to have more, and more accurate, information about the preferences of other actors. Cabinet chairmanship gives prime ministers the ability to choose the most advantageous forum for decision-making. Their role in 'calling' the consensus of cabinet meetings effectively offers prime ministers the ability to make the last offer to cabinet for decision, which would give a prime minister all the advantages associated with the prerogative to make 'Final Offer' proposals. However, as cabinet is ultimately anarchic in its institutional make-up, prime ministers cannot depend on their role in cabinet to achieve policy. I argue that the chairmanship of cabinet essentially provides a forum and a method for prime ministers to use 'power' resources sourced elsewhere. The role of cabinet chairman will not make a weak premier strong. Thus, one might argue that it may not have been Reynolds' control of the cabinet agenda that helped him achieve his policy successes, but his control over his minister for finance, Bertie Ahern, that was crucial in determining the outcome of this policy conflict. I finally analyse data on cabinet government, which empirically establishes the importance of control of the cabinet agenda in government policy making.

Cabinet decision making in 22 countries

As was just noted there is no variation in regard to whether prime ministers chair cabinet or not. Prime ministers in all the countries studied here co-ordinate government and chair cabinet.[3] This does not mean that there is no variation in prime ministerial control of cabinet agendas and cabinet decision-making. However, it is likely that

[3] In some monarchies it states that the Monarch may chair cabinet meetings, but there is no evidence that this occurs in practice.

variation between the extent of prime ministers' control of cabinet procedure is a result of political factors rather than institutional ones.

An interesting feature of cabinet and cabinet decision-making, and one connected to the last point, is the lack of instruction from legal documents as to how cabinets should operate. While there are sometimes detailed procedures instructing ministers as to how to bring an issue to cabinet, 'constitutions are less precise…about the organisation of cabinets' (Blondel 1997: 6). One can even say, that in legal terms, cabinets are anarchical. For this reason, and also because cabinet discussions are deemed confidential by the doctrine of collective responsibility, we know less about cabinet and cabinet decision-making than any other area of government.

We do know that prime ministers have responsibility for drawing up the agenda in cabinet, usually with the assistance of a senior civil servant. However, the extent to which prime ministers actually control the process will vary. The legal right to set the agenda 'does not mean that the prime minister has the power in practice to set the collective political agenda' (Nousiainen 1994: 98). Because of the lack of information contained in legal documents, I asked country experts to estimate prime ministers' agenda setting freedom. In Table 11.1 below, I give the results of the expert survey. The first column sets out the estimates of experts on the ability of prime ministers in these countries to set the agenda in cabinet; this includes their ability to judge that an item be considered in cabinet, and to put an item of their own on the agenda. The second column gives the estimates of prime ministers' freedom to restrict the agenda; that is, their freedom to prevent an item being discussed. The third column adds these two together, while the fourth column gives the number of members of each country's cabinet.

According to these data, the Austrian and Japanese prime ministers have least freedom to control the cabinet agenda. All other countries are above the mid-point of ten (column three). The prime ministers of the Commonwealth countries in the study and of Greece have the greatest level of freedom, being close to 15 on the 2-18 scale. There is less variation on the scores on freedom to set the agenda than on the ability to restrict the agenda, which might indicate that the ability to restrict discussion of items is a more important indicator of the potency of the chairmanship of cabinet. On the ability to

restrict issues from being considered at cabinet, Austrian, Finnish, Italian and Japanese prime ministers have the least freedom to prevent items coming to cabinet. Canadian, Greek and Icelandic prime ministers have the most discretion.

Table 11.1 Prime ministerial control of the cabinet agenda

Country	PM sets the agenda in cabinet (1 = least freedom)	PM restricts cabinet agenda (9 = most freedom)	Column one plus column two (2-18)	Size of cabinet*
Australia	7.9	6.5	14.5	17
Austria	5.7	3.6	9.3	12
Belgium	6.6	6.1	12.7	17
Canada	8	7.8	15.8	28
Denmark	6.6	6.3	12.9	18
Finland	6.0	4.9	10.9	18
Germany	7.2	6.5	13.6	14
Greece	7.9	7.7	15.5	20
Iceland	5.0	8.0	13.0	12
Ireland	7.5	6.3	13.8	15
Israel	7.4	7.0	14.4	19
Italy	5.4	4.8	10.2	24
Japan	5.4	4.2	9.6	18
Luxembourg	7.0	7.5	14.5	12
Malta	6.7	6.3	13.0	14
Netherlands	5.6	5.6	11.2	11
New Zealand	8.0	7.0	15.0	20
Norway	6.2	5.5	11.5	19
Portugal	6.3	6.9	13.1	18
Spain	7.8	7.5	15.5	16
Sweden	6.5	5.9	12.4	22
UK	7.8	7.2	14.9	23
Mean	6.89	6.15	13.4	17.6

*On 31 December 2002 (source: EJPR Data Yearbook)

These data broadly accord with the country specific literature on cabinet government, although most writers on the subject indicate that while prime ministers have little power to determine what gets onto the agenda, they have more control over how issues are dealt with once on the agenda. Legalism in Finnish government means that the prime minister has little discretion to set or restrict the agenda (Nousiainen 1994: 94). Koutsoukis (1994: 275) notes that the Greek prime minister is the most influential actor

in determining the cabinet agenda. The agenda in Dutch cabinets are set up mechanistically, and although the prime minister's advice is sometimes requested, most items appear on the agenda automatically (Andeweg 1997: 61-2). The Irish Taoiseach is able to put issues 'on the long finger' and one minister noted that 'you can't get an item discussed for five seconds if the Taoiseach isn't with you' (Farrell 1994: 80). This would indicate that while Irish prime ministers are unable to prevent an item getting onto the agenda, they can effectively restrict items from being discussed fully.

In terms of how cabinets make decisions, country scholars indicate that few cabinets use formal votes (Laver and Shepsle 1994a: 299). When votes are used it is normally on routine issues. However, in the UK, the descriptions of cabinet meetings in memoirs indicate that prime ministers 'count heads' to get a sense of the wishes of the meeting (see for example Heseltine 2000: 236). In Ireland voting is not unusual, although the extent of its use apparently depends on the Taoiseach (Chubb 1974: 35; Farrell 1997: 44). Israeli cabinets use formal votes even on the most controversial issues (Kuperman 2002). For instance, on the issue of the unilateral removal of settlements from the West Bank, a majority vote in cabinet settled the issue (*Ha'aretz* 25 October 2004). Greek Cabinet by-laws insist that decisions must be signed by a majority of ministers (Koutsoukis 1994: 272). Though voting on controversial issues is rare in Dutch government, the prime minister can cast the deciding vote in the event of a tie (Andeweg 1997: 62). As Laver and Shepsle (1994a: 299) point out, this could have the effect of making cabinet a second order legislature. But no country scholar in the literature I reviewed argues that voting is an important means of making decisions.

Perhaps in view of this, another decision-making rule is more common in cabinet government: consensus. Consensus as a concept is much vaguer than other decision rules, such as simple majority or unanimity. Consensus in cabinet is closely connected to the doctrine of collective responsibility (Laver and Shepsle 1994a: 299-300). A consensus position is the policy that, at a minimum, is acceptable to all members of cabinet. As I will argue, it is connected to collective responsibility, in that the consensus should be a policy that no minister is willing to resign over in order to voice his or her opposition to the policy. This means that a consensus decision may not be the first choice of any of the actors. It should also mean that the decision reflects the strength of the opinions of the actors. The opinions of a minister who strenuously argues against a

policy could be given greater weight than the opinions of those who nonchalantly raise a hand in favour of the proposal. Consensus decision-making may then be a type of weighted voting. As we shall see, the advantage for prime ministers is that as chairmen of cabinet they get to assess the appropriate weights and to 'call the consensus'.

Historically, the informality of cabinet decision-making was practical given the relative simplicity of government. Each member of government would have been able to consider issues in detail and to give their opinions. Since 1945, the increase in the number of international organisations, the expansion of the welfare state, and increased regulation of economic activity, makes government far more complex and wide-reaching. To relieve cabinet of the burdens of this 'overload' a number of changes have been made necessary.

Firstly, according to Blondel (1997: 9), cabinets have grown in size in recent decades to accommodate the extra demands. This, he argues, has led to a reduction in collegial decision-making. In large cabinets with over 20 ministers, it would be difficult to expect free-flowing discussion and debate. As a result of this, the role of the prime minister as the chair of discussions becomes more important. Unfortunately, we have few records of the extent of collective decision-making in the past, so making temporal comparisons is difficult.

There is also some evidence that the cabinet meeting is no longer the most important forum for government decision-making (Nousiainen 1993). A survey of policy conflicts in European countries indicates that Ireland and Sweden are unusual in that 71 percent and 80 percent of policy conflicts surveyed were solved in cabinet respectively (Nousiainen 1993: 275). In Germany and Denmark, only one in four cases of the sample of policy conflicts were solved in cabinet, with half of the German conflicts being decided by the Chancellor unilaterally.

Some countries, such as Greece, Italy, the Netherlands and the UK, have tried to introduce inner-cabinets. For instance there is evidence that Wilson created an unofficial, but very real, inner-cabinet (Leonard 2005: 290). The cabinet of super-ministries were, in part, an attempt to formalise the situation whereby senior ministers discuss and decide upon issues, and to enforce a structural hierarchy of ministers. On

Belgium, one writer argues there is 'a real sense in which there is an 'inner cabinet'' (Frognier 1997: 85). Nowhere has the inner-cabinet idea being fully implemented or formalised, but cabinet committees, a derivative of this idea, have become a common feature of cabinet government.

In many of the countries studied here cabinet committees are used to make decisions or to make recommendations to cabinet. The extent of their use varies, possibly depending more on the size of the cabinet than on other factors. The committee system allows the ministers who are professionally (through their department) or politically most interested in a policy decision to meet, discuss and, perhaps, decide on which policy to adopt.

The cabinet committee system is a structure more often used to ease the burden on cabinet decision-making than to distort or change decisions (Mackie and Hogwood 1985a: 4). As cabinets and the competences of government have grown, cabinet committees have become more common. Committees provide a natural way to allow interested ministers to debate policy in detail. This does not mean that prime ministers do not also use committees to force decisions on cabinet. Indeed Mackie and Hogwood's (1985b) volume gives some examples of this.

As well as formal inner cabinets and cabinet committees, the other ways in which decision making takes place out of cabinet include the use of bilateral agreement between the line minister and the prime minister; informal meeting of relevant ministers; and meetings of party leaders. The absence of formal instruction as to where decisions are made allow prime ministers to choose the decision-making process most suitable for their aims. Next I look more specifically at how prime ministers can use their role as chairman of cabinet and coordinator of government to make policy gains in government.

Prime ministers in cabinet

It is true to say that prime ministers are conscious of the potential of chairing cabinet to achieve policy gains. Prime ministers can do this in many ways. One is to take a decision only when it is likely to benefit the prime minister and to postpone decisions

until such a stage. Seán Lemass, a former Irish prime minister and experienced cabinet minister, compared his style of chairing cabinet with that of his predecessor.

> 'De Valera sought unanimity by the simple process of keeping the debate going – often till the small hours of the morning, until those who were in the minority, out of sheer exhaustion, conceded the case to the majority…I made a personal judgement as to the point in the debate at which the question had to be put for decision to the government. At that stage you had a fairly good idea what the decision was going to be anyway' (quoted in Farrell 1982: 107).

Clearly both Taoisigh used their role as chairman to manage the decisions emanating from cabinet. Winston Churchill also used his position as cabinet chairman to control policy outcomes. Comments by a former Downing Street aide show that Churchill was willing to use his agenda setting role to effectively veto items in cabinet.

> 'The Prime Minister, curiously enough, was never keen on making decisions on matters that did not demand immediate action. Unless one had to be made, he liked to discuss the pros and cons at length and would then adjourn the meeting for further thought, particularly if the decision was likely to be one which went against the grain' (quoted in Rose 1980: 25)

As can be seen from the example of Harold Wilson's treatment of the devaluation decision, prime ministers are also willing to leave certain issues off the agenda altogether. Wilson brought the issue to cabinet only when Wilson's economic ministers' views diverged with his. These and other examples show that within cabinet prime ministers can postpone decisions. This allows prime ministers to organise the agenda to ensure that important decisions are taken when these are most likely to favour the prime minister. Mackintosh (1968a: 493-508) cites many other examples of British prime ministers using their position as chair to prevail over opposition.

As was seen in chapter 8, formal models of agenda setting can be used to show how the agenda setter can use her prerogative to make policy gains in abstract terms. Yet models of agenda setting make assumptions about the agenda setter and others in the decision making process that may not hold in the real world. For instance, agenda setters are expected to have complete information about the different actors, and other actors are assumed to act sincerely. I will now look at the extent to which these are plausible assumptions.

Fewer constraints in cabinet

The assumption of complete information is plausible insofar as prime ministers should at least have superior information. Prime ministers have a structural advantage over other ministers, which assist them in their role to chair cabinet meetings: they are usually the only cabinet members not to have a department to run. For that reason prime ministers have two major advantages in cabinet discussions. One is that prime ministers have more time to devote to each department than ministers have to devote to work outside their departments. James Callaghan (1987: 403) famously described the first week after becoming prime minister thus; having appointed each minister 'I sat back and realised I had nothing to do. Ministers were busy with their departmental work; the telephone didn't ring...To a large extent the Prime Minister makes his own pace'. Callaghan noted that he could 'poke about' in those policies that interested him most (ibid.).

Therefore prime ministers have more time to read those submissions to cabinet that interest them. It is the prime minister's job to know of and co-ordinate the activities of the government departments. Departmental ministers, on the other hand, will have less time to study proposals from other departments. To alleviate this problem ministers hire special advisers to assist them to understand and contribute more fully to cabinet discussions (for example, see FitzGerald 1991: 310). Yet prime ministers often have superior general support. Even in a country with a comparatively little prime ministerial support, the UK, one holder of the office argued that an informal prime minister's department effectively exists (Callaghan 1987: 408). Sabino Cassese (1980: 181) considers Italian prime ministers 'able to assume the necessary powers and to control the necessary jurisdictions in order to give some central direction to the government.'

As well as allowing more time to involve oneself in the details of cabinet proposals, by not being responsible for a specific department prime ministers are not in competition with their ministers for scarce resources. Thus prime ministers may be seen as impartial in the arguments between ministers and their departments for the distribution of funds. Prime ministers can portray themselves as honest brokers in disputes between the Finance Department and spending ministries. This impartiality allows them to influence the overall co-ordination of government. In Japan, where it is noted that both the bureaucracy and the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) are sectional and factionalised,

one writer cites former prime ministerial advisers who see the leadership potential of a prime minister to be based on their ability to transcend sectionalism (Shinoda 2000: 10).

The classic model of agenda setting demonstrates the potency of the right to set the agenda. While it is plausible that prime ministers have superior information (especially about actors' preferences) to any other political actor in cabinet, it is unknown for any cabinet to make decisions in the way assumed by this model (in continuous pair-wise votes). It is obviously unlikely that prime ministers can achieve policy gains through a manipulation of the agenda, duping ministers into facing a choice that they never expected. However, prime ministers are afforded advantages by their agenda setting functions in cabinet through gate-keeping and final-offer rights.

Gate-keeping rights in government decision-making

It is uncommon that there is a legal requirement that government decisions be made (or even be approved) by cabinet, and where formal government approval is required, many decisions are dealt with routinely and without debate (see for instance Andeweg 1997). Prime ministers have some discretion as to what forum and what method will be used to make government decisions.

For instance, in the UK, one minister had to fight for 'the right of ministers to bring departmental policy issues to full cabinet' (*The Economist* 4 January 1986). Michael Heseltine had tried to get agreement to force a struggling British helicopter manufacturer to be taken over by a European rather than a US company. Meetings of a cabinet committee, whose membership was chosen by Margaret Thatcher, had always left Heseltine in the minority (see Dunleavy 1995 for a discussion of this case).

One can identify four ways in which government policies are decided. One is in a meeting of the full cabinet, most likely reaching a decision through consensus if there is disagreement. Another is through a committee of the cabinet, which either makes a decision or is asked to recommend a decision to cabinet for ratification. The prime minister decides on the membership and the chairmanship of the committee constrained by political factors (Mackie and Hogwood 1985a). Thirdly, decisions can be reached through negotiations between interested departments (often Finance) in which the prime

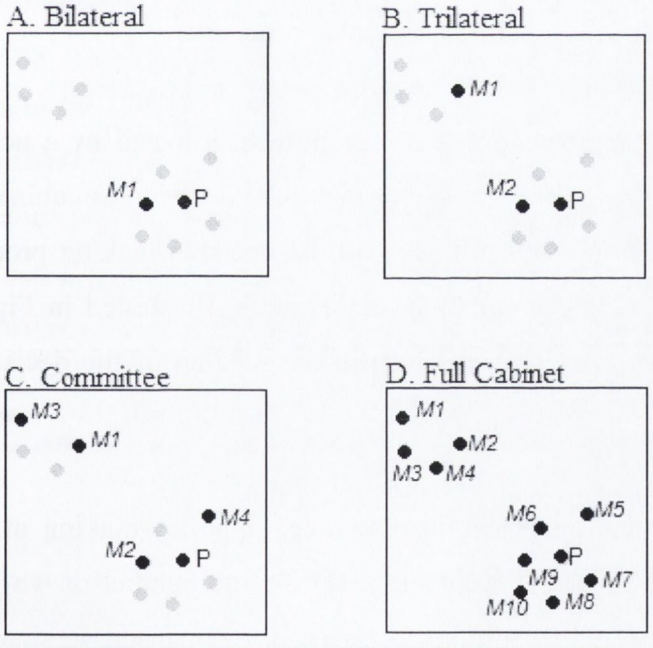
minister arbitrates if there is disagreement. Finally, ministers may take decisions unilaterally.

Which forum is used depends on how politically sensitive the issue is, and on the wishes of relevant minister(s) and the prime minister. A confident departmental minister formulating a policy that does not impinge on any other department may not see the need to trouble the prime minister (see for example, Jenkins 1975: 218). Douglas Hurd found that when he was in Northern Ireland cabinet colleagues did not want to know about his decisions. They 'allocated me a sum of money each year and expected me to get on with it' (Hurd 2003: 297). However, most ministers will refer sensitive issues to the prime minister, who in turn will have some discretion as to how and where these are decided upon.

Prime ministers will be mindful of the political sensitivity of policies, and may want to receive collective support for issues if they are fearful of the consequences of the failure of the policy. By receiving collective support, politicians who have primary administrative responsibility for a policy can get political 'cover' through cabinet approval. Cabinet approval will mean that the whole cabinet shares some of the responsibility for the policy. This can sometimes be done quickly and without risking a great deal of modification to the policy if it is offered to the cabinet as a *fait accompli*. For instance, it is said of Germany that most items on the cabinet agenda are already decided (Müller-Rommel 1997b: 189-91). On the other hand, a prime minister who knows that a policy is likely to be rejected if it is subject to a full and open debate in cabinet, may be less willing to use this forum to make a decision.

Let us consider these decision-making types in a more abstract, but generalisable, way. Figure 11.1 shows a cabinet of eleven actors with four decision-making scenarios; one of each forum that can be chosen. P is the prime minister, and M1 is the minister with departmental responsibility. M2 is the minister who is next most involved in the policy, and so on to M10. Assume, for the moment, that P has freedom to choose the forum for a decision. Assume also that P is willing to risk introducing a policy without the 'insurance' that a collective decision offers, and will choose the forum that delivers the outcome closest to P. As a rule, we should expect that prime ministers attempt to use cabinet unless doing so involves high risks of losing on a policy conflict.

Assume that the status quo is further away from, and hence more unappealing to, all actors shown in Figure 11.1 (below) than any possible outcome in the policy space shown. This is analogous to the situation in which a decision must be made because there is no status quo, or it is not a possible option for government. Therefore, each actor will prefer the ideal point of any of the actors to the status quo and the line minister's veto will not be used. The decision-making model here is simple majority voting. Admittedly this assumption stretches reality somewhat, but I have offered some evidence that informal 'head counts' occur in some governments. I also assume that P has the absolute right to choose the forum for decision. P can choose as many or as few ministers to be involved in the decision making process, but must involve the most relevant line minister. P must also follow the hierarchy of departmental responsibility – in order to include M4 in a decision-making exercise, M2 and M3 must also be included. The optimal forum for P will be the one in which P is the median voter (or close to the median) on both dimensions.



Figures 11.1a-d
Different forums for decision-making in Government

In what situations would the prime minister choose the different mechanism for decision? If, as in scenario one, the line minister (M1) and the prime minister (P) hold similar views on the policy in hand, P may choose to allow M1 to make a unilateral decision, or P could try to negotiate bilaterally with M1, using other prerogatives such

as the right to dismiss ministers, in order to bring the outcome closer to P's ideal point. It is possible that bringing the issue to the full cabinet is risk-free, and this option may be pursued.

In the second scenario (11.1b) P's and M1's ideal policies are (relatively) divergent. But another line minister M2, whose department is affected, is closer to P. In this case, P might allow bilateral negotiations, perhaps acting as a broker between the two line ministers. P could also demand trilateral negotiations in which P and M2 form a majority that could achieve an outcome close to P.

In situations such as those illustrated in figure 11.1c in which there are a number of line ministers affected by a decision, and where these are split as to what the policy outcome should be, P might be able to overcome the wishes of the primary line minister by constructing a committee to achieve a majority. To some extent, prime ministers control which ministers are on cabinet committees and what decisions are made there, especially when leading a single party government. This allows prime ministers to ensure a majority by filling the committees with like-minded ministers.

Where P is broadly in a minority among the line ministers most affected by a policy decision, but in a majority in cabinet, P will choose to make the decision in cabinet. P will choose the forum and include as many ministers in the decision-making process this will ensure the best possible outcome for P. In the example illustrated in Figure 11.1d, P chooses the full cabinet in order to be close to the median of the decision-making body.

In sum, the absence of formal rules governing the running of policy-making at the highest political level in government means that there is an infinite number of ways in which policy decisions are made. The different approaches will be nuanced versions of the four types I outline here. Of course the assumption that P has complete control over what decision-making forum is used is a questionable one. Prime ministers will find it difficult to prevent an issue being dealt with in cabinet if the relevant minister insists. However, the prime minister with sufficient resources to insist on a particular forum, can achieve policy gains in this way. Where a prime minister cannot choose the forum

for decision, the prime minister as chairman of cabinet has another advantage in cabinet, the right to 'call the consensus'.

Final Offer prerogative in government

One of the primary and vital roles of a prime minister in cabinet is to sum up; 'it is the fine art of Cabinet government' (Wilson 1976: 55). Accounts of cabinet meetings in the UK, the country about which we know most, suggest that on introducing an item for decision, the prime minister will call 'the minister responsible for the main paper: other ministers with papers or closely concerned with the matter will be next called: then other ministers as they catch the Prime Minister's eye' (Gordon Walker 1972: 122-3). But the practice of distributing a paper for discussion seems to have changed more recently in the UK. Robin Cook notes that when in government, he was 'about the only Cabinet minister ever to have put a paper around for collective discussion…Cabinet hardly ever gets a written document for discussion' (Cook 2003: 63).

Many anecdotes outline clever tactics that prime ministers have used to achieve their desired outcome. For instance, prime ministers can announce what decision they think should be made before asking colleagues for their opinions, a ploy one former prime minister regarded as 'shameless, but effective' (Major 1999: 209). This tactic may encourage prime ministers' opponents to remain silent. Prime ministers also get agreement from the salient ministers before a cabinet meeting, allowing the prime minister to say something like, 'I have spoken to most of you about matter X, and I think it is fair to say that there is broad agreement for option B. May I assume there are no objections?'

When no policy conflict is evident, the prime minister need not sum up, except to indicate that the main proposal is agreed. If differences of opinion emerge from the cabinet discussion, a prime minister's task is to get an 'impression' of the opinion of the cabinet, and he or she proposes or 'calls' a consensus position, that is, the policy that he or she feels will be acceptable to the cabinet (or at least not cause any resignations).

Then, where there is some disagreement in cabinet, the prime minister is in a position to propose solutions to disputes between ministries. The solutions that prime ministers

propose can bring the outcome closer to prime ministers' ideal policies than would otherwise have been possible. Indeed, students of countries with 'weak' prime ministers often cite the role of the prime minister as a mediator as the primary way in which these prime ministers can influence the policy outcome (Cassese 1980; Shinoda 2000).

Prime ministers summarise the general feeling of the cabinet and effectively propose a solution. This proposal follows all discussion and it can be considered the 'final offer'. Prime ministers can effectively decide which side of a debate wins the argument or where a compromise lies. The final proposal is non-negotiable, or at least to attempt to re-negotiate risks incurring costs. It is unlikely that any reasonably balanced summary and proposal will be objected to or the debate reopened.

The costs of reopening a cabinet discussion are by no means certain, but their very uncertainty in given situations may deter those unhappy with the announced consensus from demanding further debate. The potential costs are the possibility of isolating oneself in cabinet and thereby incurring the wrath of the prime minister and cabinet colleagues. By isolating oneself in such a way, a minister may be forced into a humiliating climb-down if it appears that he or she has little or no backing for dissenting from the prime minister's proposal.

In 'calling a consensus', the prime minister decides what the 'consensus' is, or what policy is offered to cabinet for acceptance. Consensus does not necessarily mean compromise, although a consensus position in cabinet could well be a compromise between two positions. Consensus merely means that all actors or parties to an agreement consent to that agreement. In calling a consensus, prime ministers have the option to propose a compromise position, or to deem that one side in a debate has won.[4] Indeed it may be the case that, after the arguments have been put, a position emerges with which the whole cabinet agrees.

[4] This model assumes that the political actors have exogenously derived ideal policies, and that these are not changeable. This seems unlikely as ministers may well change their minds after hearing arguments for and against policies. Indeed it could be argued that the purpose of cabinet is to air all views in a forum that guarantees privacy so as to ensure that each proposal is subject to the scrutiny it might receive once published. As such it is possible that many ministers, especially those who had little cause to consider the policy area before, would form a view only in cabinet, and that others may change their minds.

A consensus in cabinet decision-making is one of the points that none of the ministers in cabinet object to so strenuously that adoption of that policy would cause their resignation. It is a policy that, due to the doctrine of collective responsibility, each minister must be prepared to defend publicly. As such the policy outcome depends on the probability of resignation of different ministers.

Figure 11.2 shows the distribution of cabinet ministers' opinions on two dimensions. Again let us assume that all points in the space are preferred to the status quo by all actors, making the status quo irrelevant. Assume that the ministers most likely to resign as a result of not achieving some policy goal are those who are most affected by the decision for departmental reasons. Also assume that the prime minister, P, hopes to avoid ministerial resignations. The idea of a 'reputation limit' (introduced in the last chapter) allows us to consider the likelihood of resignation in spatial terms. In figure 11.2 RL1 and RL2 are two possible reputation limits for the minister most affected by a policy, M1. Thus there are two types of minister, one with a high tolerance to non-ideal policy and thus less likely to resign if a policy is agreed that is far from his or her ideal policy, and another ministerial type with a low tolerance of non-ideal policy who is more likely to resign.

In this model the prime minister, P, knows what the reputation limits of the different ministers are. P can use her information about the preferences of the different ministers to make a proposal that will be acceptable to a majority, but give greater weight to the opinions of some ministers when she so wishes. In this example assume that only M1's reputation limit is relevant. If M1 is intolerant of non-ideal policy, then P can call a consensus that avoids a ministerial resignation.

In the example illustrated in figure 11.2, P will call a consensus somewhere about the square (■) on RL1 if M1 is intolerant of non-ideal policies. Where M1 is more tolerant of non-ideal policies (as represented by the curve RL2) P can propose a consensus almost at P's ideal point.

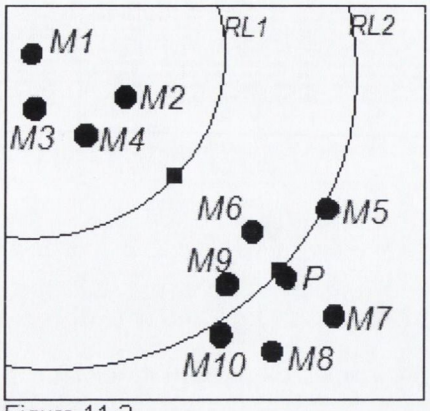


Figure 11.2
Consensus with two reputation limits for M1

For the actors in the model, the 'consensus' is a take it or leave it offer. While ministers can disagree with the prime minister's view of the opinion of cabinet, this may be punished unless well organised. Murmurs of disapproval will not suffice to change the decision of cabinet. A line minister or department that wishes to change the policy after a cabinet meeting might receive a reply to amendments to the cabinet's policy, that 'the Cabinet does not make suggestions. It takes decisions' (Wilson 1976: 60). While ministers may effectively veto cabinet decisions through inertia, they will find it difficult to change the decisions.

So prime ministers can use the two great advantages of being at the centre of government; their greater knowledge of the desires and opinions of actors in government and their institutional 'impartiality'. Their institutionally guaranteed 'impartiality' is their role as impartial adjudicators to cabinet debate. Prime ministers' greater knowledge about positions and likelihood of resignation on an issue enable them to benefit from their role to 'call consensus' at cabinet discussions and makes it more difficult for ministers to organise against a prime minister-preferred policy.

The triumph of politics in cabinet

Ultimately the degree to which a prime minister can 'stretch' a consensus towards her own ideal policy depends on her political strength. In order to block a prime minister's proposed 'consensus', a group of ministers will have to act collectively or support one another. While prime ministers are legally and constitutionally charged with managing

cabinet, allowing them to propose resolutions and call decisions in cabinet, and while they can organise agreements before cabinet, the cabinet is self-governing and ultimately anarchical. There are rules and conventions to behaviour in cabinet and those rules seem to be generally observed. However, if some members of cabinet (including prime ministers) choose not to observe the rules, there is no higher body to which one could appeal. Ministers do not take their prime ministers to constitutional courts for rulings on behaviour in cabinet. Ultimately it is politics, and not cabinet rules, that dictates to what extent the prime minister can force proposals upon cabinet and whether cabinet will accept them.

That this is the case can be seen by the ease with which cabinet conventions are discarded when politics necessitates it. In almost all parliamentary democracies' constitutions the doctrine of collective responsibility is mentioned. The doctrine dictates that all members of the government are responsible for, and must publicly defend, decisions made in cabinet. This principle of collective responsibility, while officially afforded great importance in some countries (being called 'the essential principle of [the] British system' by Clement Attlee (quoted in Hennessy 1995: 94)) has been 'long since consigned to the dignified rather than the efficient part of the constitution' in Italy (Hine 1993: 220) and Israel most notably.

Even in those countries where it is still held to be important, the doctrine is discarded when it is politically useful for prime ministers. Birch (1964: 138) gave numerous examples from the UK to argue that there is a 'gap between the doctrine of collective responsibility and the practice of contemporary politics'. James Callaghan was refreshingly frank when he told the House of Commons that he thought 'that the doctrine should apply, except in cases where I announce that it does not' (quoted in Brazier 1999: 148). Thus, Jordan (1994: 200) argues that the doctrine is a prime ministerial strength. In practice this has meant that when irreconcilable divisions appear in cabinets, prime ministers can choose to discard the principle, as Harold Wilson did when he allowed cabinet ministers to campaign on either side of a referendum campaign.

The doctrine of collective responsibility requires ministers to publicly support the decisions of the government, which in turn means that ministers cannot leak their

private positions to newspapers or disown the decision during an election campaign. This rule is also firmly consigned to the dignified part of most constitutions. A reading of ministerial memoirs reveals that prime ministers are frequently suspected of having leaked against their own ministers. Margach (1979: 132-3) points out that leaks from the cabinet have occurred in the UK for over a century in order to kill off policies and damage cabinet colleagues. The consequences of being found to have broken rules depends on one's political strength. Thatcher's involvement in the leaking of a letter was not ruled out by the conclusions of an inquiry into the Westland Affair, but in the end Thatcher survived because she was at the height of her popularity (Leonard 2005: 316).

The doctrine does appear to work at some levels. Ministers or prime ministers rarely if ever publicly criticise government policy. In order to be able to criticise policy and disassociate oneself from a policy, ministers must resign. For some, the strictures of the doctrine prevent them from criticising government policy. For instance, Robin Cook resigned as Leader of the House of Commons in protest on the eve of the invasion of Iraq. He describes resignation as a relief as 'at least [he] could speak honestly' (Cook 2003: 325). However, another colleague, Clare Short, spoke publicly against the war and called the prime minister 'reckless', yet remained in cabinet without censure. Though a minister would normally be dismissed for such an offence, according to Cook (2003: 316) Short escaped censure because of 'Tony [Blair's] weak political position'.

The doctrine of collective ministerial responsibility only benefits the prime minister powerful enough to enforce it. While it is useful to prevent public displays of disunity in government, in extraordinary circumstances of policy conflict it does not work to suppress actors who are indispensable to the government. As the prime minister is sometimes seen as indispensable (especially in single party governments) the doctrine may seem to be a prime ministerial strength. However, ministers have also been able to publicly contravene the doctrine. Jim Callaghan, when he was Home Secretary, voted against *In Place of Strife*, the cabinet's agreed policy on industrial relations, in the Labour Party's National Executive Committee. Though Wilson claimed to have reprimanded Callaghan, in reality he did nothing, nor could he, because Callaghan was too strong to be sacked (Radice 2003: 174).

Cabinet is governed by the rules of realpolitik, which essentially means that prime ministers can only control what goes to cabinet or force an issue in cabinet when they are politically strong enough. When prime ministers are leaders of coalition governments, it might be difficult to imagine the prime minister refusing to raise to cabinet an issue of concern to colleagues. Prime ministers leading a divided party cannot use cabinet to simply force decisions in their favour without expecting casualties. The former Cabinet Secretary in the UK, Lord Hunt noted this of James Callaghan's cabinet meetings.

> I know at times he occasionally said, 'Oh for Christ's sake, can't we get on and decide this'. I suppose it would have been possible for the Prime Minister to railroad it through [the budgetary deal with the IMF that was deeply disliked by left-wing members of the cabinet]. But I don't think he'd have done it without resignations in the Cabinet, without a split in the party – I really don't think he could.' [5]

Chairing cabinet meetings does not allow prime ministers to dictate the outcome through clever manipulation of the agenda as we can see could be achieved in abstract models of decision making. The chairman's role does not allow a prime minister to isolate a credible veto player. However, powerful prime ministers can use their central position in government to exert control over the decision-making process and extract policy gains by restricting others' choices. The key point is that it will be most useful to an already powerful prime minister.

Data analysis

Prime ministers' ability to choose the forum and the ability to sum up government discussion gives them an important means by which they can restrict the progress of others' proposals and achieve policies close to their own. However, it is difficult to gather data from cabinet discussions and hence to develop testable hypotheses on government decision-making. For this reason the expert survey is useful in allowing us to quantify and make generalisations about the activities in the 'black box' of cabinet government. The data from the expert survey is quite general, dealing broadly with the ability to control what is dealt with at cabinet. The questions deal with the 'ability to raise [the prime minister's] preferred policy proposals at cabinet, and to force a decision

[5] From *The Top Job: King of the Beasts* presented by Peter Hennessy first broadcast on BBC Radio 4, 16 October, 2000.

on these' and whether the 'prime minister can easily restrict what goes on the cabinet agenda' or not. Again both the ability to set and restrict the agenda are taken at the country level and measured on a 1 to 9 scale where 9 indicates more freedom to set and restrict the agenda.

When each variable is regressed on the dependant variable measuring prime ministerial power by country, the variable measuring the ability to restrict the agenda is highly significant, and taken together the two items account for almost two-thirds of variation in prime ministerial power. This may not be wholly unexpected because the literature on cabinet deliberations referred to earlier in this chapter emphasised that in many countries the actual contents of the agenda are set automatically, but that restricting discussions is possible. The ability to set the agenda is insignificant, so the 'wrong' direction of the coefficient is unimportant.

Table 11.3 Effects of and on cabinet decision-making

Model	**1*** **	**2** **
Restrict agenda	.79***	-
Set agenda	-.25	-
Fire ministers	-	.41**
(Adj.) r-squared	.62	.34
N	21[6]	21

I then argued that the ability to control the cabinet discussion is variable according to the policy issue and the varying political strength of the prime minister. At the country level we should expect to see that the ability to control the agenda is a function of the political strength of the prime minister. In model 2 I take the variable measuring the ability to restrict cabinet discussion as the dependent variable and the ability to fire ministers as a broad proxy for control of the individuals in cabinet. This proposes that a prime minister's ability to control what is decided at cabinet is a function of their control over the careers of her cabinet colleagues. The resulting regression shows that the ability to fire minister is a significant predictor of the ability to restrict the agenda of cabinet.[7]

[6] Malta is excluded because the standard error for the estimate on cabinet procedure was over one.
[7] That two of the variables measured in correlate may not seem surprising given that they are derived from the same experts. Yet these two items measure quite different concepts, and so that they do correlate reflects that experts in their field regard the two as connected. In terms of the reliability of the models in this thesis, for all models simple diagnostic checks were completed.

Conclusion

The prime minister's role of chairman of cabinet is mentioned in many works as a strength to prime ministerial power. However, few writers have explicitly investigated how or why this might be the case. There are strong prima facia reasons to consider the agenda setting role of the prime minister as important. In this chapter I argued that the role of chairman of cabinet affords prime ministers some advantages over other ministers. Prime ministers' role as cabinet chair provides them with two important strengths; to choose the most favourable forum for decision-making; and to propose solutions to cabinet disputes. As chairman of cabinet prime ministers are in important positions whereby they can make judgements about the nature of a disagreement and propose a solution. That solution will be one that prime ministers, using their political acumen and administrative resources, consider to be acceptable to all sides. Of that set of acceptable solutions, prime ministers should choose the one closest to their ideal policy.[8]

However, one can also see that the prime ministers using their power to prejudice a decision, to pack a committee or to leak against a minister do so not because the chairmanship of cabinet gives them the *power* to do so, but because it offers them the *forum* to do so. Prime ministers are able to pack committees or prejudice decisions of cabinet because they control the careers of the protagonists or dominate them in some other political way. Therefore, one cannot argue that merely chairing a cabinet offers prime ministers a strong basis for determining policy, just that a strong prime minister can use these tactics to advance their policy interests.

[8] For this reason administrative resources can be important to 'weaker' prime ministers. Downing Street's staffing resources are insignificant compared to most other 'prime ministerial departments' yet this does not make the UK prime minister weak. However, in Italy the addition of administrative support to the prime minister in the late 1980s was seen as important (Koff and Koff 2000: 135).

Chapter 12. Using the prerogatives: party leadership- resource and constraint

When Gerhard Schröder, the German Chancellor, was elected in 1998, he was widely seen as starting his term in a strong position with many key resources to hand, and his subsequent style reinforced this view (Helms 2001). In March 2003, Schröder launched his plan for German economic recovery to the Bundestag. The plan, Agenda 2010, proposed major cutbacks to the pensions system and welfare state. These included reducing the duration of unemployment benefit payments from 26 months to 12 months for those less than 55 years of age. The plan marked a major shift to the right for the German Social Democrats (SPD) and one that many in the party were not expected to want to take. Schröder immediately ran into difficulties as discontent in the unions and among backbenchers threatened to ruin the plan.

By late April, Schröder had called an extraordinary congress of the SPD to approve the overall package. The Chancellor made it clear what was involved – 'Those who want to decide on or impose some other plan should know that doing so would remove the basis of my leadership, and I would have to act in response' (*El País* 29 April 2003). The calling of the party congress was designed to achieve support from the party and specifically to silence 12 dissidents in the parliamentary party who had said they would not support Agenda 2010.

He spent the next month making speeches to angry workers who seemed uninterested in hearing what he had to say. Yet he kept hammering out the same message with veiled resignation threats. He argued that rejecting the reforms would 'threaten our ability to govern'. As one German pollster noted, 'it reminds the rank-and-file party members that there is no alternative to Mr Schröder's leadership or his policies' (*The Irish Times* 7 May 2003).

At the party congress, the Chancellor only received polite applause, unlike the enthusiastic standing ovation received by a fierce critic who questioned the legitimacy of a decision under the shadow of a resignation threat (*The Irish Times* 2 June 2003).

Yet his political gamble paid off, as over 80 percent of the delegates to the conference backed Agenda 2010.

Schröder's problems continued however, as some MPs threatened to vote against specific measures in parliament in October. Once again he prevailed, as those members eventually backed the plan. In November, Schröder received over 80 percent support towards re-election as leader of the SPD. Again the delegates seemed less than convinced, but one delegate summed up the dilemma well; 'He's the best we've got' (*The Guardian* 18 November 2003). Chancellor Schröder appealed to party members' minds rather than their hearts, and the party supported this appeal. They knew that without the charismatic Schröder, the SPD would not have much hope of re-election. As is pointed out, Schröder's 'individual popularity is his party's single most important asset' and he is 'without an attractive rival or alternative' within the SPD (Patzelt 2004: 294). Schröder set an awkward choice for his party. In this chapter I consider how holding the leadership of a party affects a prime minister's ability to set choices for veto players that enable prime ministers to achieve their policy goals.

Introduction

No matter how benign an institutional system is to a prime minister, it is true of all prime ministers that they 'remain hostage to the party and to parliament. Even in times of triumph, they must rely on the support and goodwill of their colleagues' (Davis 1997: 90-1). In this chapter I look at the reasons why prime ministers can sometimes rely on 'the support and goodwill' of their colleagues and why, at times, they cannot. I focus on their role as party leader in enabling them to unite a party behind policies that are sold to and supported by the electorate. Parties, I argue, will support a leader who is seen as competent and has a reputation or track record of sound judgement and electoral popularity. In turn, the leader can threaten to withdraw those leadership services in order to achieve policy gains.

Prime ministers are almost invariably party leaders and there are a number of reasons why MPs seem to support and follow the direction of their party leaders. One is that the MPs and their leader quite simply agree in policy terms. Parties, often consisting of the parliamentary party, choose as leaders individuals who are expected to represent the

views of the party. It should not be surprising that the party and its leader act cohesively.[1]

A second reason may be that prime ministers, as party leaders, are given disciplinary tools to maintain cohesiveness. These include the ability to remove the whip from an MP who votes against party direction, to fine an MP, to withhold the allocation of certain policy-making roles (such as the membership of parliamentary committees) and even the ability to deselect an MP as a party candidate.

A third reason relates to the prime minister's usefulness to the party. Davis (1992) pointed out about Australia, though the point can be made generally, that prime ministers as party leaders are there to provide a service, and only tolerated so long as it is provided. In return for the services they offer to their parties, party leaders are given a certain amount of support and control over the structures of the party. One of the reasons that party leaders are given control of disciplinary procedures is that party leaders are expected to maintain cohesive and electorally successful parties. There seems to be some acceptance of the idea that 'a divided party is likely to be an electorally unsuccessful one' (Jordan 1994: 199). Divided parties, by their nature, have less clear policies and risk-averse voters are unlikely to support parties whose policies are ambiguous (Shepsle 1972).[2] A possible causal relationship for this party unity is that in order to have clear policies, parties unite, and because leaders are the most visible manifestation of the party for the public, they may unite behind a leader who promises to achieve electoral success. Equally, a party that is electorally weak will display divisions, especially if the leader does not imbue the public with confidence in the party and its policies. Individuals or groups may begin jockeying to replace the leader. Leaders may be expected to maintain discipline for electoral reasons and may find it difficult to achieve cohesion behind their position if they do not provide their party with electoral success.

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[1] In an analysis of 'free votes' in the UK House of Commons, Cowley and Stuart (1997) show that there are high levels of party discipline even when whips are not in force.

[2] The fact that parties are so lacking cohesion in the US may be puzzling, except that US voters do not elect governments when they elect parliamentarians; therefore it is not important for the parties to act cohesively. This is unlike in parliamentary democracies where party divisions will impact directly on the stability of the government.

So, party leaders are expected to be effective communicators of party policy, attractive prime ministerial candidates and good general managers of their parties' fortunes. Schröder was seen as an electoral asset by his party and as a result was able to use his electoral popularity to set a difficult choice for certain SPD MPs. They could either accept his (for them) unattractive policies or risk losing their leader and quite possibly, executive power.

In this chapter I will look at the role and resources of party leaders to maintain unity and, particularly to maintain unity around the party leaders' own policy preferences. This will involve looking at the power of party leaders within parties (the disciplinary resources they are granted) and the relationship between electoral success and policy power. I will then look at electoral resources more generally, and see to what extent these allow prime ministers to set the choices for other within the party. Statistical models are constructed to study the effects of political resources, such as parliamentary majorities and electoral success on prime ministerial power. While, as most of the literature suggests, one would expect that institutional factors are important, their importance depends on a benign political situation. I find that certain political factors that are associated with prime ministers' ability to set tough choices for veto players are important and that other factors, which a resources-based approach to the study of prime ministerial power would expect to be influential, are not statistically prominent.

Parties and Party Leaders

Parties are central to politics and government in established parliamentary democracies and in most established parliamentary democracies party cohesion is high. Though filled with independent actors, parties are often found to behave like unified actors. To see why parties act as unitary actors one needs to understand what parties do.

Ware offers a deliberately broad and inclusive definition of a party as 'an institution that (a) seeks influence in a state, often by attempting to occupy positions in government, and (b) usually consists of more than a single interest in the society and to some degree attempts to "aggregate interests"' (Ware 1996: 5). Downs, taking a view developed from Ostrogorski and others, argued that parties are groups of people gathered together to achieve political office (Downs 1957: 28; Ostrogorski 1902). Similar definitions from

Schattschneider, Duverger, Michels and Schumpeter, all mention (in so many words) the attainment of political power (Schonfeld 1983: 478).

A recent literature argues that purely electoral explanations for parties are too one-sided (Aldrich 1995; Cox 1987; Cox and McCubbins 1993; Rohde 1991). These writers argue that the assumption that politicians have no interest in policy is unrealistic. They look at legislative institutions and their effects on policy to explain the existence and cohesion of parties.

Regardless of the initial motivation of politicians to form political parties, it is reasonable to suggest that parties would not exist if they did not provide some sort of function to those who founded them and join them. Campbell et al. (1960) have argued that political parties provide voters with cues. Parties make the vote choice easier for the electorate by summarising the considerable number of policy issues and choices into a small number of labels (parties). Voters will be less likely to vote for politicians if they do not know what the politicians stand for. Thus it is to politicians' advantage to belong to parties, which can give an instant picture to voters of the politicians' type and quality, just as a logo or brand name does. This makes it easier for voters to vote for and elect those individuals in political parties.

Parties also assist those who form them to get elected by providing guarantees to voters about the behaviour of their elected representatives. Elected politicians are agents of the electorate and are given freedom of action as legislators. They are not required to consult with the electorate when deciding how to vote on issues. As parliamentary representatives normally cannot be censured between elections, politicians in office may have incentives not to consider the party group's (and its electorate's) interests. It may be personally advantageous to defect on 'agreements' between voters and themselves. By aligning themselves to parties, politicians offer the voters a form of guarantee against defection and thus give themselves a greater chance of receiving support from sceptical voters.

This is because parties are 'going concerns': ongoing organisations that do not close down with the departure of individual politicians. As such, parties (or rather their members) do not want their label or brand to be damaged by a politician's defection on

an agreement with voters for that individual politician's gain. Voters can punish a party for defections. Parties may then punish politicians who attempt to defect in order to maintain the reputation of the party, thereby preventing any defection. Parties can do this by retaining the right to remove and censure their office holders. Weingast (1979) formally shows why individual members would submit to the disciplinary rules and procedures of a party even if those procedures can be used against them. Through the use of these procedures parties can help guarantee agreements between members, thereby making the formation of governing coalitions possible.

So we can conclude that parties are interested in power; and that to attain electoral success and power, parties are helped if they show some unity of purpose; and that in order to do this, among other things, they employ leaders to ensure cohesion, sometimes granting them rights to discipline others.

Nearly all parties have party leaders; only Green parties have a tradition of not having one.[3] In a journal edition devoted to the selection of party leaders, Marsh pointed out that 'most parties do seem to have someone widely recognised as the party leader, although the post that leader occupies varies widely across countries and parties' (Marsh 1993: 231). The identity of the party leader may not always be obvious. Some parties have multiple poles of power: there being a parliamentary party leader, an organisation leader and perhaps a prime ministerial candidate.

However, it does seem broadly acceptable to think of the prime minister as the leader of their party – exceptions being in France during *cohabitation* and the Italian DC (Gallagher, Laver, and Mair 2001: 282). Of course there can still be a great deal of variation in control that different parties afford their leaders. Unfortunately, while data have been systematically collected on the minutiae of rules in parties (Katz and Mair 1992) these do not provide easily comparable and quantifiable data on power within parties. In the absence of such data it is difficult to test the effects of internal party rules on prime ministerial power. However, we can look briefly at the disciplinary resources available to party leaders in a number of countries and see that for some countries with strong prime ministers, their resources for party control are impressive.

[3] The German and Irish Green parties chose party leaders months before their respective parliamentary elections in 2002 which may indicate that they saw the benefit of having a leader for electoral purposes.

Resources for Party Control

It has been suggested that 'internal disunity is the result of electoral competition within [a] party' (Katz 1980: 116). One would expect the resources party leaders have to control electoral competition within the party to be important to explaining control over the party. In this section I argue that unity behind a leader is partly a function of internal and external electoral competition, and that leaders who possess the means to control the electoral prospects of party MPs will be granted more discretion over policy by those MPs.

Candidate selection and de-selection

A frequently cited method of controlling electoral competition is through candidate selection and deselection (Bowler, Farrell, and Katz 1999b; Gallagher and Marsh 1988; Katz 2001; Montabes 1999). When one considers that in Britain, sometimes as much as 90 percent of the MPs elected to the House of Commons come from the two main parties, Labour and the Conservatives, the people who choose the candidates in those parties will have a great deal of power (Gallagher, Laver, and Mair 1995: 253).

If prime ministers in their positions as party leaders control the candidate selection process, they can have a great deal of control over the composition of their parliamentary parties and to some extent the parliamentarians' behaviour (Gallagher 1988: 276). Prime ministers can influence the policy outcomes by selecting candidates who share their policy preferences.

Even where prime ministers have had no influence in determining whom they lead in parliament, some party leaders still have some control over their parties' MPs through candidate deselection, or by placing candidates much lower down on a party list thus reducing prospects of re-election. This is a strategy adopted by some powerful party leaders who are also powerful prime ministers. Spourdalakis (1998) argues that in the 1980s, the Greek socialist party, PASOK, was controlled completely by its leader, Andreas Papandreou, and a small circle of confidants. It is also clear that all parliamentary candidates needed his personal approval (Pappas 1999: 110). Of Spain,

another country with a strong prime minister, Martínez and Méndez (2000: 245) argue that parties there are 'clearly hierarchical' and that 'the existence of closed, blocked lists reinforces internal party discipline'. Where party leaders are powerful one can make the connection between this power and party discipline around their leaders' position. Spanish party leaders have great control over the content and order of electoral lists, the party leaders have a great deal of control over the parties' MPs (Oñate 2000: 123). In 1979 the PSOE leadership used its control of candidate selection to exclude 32 incumbent MPs from the left of the party (De Esteban and Guerra 1985: 71). Berlusconi's control of *Forza Italia* was as a result of his deliberately setting up a clearly hierarchical structure, and was also helped by the centralising effect of the electoral system on candidate selection (Pasquino 2003; Venturino 2000). As a means of control, the logic of the force of deselection threats is strong.

The experiences of John Major as UK prime minister in the 1990s caused his successor as leader of the Conservative party to change the rules regarding candidate selection and de-selection. As prime minister, Major had found that he had little ability to punish MPs who retained the support of their constituency parties. He also noted that many of the younger backbenchers were ideologues who expected ministerial office soon after entering parliament (Major 1999: 347). Unable to offer them all inducements and without recourse to punishment he had was at the mercy of his parliamentary party. His immediate successor, William Hague, changed the rules so that all candidates had to be centrally approved, and this meant for sitting MPs, that they are subject to the party whip. This came to a head in 2005 when a sitting MP and deputy chairman of the Conservative party, Howard Flight, made a statement which indicated that the Conservative party policy would be set aside on achieving office. The Tory leader, Michael Howard, withdrew the whip from Mr. Flight, which despite a desire to resist forced Flight's constituency party to deselect the sitting MP (*Financial Times* 26/ 27 March 2005).

Like Major was, Japan's prime minister is limited in what s/he can do to control candidate selection. Despite the attempt to remove intra-party competition with electoral reform, candidates continue to run highly personalised campaigns (Curtis 1999: 211-3) and candidate selection is given to local branches, out of the control of the weak party leader (and prime ministerial candidate) (Cox, Rosenbluth, and Thies 1999: 43).

Another country with a weak prime minister is the Netherlands. Andeweg (2000: 93) reports that the regional level party organisations choose the candidates for elections. Where it is the case that a party leader controls the mechanism of candidate selection, such as PASOK under Andreas Papandreou, party leaders can use this to control the actions of the party. However, direct control of candidate selection is rarely ceded to the leader. There are other disciplinary mechanisms leaders are sometimes used to control MPs.

Whips and oaths of loyalty

Other, more direct, disciplinary resources also exist to control the actions of MPs. MPs in some parties must sign or swear an oath of loyalty, and in some countries breaking this could lead to an MP's forced resignation. This practice, which possibly began in the Irish Home Rule Party, continues today in many parties (Bowler, Farrell, and Katz 1999a: 6-7; Cruise O'Brien 1957). Deputies in the Portuguese Socialist Party must provide an undated letter of resignation that the party can use when it requires, enabling the party to force a resignation of the MP (Antunes Sablosky 1997: 63). In Spain, 3-4 deputies on average are substituted in each Congress over disagreements with the party (Sánchez de Dios 1999: 158) and significantly the most common source of substitutions is the government party (data from the *Congreso de los Diputados*). Their Dutch counterparts must sign an agreement to accept party discipline (Heider and Koole 2000: 256).

Irish legislators continue to have their whip removed for not voting with the party. In fact, there is only one case of a Fianna Fáil deputy not voting with the party whip and not being disciplined.[4] The British Labour Party's standing orders must be observed by MPs, and failure to observe these can result in the whip being removed (Rush 2001: 16).

In Spain punishment can be pecuniary as well as symbolic. The PSOE receives the salaries of each of its deputies, decides on their wage and distributes it (Sánchez de Dios 1999: 154). Spanish deputies' individual right to vote as they wish is questionable as they can be fined by their party up to €250 every time they vote against its direction or

[4] In 1979 a cabinet minister, Jim Gibbons voted against the government's proposal for limited availability of contraceptives on religious grounds.

abstain from a vote without good reason (Sánchez de Dios 1999: 157). While Spanish deputies cannot be forced to resign, there are restrictions in *Cortes* standing orders on their movement between groups. A deputy could become an independent, but as the parliament is organised around parties, the deputy would lose nearly all rights in parliament except the right to vote.

Austrian MPs risk losing perks like foreign travel for not abiding by their parliamentary party leadership. Continued offence can be punished by de-selection and expulsion from the party (Müller and Steininger 2000: 81-2). Belgian MPs also face these possible sanctions for indiscipline (de Winter and Dumont 2000:114).

Non-promotion to office

The threat of non-promotion can also work in a party leader's favour. Those marked out as troublemakers may be less likely to be promoted, and this will act to keep backbench MPs not wishing to curtail their careers in line. Collins (2001: 221) tells of backbenchers being implicitly promised promotion if they supported the then Taoiseach, Charles Haughey, in one of the regularly-attempted coups against him. Of course a party leader must also deliver. Collins goes on to highlight that 'much of the impetus for Reynolds' campaign [to remove Haughey] came from a feeling of frustration among younger TDs at the lack of opportunity under Haughey' (Collins 2001: 238).

This does not mean that party leaders must be bullies in order to get their way. British whips think that the image of them herding MPs like sheep into the lobby is ridiculous. Persuasion is a more subtle, and usually more effective tool, but at times whips remind straying MPs of the possible consequences if persuasion will not work (Searing 1994: 280). However, it should also be noted that whips attend cabinet not just to pass on orders to the backbenches, but also to relay what policies are politically acceptable to the chamber.

Financial control

A factor that one would expect to be significant to the control of parties, because it can have an effect on electoral competition, is the financial support candidates receive from

their parties. In the US, where individual candidates raise and spend a great deal of money on their own, even before receiving the party nomination, it is likely that they depend less on, and take less note of, the party machine. By contrast, in many parliamentary democracies parties have some control over the financial support available to candidates. German parties receive generous grants from the state which ensure that they generally do not need to look to other sources for funding (although recent scandals may suggest otherwise). The party organisations can control who gets elected through the list system, and anyone trying to work outside a party will find it difficult, as is seen by the fact that no independent has been elected to the Bundestag since 1953 (Mény 1992: 177). Spanish parties also depend greatly on the state for funding, and funding is given by the state to the parties rather than individual legislators or candidates (Del Castillo 1989: 189). In fact Spanish party leaders have the means to control many ordinary members also. In 1988, almost one in three party members depended on the party for their livelihood (Hooper 1995: 54) and many of these depend on their being in government (either locally, regionally or nationally). This, combined with the centrally controlled closed list system, serves to make Spanish parties highly cohesive around a central leadership.

By contrast, the Dutch PvdA depends on members to cover 80 percent of its operating costs (Hillebrand and Irwin 1999: 115). Its organisational structure is highly decentralised, giving amateur members a good deal of power to form policy. Where Spanish party members lived in fear of their leadership, the PvdA leaders in the Netherlands have had to fear their party's members.

That financial support for elections is important to ensure unity around the position of the leader is almost undoubtedly true. An exception provides further evidence for this assertion. In Japan, where election campaign expenses are comparatively high, the party factions (especially in the LDP) raise money for candidates and the members of the Diet subsequently remain extremely loyal to the factions even at the expense of the party (Hayes 1992: 117). In a country where political culture is often used as an explanation for a supposed tendency to subordination and compromise, Japanese LDP Diet members have voted against their own government in confidence motions at the behest of their faction (Curtis 1999: 79-81). Party presidents and prime ministers are not able to punish

the defectors because they do not control the selection methods or the purse strings of the party. These are in the hands of the factions.

In the US, where legislative voting behaviour is comparatively well-studied because of the extent of non-partisan voting, Harmel and Janda (1982) have found that the motivation for re-election causes members of Congress to ignore the party whip and to concentrate on voters' needs as the electoral term nears an end. Ranney (1975: 131) points out that because of the democratic nature of candidate selection, candidates depend on voters rather than parties for their nomination, and hence are loyal to voters rather than parties.

In parliamentary democracies there is evidence that, if anything, the opposite happens; that parties are more cohesive near elections (Skjaeveland 1999). This may be due to the assumption that voters punish parties with internal disagreements and low cohesion (Herrera 1993). Equally these MPs will be unlikely to want to upset leaders who have some control over their re-election prospects through candidate selection and the distribution of campaign support. This is not to claim that party leaders are utterly secure in their positions while able to control completely the positions of others. Party leaders are in that position only as long as the party (often the parliamentary party) want them. Party leaders are not invulnerable. However, in some parties the balance of power is tilted in favour of the party leader, and in those parties, leaders who become prime ministers are more likely to be secure in that position, and have more freedom to use their prerogatives. In others, such as the LDP in Japan, the party leader's position is weak, and the freedom to use prerogatives is reduced as a result.

Strong party leaders are often strong because they can control candidate selection and disciplinary procedures, and as prime ministers they can use these controls to enable them to structure the choices facing others in the policy-making process and to allow them to use prerogatives that they are constitutionally granted, but may sometimes be politically costly to use. Party leaders also affect MPs' re-election prospects in another way: as an 'ostentatious flagship' of the party, the leader sells the party's message to the public and may then affect the support that the party receives, which in turn, may affect MPs' likelihood to support leadership positions.

Leaders and electoral popularity

Denver has argued that UK general elections are increasingly 'portrayed as contests between candidates for Prime Minister rather than between political parties competing for control of government' (Denver 1989: 88-9). British voters have traditionally supported their favourite party regardless of whether another party had their preferred leader (Crewe 1981). However, in this and many other countries, there has been a 'partisan dealignment': sections of voters who had supported parties based on certain societal cleavages no longer necessarily support the party that the salient cleavage would have predicted they should (Dalton 2002). In fact it could be the case that 'the leader absorbs the functions once exercised by the party' (McAllister 2003: 259).

It seems intuitively plausible that the leader would affect his or her party's support. Some writers argue that 'there can be little doubt about the ties that exist in the minds of British voters between their evaluations of the incumbent prime minister and their relative views of the parties' (Lanoue and Headrick 1994: 196). Clarke et al (2004) argue strenuously that evaluations of leaders affect changes in party support. It also makes sense that the impact should be greater now than in the pre-television age. Before television became common few voters ever saw their prime minister or the party leaders in action (King 2002a: 7).

So it is unsurprising that there is now ample evidence of parties' willingness to remove their leaders because of feared electoral defeat. In 2003, the UK Conservative party replaced its leader, Iain Duncan Smith with Michael Howard. At the time it was common to hear MPs say that the problem was the messenger not the message. MPs seemed quite happy with his policies, but felt no confidence in his ability to sell them to the public. The writer of an article entitled 'Just not up to the job' noted that Duncan Smith failed to unite the party or to make any impression on the public, and his performances at Prime Minister's Questions were abysmal (*The Guardian,* 29 October 2003). In Ireland, two years earlier, Fine Gael removed John Bruton, a former Taoiseach, within a year of a general election. This was, according to his successor, because 'unless John Bruton stands down, he'll close us down' (quoted in Gallagher and Marsh 2002: 40). Until the surprise win in March 2004 the Spanish PSOE continued to

struggled to settle on any new leader since Felipe González because of continued fear of electoral defeats (López Alba 2002: 96-8; Powell 2001: 614).

The pressure is not just on opposition leaders to achieve office. The fear of losing office is equally forceful. In the UK, Margaret Thatcher's party deposed her in what she called a 'constitutional coup' (Hennessy 2000: 398). The Tory party apparently feared the electoral consequences of policies she seemed unwilling to revise, and of her image in the country at large. These factors had the effect of losing a by-election in one of the safest Tory seats in Britain and giving Labour a consistent double digit lead through 1990 (Young 1991: 574). In Ireland, Jack Lynch was forced to resign as Taoiseach in 1979 before his planned retirement date because two by-election defeats in his own city gave momentum to a plot to remove him (Arnold 2001: 214-20).

Even in countries where the party leaders have traditionally been less dominant, parties are becoming more inclined to appoint certain types of leaders. The prime ministerial candidate for the PvdA in the 2003 Dutch general election, Wouter Bos, was much more obviously telegenic and charismatic than his predecessor, who oversaw the halving of the government party's parliamentary representation. One analyst credited Bos' leadership with 'bringing [the PvdA] back from the (almost) dead' (*The Economist* 16 January 2003). The Italian election of 2001 'was basically centred on the conflict between the two competing leaders' and 28.5 percent of voters for the winning coalition reported that the leader's image was of utmost importance in their vote choice (Ignazi 2002: 992-3). The same seems to be true in Canada:

> 'Most of Trudeau's cabinet sensing they had a winner in Turner, supported him [in the leadership election], and so did two-thirds of the official party delegates to the 1984 Ottawa leadership convention. He won with ease. People liked Chrétien more, but Turner was thought tougher, sounder and more competent, and better on television. When asked who was best able to help the Liberals to victory in the next election, delegates favoured Turner 63 percent to 19 for Chrétien.' (Granatstein and Hilmer 1999: 184)

In almost any country one studies, the competing party leaders will be at the centre of media attention, and charisma, it seems, is a prerequisite for the job. It is also true that party leaders rarely stand down of their own accord. Parties or electorates push them, and for many who cease to be leader, one could make a good case that electoral considerations were influential.

Indeed, there is broad acceptance that party leaders have an effect on party popularity, although the nature and strength of that influence remains debateable (King 2002a). Numerous studies have been undertaken to assess the impact of the leader on election results, but these have not uniformly supported this intuition. Bean and Mughan (1989) found that leadership effects may have been the difference between victory and defeat for Labor in the 1987 Australian general election. Some political scientists even suggest that it is the leaders, as opposed to the policies they espouse, that attract voters (Bean and Mughan 1989; Clarke, Ho, and Stewart 2000). McAllister (1996: 281) in a review of the literature, found that studies suggest 'a modest but significant influence [of public perceptions of party leaders] on the vote'. However, others using individual level survey data could not come to similar conclusions (Bartle and Crewe 2002; Bartle, Crewe, and King 1997; Brettschneider and Gabriel 2002; Crewe and King 1994). At the aggregate level, Weller (1985: 189-90) pointed to numerous examples of the more popular leader's party losing the election.

The results arising from studies of leadership effects may be less than convincing because scholars only consider the *direct* effects of leadership on election results or voter assessments of parties. For instance, the policies that leaders espouse are not taken as relevant to these studies. The direct effects that these studies look at are evaluations of leadership traits, such as personality traits and physical appearance. For instance, an experiment in the US found that those tested supported the physically more attractive candidate when one controlled for policy differences (Rosenburg et al. 1986). Studies of leadership effects implicitly or explicitly assume that policy evaluations and leadership evaluations are independent. If the two are not regarded as independent, then the assumption is that policy evaluations are causally prior to leadership evaluations.

Yet party leaders are increasingly the most important medium through which potential voters receive their knowledge of parties' policies. The leader is the salesman for the party's policies. So if a voter thinks that policy X is good, s/he probably first heard about the policy through party X's most significant mouthpiece – its leader. As it is unlikely that many voters have political philosophies on which they independently develop policy preferences, most voters must judge policies on how they are presented and the perceived competence of the party that proposes to implement them.

It is difficult, and perhaps unwise to attempt to disentangle the personal effects of the leader from that of the policy associated with that leader. A party cannot credibly remove a leader associated with certain popular policies, replace him or her with a 'more presentable' leader who is associated with unpopular policies, and expect to maintain the original positive association with the policies. If one gave Michael Foot a New Labour-style manifesto in 1983, voters would hardly have been convinced; voters associated Foot with left-wing policies. To find out the effects of different leaders perhaps one should look for 'Leadership Associations', that is, the effect on the likelihood to vote for a party when the leader is emphasised, against when he or she is not.

However, for my purposes it is unnecessary to discover the direct effects of leaders on election results. It is sufficient that MPs in parties *think* that there is some effect. The list of examples above should suffice to show that in many different countries and many types of parties, from both left and right, MPs are willing to remove a leader whom they perceive as an electoral liability. The reverse may also be true. Leaders who are thought of as electoral assets may be granted policy concessions and other benefits in order to keep their services.

G.W. Jones argues that the UK prime ministers are only as powerful as the cabinet (and one may assume the party generally) lets them, and that the cabinet's 'attitude will be determined mainly by the success or failure of the Government as measured by its popularity and likelihood of winning the next General Election'.[5] King sums up the importance of popularity to a UK prime minister well;

> 'A prime minister thought to be leading his party to electoral disaster is likely to find that his colleagues increasingly question his judgement and are reluctant to acknowledge his authority. By contrast, a prime minister believed to be an election winner will almost certainly find that outside prestige can be translated into inside influence.' (King 1985: 109)

This echoes a point made by Neustadt. Writing on the US presidency, he argued that 'the prevalent impression of a president's public standing tends to set a tone and to define the limits of what Washingtonians do for him, or do to him' (Neustadt 1960: 87).

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[5] Correspondence with Prof. George W. Jones of LSE (2001).

An electoral mandate also seems important. In the US, where presidents normally receive electoral mandates, it was said of Gerald Ford that 'Congress took advantage of an appointed president to regain some of its own lost authority' (Cronin 1980: 226).

In Austria too, 'the intraparty power of the chancellor...is increased by electoral success' (Müller 1994: 20). Mughan (2000: 138) is most conclusive about this thesis. He argues that;

> 'Prime ministers can have an independent electoral base and, just like presidents of the United States, they can deploy it as a power resource when they seek to bend their backbench and frontbench colleagues to their will'

Exactly how this factor feeds into public policy deliberations is unclear, but a Canadian minister, Mitchell Sharp may give us some insight.

> 'Trudeau never came into the cabinet and said 'This is what we will do'. But at the same time we recognised that we were the majority party in 1968 because Trudeau had been the leader. We all had the sort of feeling that we were there because Trudeau had been the leader.' (Weller 1985: 198)

Parties reward leaders who bring them office and promise to continue them in office.[6] So, parties will unite behind popular vote getters, and cede a certain amount of policy discretion to leaders that they consider will attract support for the party. Factions may emerge to compete to remove a leader that is a threat to the electoral prospects of a party's MPs. The events of Black Wednesday, when in October 1992 the Bank of England lost billions of pounds unsuccessfully trying to defend the pound, gave the impression that the Conservatives were not sound on the economy and made that government very unpopular. Government backbench MPs and cabinet ministers who were unhappy with the government's policies then began attacking John Major's leadership and thus weakened his premiership. This contrasts with the discretion Felipe González was given within the PSOE. González changed what may have been regarded as his party's core policies, without opposition from within his own parliamentary party.

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[6] This suggestion is in contravention of an earlier assumption that political elites, such as MPs or cabinet ministers, act primarily on policy grounds. Therefore they should not give up their veto for a leader who it is felt assists their election and supports policies they oppose. Of course one must look at the alternatives these politicians face. If MPs face a credible opposition that proposes policies even further from their leaders' preferred positions, it would be unwise to split one's party, which might allow less favourable policies to become law. Supporting a popular leader despite the policies espoused makes sense for MPs. This can also explain why one might see less cohesion in government parties with weak and divided oppositions.

Indeed, PSOE deputies appeared content to allow the popular leader who helped elect them to act in a way he thought fit.

Overall there seems some agreement that leaders affect election results (in some form) and that MPs will concede certain resources to their party leaders to ensure cohesion, which in turn assists electoral success. Parties that are, or expect to be, electorally successful will tend to support the party leader and support policies that they may have otherwise opposed. We should therefore expect to see a positive relationship between the electoral success of a prime minister's party and that prime minister's power to influence policy outcomes.

In this chapter I have shown that there is some expectation in the political science literature that electoral success and other political resources are important in allowing prime ministers to achieve political power. It is not simply that veto players submit to a popular prime minister. Even electorally popular US presidents find it difficult to achieve policy changes (Light 1999: 28-9). In parliamentary democracies, parliament, cabinet and the prime minister depend on each other for their mutual survival. A popular prime minister makes it more likely that members of his or her party will be re-elected. A party benefiting from a prime minister's popularity will be unlikely to wish to see his or her removal. Popularity enables a prime minister to use the prerogatives afforded him or her without fear of being removed from office.

Removal from office is the only official way in which MPs and ministers can censure a prime minister. Therefore, prime ministers will not use the prerogatives available to them if they believe MPs might react by trying to remove the prime minister. Of course if a prime minister is highly popular, and MPs depend (or believe they depend) on their prime minister and party leader for getting elected and achieving or keeping political power, then those MPs will be less likely to react against a prime minister using the prerogatives outlined in chapters seven to ten. So we should not only see a relationship between electoral success and prime ministerial policy power but also a relationship between electoral success and a country's prime ministers' ability to use these prerogatives.

Data Analysis

The most important first step to testing this proposition is to decide on some type of measure for electoral success. While counting the percentage of votes received is often the most intuitive way of measuring electoral success, for MPs the most important factor is whether they are elected or not. Therefore, one could measure success by the percentage in seats attained by a party. However, the percentage of seats too may not be an accurate proxy for electoral success, as a level of seats that may seem woefully poor in one system may represent great success in another. Therefore it is useful to take the percentage change in seats since the last parliament. One might also consider that MPs are more conscious of their future likelihood of re-election than of past electoral performance. It might then be useful to include an equivalent measure of future electoral expectations. Obviously MPs do not know what the result of the next election will be, but they will have informed expectations that are continually updated. These expectations, then, will change as new opinion polls are conducted, and as the performances of the parties and their leaders are assessed. It is possible and indeed likely that some elections results will represent a shock, so ideally one would want to use opinion poll results. However, it is too difficult to access these. Another reason one would want opinion poll results is that to use future results is temporally illogical, i.e. predicting actions in the past from events in the future. This is a fair criticism, except that the prediction is that the 'expectations', rather than the future events predict behaviour. I use a future event as a proxy for 'expectations'.

Using data collected and collated from various sources set out in chapter five, I run a regression model with both the change in percentage of seats held by the prime minister's party on starting and ending a term in office as independent variables and prime ministerial power as the dependent variable. These independent variables are measured in this way: A party leader whose party increases its share of seats by five percentage points is given the score of 5 for the variable measuring the gain into office; Those prime ministers who begin a term of office in the middle of the electoral cycle, that is, without an election immediately prior to taking office, are kept in the model but are given the score zero; And in the variable measuring percentage point change in seats at the end of a term in office, prime ministers who leave office mid-electoral cycle are given a score of zero. This may be slightly misleading insofar as prime ministers who

retire or are removed before an election may do so because their parties feel they are electoral liabilities in the way Thatcher was considered in the early 1990s. However, to take these possibilities into account one would need to rely heavily on speculation.

Table 12.1 shows the results of the regression model (1) with the percentage seat gain into government and gain out of government as variables used to predict variation in prime ministerial power. This shows that the gain on entering office is a statistically significant predictor of prime ministerial power, although the model can only predict seven percent of variation. The strength of the 'gain in' coefficient can be most easily interpreted using the beta weight, which shows that a one standard deviation increase in 'gain in' would yield a .28 standard deviation increase in power. The prospective increase in seats is not a significant predictor.

Of course, as was also discussed in chapter seven, one would need to consider the size of the prime minister's party's representation as well as any (prospective or retrospective) increase. A prime minister who retains a significant number of seats for his or her party may be as appreciated as one who makes some gains from a low point. To capture this I use a measure for electoral success (described in chapter seven) which adds the percentage of seats held by a prime minister's party, and the net percentage point gain and loss at the beginning and end of the prime ministerial term.

Another potentially important factor is whether the prime minister received a mandate, i.e. did the prime minister come to office as a result of an election or because of an internal party decision. One would expect that the prime minister with the popular mandate would have greater policy discretion compared to a counterpart appointed as a result of a party decision. The OLS regression model (2) above explains over one fifth of the variation in prime ministerial power, and the variable 'electoral success' is highly significant. A prime minister with a score of 50 (through, for instance, holding 40 percent of seats, gaining ten percentage points, and losing no seats) would cause a one and a half point increase in the nine-point prime ministerial power measure. Having a mandate is also important and this would cause a greater than one point increase on the prime ministerial power scale.

Table 12.1 Explaining policy influence using electoral variables

Model	**1****	**2*****	**3***	**4****
Gain in	.042**	-	-	-
Gain out	-.001	-	-	-
Electoral success	-	.03***	.02*	.032**
Mandate	-	.62*	-	-
(adj.) R^2	.065	.23	.07	.14
N	137	137	58	79

However, it is possible that in certain countries, backbenchers rarely consider the popularity rating of the prime minister or party leader. If an Italian party's rating were poor, backbenchers did not normally blame the party leader. The brevity of the Italian prime minister's tenure ensured that there was no significant coat-tails effect[7] (Hine 1993: 200). One could make a similar argument about Japan, where at least until the recent electoral reform, intra-party competition was as strong as inter-party competition for candidates seeking election. In what party systems will the leader be regarded as important?

According to Mughan (2000: 16) the main factor 'promoting presidentialisation in Britain relative to other countries would seem to lie in its institutional structure, more specifically in the majoritarian character of its parliamentary institutions'. Leaders will be the subject of greater focus where there are a small number of large parties each able to form a government. One may then expect that electoral success would be a better explanatory variable where single party governments are formed than when coalition governments are formed. This is tested in models 3 and 4 above, which test the explanatory strength of 'electoral success' on single party governments and coalition governments respectively. In fact, contrary to my expectations, electoral success is a better predictor of prime ministerial power where coalition governments are formed than where single party governments are formed. This could be because electoral success is a major factor in determining the bargaining power of the prime minister's party vis-à-vis other parties in a coalition system.

One might then argue that the significance of electoral success is purely due to the possession of a parliamentary majority. One can test to see that this is not the case.

[7] The party system and electoral system change in the mid-1990s may mean that the party leader has now become more important.

However, when in model 5, I regress the variables 'gain in', the parliamentary base of the government (i.e. the percentage of seats the government has in the lower house) and a control, dummy variable for coalition, then 'gain in' is still significant. If the prime minister's party's share of the seats in parliament is also included, the 'gain in' variable continues to be significant (model 6). This means that it is not just the control of a significant share of the seats in an institutional veto player, such as parliament, that is important, but that electoral benefits are also significant.

Table 12.2 Explaining PM policy influence with political resources

Model	**5****	**6*****	**7*****
Gain in	.043**	.026*	-
Parliamentary base	.004	-.01	-
Electoral success	-	-	.13***
PM's parl. base	-	.03***	-
(adj.) R^2	.06	.19	.16
N	137	137	131

I argued above that the causal relationship between electoral success and policy power was not simply that MPs submit to an electorally-successful prime minister. Rather, an electorally successful prime minister will be able to use prerogatives against veto players in the political system with less fear of punishment for doing so because the prime minister is an electoral asset that is valued. Thus Gerhard Schröder could make demands on his party, such as effectively dismissing ministers with senior posts in the party, for example Oskar Lafontaine, without being removed.

Therefore one would expect to see that electoral success is a significant predictor of prime ministers' ability to use the prerogatives given them. Model 7 shows the results of a regression in which electoral success is used to explain the freedom to use prerogatives as estimated from the expert survey. Freedom to use prerogatives is measured by summing the estimates in the expert survey relating to the use of the prerogatives (except the ability to fire and hire ministers from other parties). Electoral success is, as expected, a highly significant predictor of 'prerogatives' (see model 7 above). This is an important result showing a strong relationship between two completely independently-sourced variables.

In sum, there is a strong relationship between a prime minister's electoral success and prime ministerial power. These are, of course, rather crude cumulative measures of both a prime minister's power and popularity. In fact popularity and power change over time, even within a term of office. For instance, John Major may have found that his control of his cabinet and his party was quite high before Black Wednesday, but dropped considerably with his party's poll ratings. One would prefer to have data on power at points in time and compare it to policy power at that time. However, such data are not available, and in their absence the data and analyses offered above represent a best effort given available data.

Explaining the variation in prime ministerial power

Up to now I have studied whether and how certain institutional prerogatives mentioned in the institutional literature on prime ministers affect the ability of prime ministers to influence policy outcomes in parliamentary democracies. That they might be useful is based on the general theory that prime ministerial power is exercised by determining the choices that other actors face. It has been found that there is an empirical association between these institutional mechanisms and prime ministerial policy influence, which would support the contention that prime ministerial power is operated through setting choices for others. Illustrative examples outlined at the start of most chapters also point to this. In this chapter I have also looked at the effect of certain political factors, such as the impact of party leadership and electoral popularity, and how these affect a prime minister's ability to use prerogatives to set credible choices for veto playing actors in the political system.

A secondary but concomitant goal of the thesis is to explain variation in power within and between countries. I now attempt to explain the variation in prime ministerial policy influence, as measured using the expert survey data. In chapter seven I set out veto player theory, which is used to explain ease of policy change. There is a strong connection between the number, and more importantly, the policy diversity of veto players in parliamentary democracies and prime ministerial power. I contend that while the number and policy diversity of the veto players can tell us about prime ministerial power, it cannot tell a full story. This is because prime ministerial policy influence operates through influencing veto-playing actors. Veto players in parliamentary

democracies are not invulnerable to pressure and persuasion, and are the political actors for whom the prime minister must set choices. Therefore we need also to know how some actors in the policy making process influence others. In the previous chapters I have shown how certain institutional and political prerogatives can be used by prime ministers to influence veto players given the right circumstances. Here I put all these together to see if they can account for more variance in prime ministerial power.

Before I do this I should set out a number of caveats. As much of the data is not 'real', insofar it measures impressions experts have on manmade scales rather than measures of a reality, drawing strong conclusions from comparisons of coefficients in multivariate analyses is not wise.

Table 12.3 begins with two models on veto players taken from chapter seven. One can see that the policy diversity of the political actors (veto players) explains up to a quarter of variation in prime ministerial power depending on how the model is specified. If we add variables on the ability of prime ministers to set choices for the veto players to the model (not shown), the R-squared increases (to .4). Of the prerogatives only the ability to restrict the cabinet agenda and the ability to set the parliamentary agenda are statistically significant.

I constructed different statistical models using the data on individual prime ministerial terms including many of the various variables included in bivariate models shown above. Model (10) includes just the veto actors and resource variables. Those testing for veto player theory are the diversity of the parties in government, the log of the number of parties and faction variables. The parliamentary strength of the government and the dominance of the cabinet by the prime minister's party are the resource variables. These are all statistically significant, and given that the data is independently sourced, this shows some support for these explanations of prime ministerial policy influence.

Table 12.3 Multivariate analyses explaining PM policy influence

Model	8***	9***	10***	11***
Constant	6.58	6.71	2.34	2.42
Diversity (HI)	-.37***	-.3**	-.40**	-.21
Log no. parties	-	-.24	1.2*	.77
Faction	-	-1.71**	-2.38***	-1.95***
Prerogatives	-	-	-	.04*
Electoral success	-	-	-	.02**
Govt. strength	-	-	.02*	.01
Cabinet domination	-	-	.03***	.01
R-sq. (adj.)	.17	.27	.35	.41
N	122[8]	122	112[9]	112

However, the theory is based on the ability of prime ministers to set choices for other veto actors. This ability, I have argued, depends to a great extent on institutional prerogatives. These potency of these prerogatives, such as the right to call elections, set confidence motions and control the cabinet agenda are contingent on one's ability to use them, which is conditioned by electoral success, among other possible factors.

The final model includes a measure of each country's prime ministers' right to use such prerogatives and the measure of electoral success. Given the goal of keeping the model simple, and including only those variables that have 'theoretical importance…and good predictive power as measured by a reasonably high R^2' (Agresti and Finlay 1997: 528), I have excluded from this final model some variables that were significant in bivariate models. With a moderate sample size, such as here, it is best-practice to use only a few independent variables.

A single variable was generated encompassing the various prerogatives by summing the results of the expert survey questions (except the ability to hire and fire other ministers).[10] This is on a scale of 0 to 48 where higher scores indicate a greater freedom

[8] No data exists for Luxembourg, Israel, two Japanese governments and some Second Republic governments in Italy.

[9] This is lower because data for countries without reliable estimates are removed. These are Malta, Iceland and Luxembourg.

[10] The rights to hire and fire ministers from other parties were excluded because it would mean dropping countries with single party governments. This left 'select own', 'fire own', 'election right', 'cabinet agenda', 'cabinet procedure' and 'parliamentary agenda' prerogatives. To create the scale on a 0-48 metric, 6 was taken away from each score.

to use the prerogatives. Used in the model 11, the scale on prerogatives emerges as a large, significant predictor (a one standard deviation change in this variable causes .20 of a standard deviation change in prime ministerial power when using beta weights). However, one must be cautious in making claims as the 'prerogative' variable is drawn from the same expert survey as the dependent variable, and the ordering of the questions in the survey may have 'led' respondents to linking these prerogatives to prime ministerial influence on policy.

The veto player variables – variables on the number of parties and their policy diversity – are no longer statistically significant predictors of prime ministerial power. This is as expected. Veto player theory can explain only so much, but veto players are not invulnerable as is implied in the theory as proposed by Tsebelis (2002). We need also to consider how the veto actors can be persuaded not to use their veto, even when on short term policy grounds they may be expected to.

Another reason that the veto player may not explain as much as it would is due to measurement problems. It would seem that the unitary assumption about parties is misleading as the admittedly crude faction variable (a dummy for the Japanese LDP and Italian DC) is highly significant. It would be useful, therefore, to have a more nuanced and broader measure of factional divisions within political parties.

'Electoral success' adds considerably to the explanatory power of the statistical model. It is both more significant, and the coefficient is larger (on a standardised metric) than the prerogative variable. This indicates that institutional factors alone cannot account for most policy influence, and that electoral success allows certain prime ministers set choices for other actors. Whether one depends on the availability of the prerogatives to do this is not certain. A benign institutional framework may be neither a necessary nor sufficient condition for prime ministerial influence. However, the 'choice' approach to understanding prime ministerial influence, used here, would suggest that 'strong' institutions are only be useful where the prime minister can make the 'difficult choices' credible, usually through electoral popularity. Electoral popularity, one would expect, will have a greater impact where prime ministers have strong institutional frameworks backing them up. If we divide the countries under study into three types – weak, medium and strong – based on King's measure, this will approximate for the

institutional strength. A simple regression analysis on the impact of electoral success on each of these three types supports this contention (not shown). Electoral success is only a significant predictor of prime ministerial influence in those countries with institutional frameworks favouring strong executive influence.

Other political resource factors are also included in the final model. It is interesting that the political resource-type variables such as parliamentary majority, the size of the prime minister's party and the prime minister's party's control of cabinet seats are not significant, whereas the variables relating to the ability of the prime minister to set difficult choices are (although these are contained in 'electoral success' to some extent). It would seem that certain political resources are less important that the literature on prime ministers suggests. This is not *that* surprising. We can see that prime ministerial influence goes up and down with a prime ministerial term, even though these factors remain fixed. Having a parliamentary majority *per se* does not allow one to set choices for ministers or one's party. If one is expected to hold on to a majority, this will have an effect on the ability to structure others' options. These evaluations, which are partially captured in 'electoral success', continually change.

Some variables, such as 'Finance' were no longer significant when the prerogative variable was controlled for, and their inclusion reduced the adjusted R^2. This is not surprising, as it includes in it the variable cabinet domination, which measures the percentage of cabinet seats held by the prime minister's party.

Overall this model brings together variables representing three distinct theories or approaches. Firstly is the veto player theory, which hypothesised that policy change, hence power, is more restricted where there are more diverse actors in the policy system. On its own this theory was useful in explaining variance in the data used here. Secondly, there are those who point to the political resources of prime ministers, such as parliamentary majorities, as sources of power over policy. Theoretically this explanation was troubling as it did not make explicit the mechanism through which policy change occurred. Finally, the theory offered here, was that policy change, and hence power, is achieved through setting choices. This can be done in many ways not least through institutional prerogative which formally allow prime ministers to set choices for others.

The full model has succeeded in explaining over two-fifths of variation in prime ministerial power- quite high for a non-obvious relationship in the social sciences. Most interesting, however, is that the variables which are associated with the choice approach are precisely those that are most significant.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have sought to look at one effect of prime ministers' role as party leader on their ability to avoid the use of the veto by either their cabinet or the backbenches. There is some evidence of a few cases in which some exceptionally powerful prime ministers have strong control over disciplinary resources such as candidate selection.

I then focussed on the perceived vote-winning ability of party leaders, and its impact on the parliamentary party. While acknowledging that the effect of a crisis within a party, and attacks on a party, may be to unify that party, generally, one can see a relationship between the electoral strength of a party and the power of that party's leader to achieve policy gains. I also provide evidence that this relationship is due to retrospective electoral success rather than just the possession of a parliamentary majority. I provided evidence to show why the mechanism by which this success translates into policy influence is by allowing prime ministers more freedom to use the prerogatives available to them.

These political factors also affect the use of the prerogatives, and we find that electoral success is important for policy-making influence, even when we control for factors such as the number and diversity of veto players. Empirically the prerogatives allowing prime ministers to set choices for others continue to be important in models containing many other political resource variables.

Chapter 13. Conclusion: Organising Power

In February 2003, the Italian prime minister, Silvio Berlusconi held meetings at his home with the other party leaders in his coalition to discuss a plan for the future of RAI, the Italian public broadcasting company. His efforts to reform RAI were notable for their success. Historically, Italian prime ministers had not been able to point to significant policy gains, and surprisingly, in this case these policy gains benefited the private interests of that prime minister alone. Despite parliament being the legal setting where appointments to head the company are ratified, the plan included the names of those to be appointed and the key strategic decisions that RAI should take once under new control. Parliament was bypassed and the Presidents of the two Houses were dictated to on what to do in terms of appointment. Indeed, Berlusconi himself drew up the main points of the plan (*La Repubblica* 27 February 2003). The conclusion of this process of 'reform' of television broadcasting laws and regulations was the 'Gasparri Law', from the name of the Telecommunications Minister. Despite being a minister representing Alleanza Nazionale (AN) in cabinet, and therefore enjoying a degree of independence from the prime minister, Gasparri presented a reform of television broadcasting exactly in line with the wishes of the Berlusconi. The law was pushed through in spite the criticism coming from many quarters, including parliamentarians of the Casa delle Libertà (Berlusconi's coalition) and the President of the Republic.

Berlusconi was able to force his coalition partners to accept these policy directives because he could place his main rivals and the key veto players in government and his party in invidious positions. Forza Italia was absolutely dependent on Silvio Berlusconi as its chief source of funding. Forza Italia's place in government depended on its ability to make the other parties in the coalition support it. The other two most significant parties in the coalition, AN and Lega Nord, were in the unhappy position of being fearful of an election, as both would have expected significant losses from an immediate election. Under the normal 'rules' of Italian politics these parties could have withdrawn from government and been certain that the prime minister's party would have found another acceptable candidate. However, unlike previous Italian prime ministers, Berlusconi controlled his own party completely. Nor was either party able to form another coalition, as both were unacceptable partners for the other block of parties (O'Malley and Cavatorta 2004). So without any legal prerogatives, but

through a significant control of his electorally-popular party, Berlusconi was able to achieve policy gains unknown for prime ministers in post-war Italian history. Berlusconi was able to structure the choices his coalition partners faced, who could either accept unattractive policies, or risk political annihilation.

In this thesis I set out to describe and explain how prime ministers, seemingly without any power to make policy unilaterally, achieve policy changes. The way in which most prime ministers change policy, this thesis has argued, is through setting the alternatives for other essential actors in the policy process. Berlusconi was in a position to define the alternatives the main veto players (the coalition parties) in Italy faced. In this final chapter I briefly reiterate the theoretical framework of prime ministerial power that I have developed in this thesis. I then look at the empirical evidence I have offered to support the verity of this framework as a way of understanding policy power in parliamentary democracies. I discuss some of the issues raised in this work and finally offer some suggestions for future research.

A theory of prime ministerial power

In this thesis I have offered a theoretical framework that is both coherent and generalisable. It can help to explain the routes to policy change in parliamentary democracies. It also allows one to explain variations in prime ministerial power regardless of the country being studied. At its most abstract level, the framework proposes that policy change is achieved by making other powerful actors in the policy-making process act in support of prime ministers. Prime ministerial power is determined by the ability of prime ministers to (implicitly or explicitly) structure the decisions that veto holding actors face, forcing them to act in ways that they otherwise would not have.

The main basis of the puzzle of prime ministerial power is that, unlike presidents (Howell 2003) prime ministers are rarely ceded unilateral or direct policy making functions. So I argue that prime ministers must work through a system of veto players. The veto player approach is one that is now widely cited, and although it is problematic, those problems provide new challenges to our understanding of the nature of policy-making in parliamentary democracies, rather than impediments.

I argue that prime ministerial power depends firstly on the number and diversity of the veto players in the policy-making process. A veto player is a political actor whose agreement is necessary to change policy, or, more correctly, whose objection could prevent policy change. Where there are a number of diverse veto players, prime ministers, who are among the principal agenda setters and veto players in policy making systems, can lead policy change in the way they wish, thus making them powerful. There are a number of actors holding a veto in parliamentary systems; cabinet ministers, parties in government, party factions and cabinet. These veto players may have remarkably similar policy preferences, making policy change (or stability) easily achievable. In this case the prime minister may be regarded as powerful, although arguably the prime minister is chosen for the job, and is leading those who wish to be led.

Where the number and diversity of veto players make policy change seemingly impossible, change may still be seen to occur. One could argue that in these cases the veto players who failed to successfully veto were not veto players at all, and point to the fact that the veto was not used as proof of this. However, it is not controversial to suggest that the actors I name above *may be expected to be* veto players, and where their position is set to worsen because of policy change, they *may be expected to have* used their veto. We should not get entangled in the effort to accurately identify veto players. Instead, the more interesting question becomes why did the actors who we would expect to be veto players not use their veto? I argue that this is because prime ministers have an effect on veto players' failure to act.

Veto players lose their potency when prime ministers can set the alternatives from which the veto players must choose. There are a number of advantages prime ministers sometimes have; superior information, electoral popularity and institutional prerogatives allow prime ministers to structure the choices facing veto players. Veto players retain the choice as to whether they exercise their 'veto' or not, but prime ministers can make these choices 'awkward'. Prime ministers can do this in a number of ways, but principally by being the controller of the careers of many of the important political actors we expect should be veto players. Prime ministers can sometimes hire and fire ministers. This fact will have a significant impact on the decisions ministers

make, even if this is not always obvious. Prime ministers can sometimes call general elections, which will impact on the careers of their own backbenchers and the actors in other government parties. Prime ministers are party leaders and sometimes this allows them to control or affect candidate selection. However, these prerogatives do not necessarily bestow power. Some prime ministers have little freedom to choose other ministers, even though their political rulebook says so. To some extent the number of veto players affects the freedom to use these powers, but the institutional prerogatives can also be used as a predictive tool for the number of *potent* veto players.

The theoretical framework I offer is based on the ability of prime ministers to set choices for other veto holding actors through the use of institutional prerogatives and other resources. But merely having the legal right to use a prerogative does not bestow one the practical ability to do so. And as can be seen from the preceding narrative, it is not always necessary to possess these prerogatives. Political factors are crucial to understanding prime ministers' freedom to use the prerogatives and to therefore explain prime ministerial power. Where there is more than one party in government, this has a severe effect on prime ministers' scope to use the prerogative to appoint and dismiss ministers. Where prime ministers' parties are electorally weak, this neutralises the threat of an election against other parties, but in the short term it can concentrate the minds of backbenchers to support their prime minister (in the longer term, back-benchers may question the wisdom of keeping an unpopular prime minister and leader). On the other hand, electoral popularity may make prime ministers, as party leaders, assets that MPs are unwilling to disobey.

Electoral popularity is an intervening but seemingly necessary condition. A US president, even one enjoying public support, cannot necessarily achieve great influence over policy. He must convince Congress that it is in its interest to support the president. For governing parties in parliamentary democracies, however, their interests are likely to be tied to those of the prime minister. Electoral popularity enables prime ministers to use the prerogatives provided to them, whereas it gives no such advantage to presidents. Electoral popularity makes the threat to use prerogatives credible.

Generally where rewards and punishments are available to prime ministers to be given to other actors, and these rewards and punishments are credible, the prime minister

will be in a strong position. Where these are not available or not credible, veto players with whom prime ministers disagree lose none of their potency. Thus the prime minister loses power.

This framework is not an 'ultimate' explanation of prime ministerial influence and power. Quite apart from the fact that the framework in itself can be improved on, this thesis looks at just one stage of the understanding of prime ministerial power. I explain how prime ministers use prerogatives to set choices, and that the freedom to do so depends on certain political resources. I have not tried to show how political leaders earn these political resources, such as electoral success. I do not attempt to explain why some leaders are more popular than others. This probably comes as a result of some internal factor such as charisma. In turn, charisma may be explained by further psychological factors, which in turn may be explained by biological factors, *ad infinitum*. Arguably no explanation can be the final and overall explanation (Taylor [1989] 1993: 91). I have identified and offered one possible explanation of one stage in the process of policy making.

Overview of empirical evidence

Ultimately, whether this explanation is viable depends on its internal plausibility and the evidence that can be offered in support of it. I have constructed an argument based upon the number and policy diversity of important political actors in the policy-making system. In order to achieve policy changes, a prime minister must be able to set choices for 'veto players' in the political system. One would then expect a relationship between the political rules allowing prime ministers to set choices for other veto players in the system and the freedom to set policy as measured by the expert survey.

Small but significant variations in countries' political rules make it very difficult to compare institutional arrangements. To develop an expertise in the politics of such a large number of countries is also prohibitively difficult. One is therefore at risk of 'miscomparing', as Sartori (1991) has described one of the possible pitfalls of comparisons across many countries. However, as I have collected original data from an expert survey, which puts quite complex institutional and political frameworks on a number of one-dimensional metrics, this renders the data analysis meaningful. The

disadvantage of these comparable data is that they are artefacts of an expert survey and also quite crude proxies of a complex real world.

The data analyses offered in the thesis are technically unsophisticated, just bivariate analyses or multivariate OLS regression and ANOVA. They are deliberately kept simple, as to use more sophisticated techniques with these somewhat crude data would risk increasing the rate of Type II errors, or not finding a relationship where one exists. This is also in keeping with Cohen's (1990: 1307) dictum that 'simple is better' in data analysis. The basic techniques that I use also have the advantage that they are better known, better understood, and more easily interpretable. By using common and more easily understood techniques, one avoids accusations of choosing the technique that provides the desired result.

The data, whose sources I described in chapter five, provide strong support for the ideas in this thesis. First of all, in chapter seven, building on the relatively new but widely cited literature on veto players, I hypothesise and then empirically show that there is a connection between the number of veto players in a policy system and the power of prime ministers as estimated by experts in the field. Furthermore, taking into account the policy positions of the different actors, more variation in power is explained.

The next five chapters look at ways in which prime ministers can set choices for veto playing actors. These are prerogatives mentioned in the literature as causing prime ministers to be influential. I first examined how these might allow a prime minister to set choices for others, building on an existing rational choice literature.

Chapters eight and nine study the ability of prime ministers to control parliament by setting choices for parliament. I analysed two ways in which this occurs. One is by directly setting the agenda in parliament. A principal way in which this can occur is through the use of the confidence motion to set a final offer in parliament. Prime ministers, and their governments, have many other means to control the agenda such as the right to veto 'Money Bills'. The empirical analysis found a strong connection between the right to set the agenda in parliament and prime ministerial power. The second prerogative I concentrated on was the ability of prime ministers to offer

parliament the choice between a certain policy and an election, and all the risks and costs these entail. I found that there is a strong causal relationship between the likely occurrence of an election after the termination of a government and prime ministerial power. Moreover, when the likelihood of an election is interacted with electoral popularity, a statistically significant relationship also exists.

Chapters ten and eleven concentrate on the other great forum for policy-making in parliamentary democracies – the government or the cabinet. Chapter ten examines the ability of prime ministers to set difficult choices for colleagues as s/he controls the careers of those colleagues. I hypothesise that one way in which prime ministers achieve policy gains is through implicit or explicit threats and inducements to the careers of their colleagues. I provide both direct and circumstantial evidence that this is an important factor in enabling prime ministers to effect policy change. Anecdotal evidence is also used to illustrate the potency of the dismissal threat.

Chapter eleven deals with the prime minister's role as chairman of cabinet deliberations. This position offers prime ministers two advantages. Firstly, some prime ministers have discretion in choosing the forum in which decisions are made. The second is the ability to call a consensus in cabinet. This is analogous to making a 'final offer' in agenda setting, as could be costly to reject a prime minister's offer. The real benefit to the prime minister is that s/he can estimate the best policy that is acceptable to the cabinet. Using the survey data on cabinet decision-making, there was some empirical backing for the proposition that ability to restrict the cabinet agenda affects prime ministerial power. However, the prerogative to control cabinet is not legally guaranteed and while strong prime ministers can use the advantage of being chairman of cabinet, a prime minister under pressure may find little use in the legal ability to call a consensus. The empirical evidence in this chapter is weak, possibly because the secrecy surrounding cabinet discussions means one must to rely almost exclusively on other data, here, from the expert survey.

The last substantive chapter, chapter twelve, focuses on the prime minister as party leader and the services that party leaders provide to their party. I argued that the prime minister may be valued as an electoral asset, and as such can use this to extract concessions from veto players within the party by using the (implicit or explicit) threat

to resign. A significant statistical relationship was found between electoral success and power over policy. A relationship was also found between the possession of an electoral mandate and prime ministerial power. It has been shown that electoral success is related to the ability to use prerogatives. This chapter also provided a model which shows that the prerogative data and data on electoral support significantly improve explanation of prime ministerial power on the veto player model. In all these chapters I have expected and found strong empirical backing for the hypothesised relationships between the ability to set awkward choices for the other veto players in the system and prime ministerial power.

It is important to acknowledge the limitations of the data available here, and that some of the tests were less than ideal. For instance it is difficult to test veto player theory fully in the absence of data on factions and their policy positions. Nor do we have data on the institutional prerogatives that are truly independent of the dependent variable as measured. Most significantly the data on prime ministerial power is imperfect, measured as it is using expert surveys rather than 'real' data.

However, given that one of the major problems with research in this area up to now was the lack of data, these imperfect data and the imperfect tests associated with them, can be considered preferable to none at all. Next I look at some other ways which the scholarly analysis of prime ministerial influence on policy could be improved.

Future work and research

This thesis provides what I hope is a step forward in understanding one aspect of the core executive – how prime ministers achieve policy change in the policy-making process. By offering a theoretical framework, from which I developed hypotheses that are tested on original data, I hope that it makes a useful contribution to an on-going debate. However, it is just one small contribution and many scholars continue to attempt descriptions and explanations of the phenomenon of core executive policy making. There are many phenomena that must be studied and examined more closely and precisely for research in this area to make progress.

I have been open in admitting that the original data used in the thesis are rather crude, but I would stand by their validity and comparability. These data are better than no data. That said it is probably necessary for scholars to think about better ways to measure policy-making power and influence. Expert surveys are useful, and provide an efficient way to acquire data (especially in a secretive area such as government where inside knowledge is often indispensable) but these data are not real. Future technological advances may allow quick comparisons of political texts to estimate the policy positions of political actors and policy outcomes in policy conflicts. However, intimate country-expertise will remain necessary.

A factor that is important for the development of scholarship in any area is the systematic maintenance of information about a subject. For that reason it is necessary that a database on prime ministers and their governments is maintained. This would also require some agreement as to what constitutes a term of office. The dataset provided with this thesis contains much of the information that would form the basis of such a database.

Standing orders and other such 'obscure' rules are often thought too esoteric for comparativists to deal with. Standing orders and parliamentary rules tend to be left to the country expert. There is a very good reason for this. Small details tend not to be comparable. However, there are theoretical and empirical reasons to suppose that these small and detailed rules do matter. One research group is studying these comparatively, and one can expect that the group led by Herbert Döring will continue to produce both useful insights and data. It would be helpful if there were a translation of rules of procedures into English to allow better and more accurate comparisons.

Another area in which minor details are important to the policy influence of prime ministers is politics within parties. However, some authors on central government ignore areas outside government and parliament, and hence tend to ignore the importance of political parties. Again seemingly non-comparable rules governing the organisation of political parties are found to be important. Authors such as Richard Katz and Peter Mair have gone some way to gathering together these rules, but Janda remains one of the few authors to attempt to place these rules on a comparable metric.

I believe a major beneficial change in the way that core executive policy making is studied would be to change the dependent variable from the assessment of institutional actors to actual policy outcomes. It is normal in one tradition within political science to treat aspects of the prime minister or the prime ministership as the phenomenon to be explained. It is something I do here. Those who follow this strategy study how certain institutions operate and look for trends. There is a separate policy making tradition in political science, in which scholars concentrate on and gain expertise in a policy areas in a country. These scholars sometimes gain personal acquaintance with some of the political actors and even become political actors in their own right. However, studies of this kind are often atheoretical and there is little tendency to look for trends beyond their policy area and their country.

From the narratives at the beginning of most chapters it is possible to judge that each policy decision is unique. Seemingly minor factors, such as the age of the actor, may change the outlook of that actor and hence the policy outcome. Because each situation is different it is sometimes difficult to generalise about even single prime ministerial terms. Prime ministerial popularity rises and falls over time; some minister's star may be on the rise during one conflict, making him or her more powerful, but be on the fall in another; some parties may go from being indispensable in government to being a liability to the government.

Given that each policy decision is unique, it would be useful to approach policy making using theoretically-informed case studies of single policy conflicts. These could also be informed by the generalisations made by comparativists and institutionalists. In turn these case studies would allow more systematic and evidence-based assessments of the importance of political actors and institutions. Improved caveats and contingencies could then be attached to these general assessments and our knowledge of how politics works would be improved vastly.

Concluding discussion: Routes to Power

This thesis shows that the power of prime ministers depends, to some extent, on the number of other powerful actors in the policy-making system, and the variability in this number depends on many factors. However, one conclusion that does emerge from

this work is to further support the contention of political scientists since Michels ([1910] 1999) that organisation is a major route to power. It is the ability of individual politicians to act collectively in support of and against certain policy positions that give them power.

Many prime ministers have had policy plans scuppered by small groups organising and thereby removing their ability to control. Small but organised factions, we have seen, can make it difficult for a prime minister to use prerogatives such as the right to dismiss ministers. Consider Roy Jenkins' successful attempt to prevent the dismissal by Harold Wilson of one of his colleagues. This minor victory should be seen against the power of well-organised parties to determine who from their ranks become members of cabinet. German Chancellors are unable to decide who are the ministers provided by coalition partners, and these parties are frequently over-represented in cabinet (Helms 2005: 96).

But prime ministers have an advantage over groups within parties in that, as co-ordinators of the process of the government, they have a broader overview of both the issues and the individuals involved. They can expect to be consulted on most issues. Potential plotters, on the other hand, may risk exposing themselves if they confide in the wrong person. As incumbent leaders, prime ministers are more likely to be able to work in the open. Prime ministers are more likely to know who their opponents are, and are more likely to be better organised than their opponents because they have more time to co-ordinate and observe their parliamentary and cabinet colleagues. For instance, Margaret Thatcher was able to isolate and demote her many opponents in her early cabinets because they failed to organise themselves. Had she left all prominent 'wets' out of her first cabinet, she would have enabled them to be free of the strictures of collective responsibility and this would have enabled them to organise against her.

The prime minister has another advantage in terms of preventing others from organising effectively. Prime ministers possess more information than most others in the policy-making process. Because prime ministers are at the centre of government, most items of information can be demanded and will be provided. This gives prime ministers a comparative advantage over competitors in the political process. For instance, the success of Tony Blair's campaign to obtain approval for the invasion of

Iraq (considered at the beginning of chapter three) had much to do with the inability of sceptics to unite around a common position. Had the full facts been known, some unity of purpose might have been possible to accomplish.

One can easily see that one of the most important ways in which politicians can organise is through forming political parties. Political parties tend to be a significant constraint on prime ministers' freedom to set policy (see model 5 in chapter seven above). A significant factor determining the ease with which cohesive political parties can be organised is the electoral system. A country's electoral system has an impact on the extent to which it is profitable in the medium to long term to form distinct groups.

Many scholars have found that the proportionality of the electoral system affects the ability of new parties to enter the political market (Cox 1997: 173-4). Where proportionality is high, as in the Netherlands and Israel, small parties can achieve representation in parliament relatively easily. As a result, coalition governments become more common and large parties may find it more difficult to maintain cohesion, as it is not necessarily politically suicidal to leave one party to join or form another one.

In terms of constitutional engineering, one would then prescribe a relatively disproportional electoral system if one wanted to increase the control a prime minister had over policy. This was attempted in Italy, but for various reasons (discussed by Katz 1996) the reforms failed to induce a two party system as anticipated. Recent debates have occurred in many countries about how to strengthen the prime ministerial figure, and many writers favour changes to other institutional mechanisms, such as the popular election of the prime minister. However, it is questionable to what extent these mechanisms would work while the electoral system distributes power to a large number of cohesive political parties (see O'Malley forthcoming for details).

It is also unsurprising that in certain countries, such as Japan, where factions are prevalent, prime ministers are less powerful. It has been found in this thesis that leadership of a factionalised party reduces a prime minister's ability to govern. However, there does not seem to be an obvious single cause of party factionalism, as there is of party system fractionalisation (i.e. the electoral system). Issues such as the

internal organisation of political parties and political funding seem to be relevant to understanding party factionalism however.

The ability of a prime minister to organise support around one's own position and to disrupt organisation around opposing positions is important to achieving one's policy goals. Furthermore, the way in which one can best organise a position is through a political party in government, and prime ministers who lead their own party and have no other party to deal with can, if they possess the appropriate political skills and prerogatives to control actors within the party, expect to achieve their policy goals.

One of the most frequent and forcefully made claims in the literature on prime ministers and policy influence is that institutions matter. This is not a point I have tried to disprove – institutions do seem to matter. If they did not, why would so many political disagreements be centred on institutional design? However, it is not clear that a 'strong' institutional framework is sufficient for a prime minister to be influential. One need only consider weak British prime ministers, such as John Major, to realise this. Nor is a benign institutional framework a necessary condition for an influential prime minister. The example of Silvio Berlusconi proves this.

So what can one say about the importance of the institutional framework? Institutions and institutional prerogatives have been shown theoretically and empirically to be useful to frame the decision-structure other actors face. However, for the choices to be awkward, as Harold Wilson hoped he would make others' choices, they must be credible. The prerogatives given to prime minister often relate to the careers or prospects of other policy actors. For these threats to be credible and for prime ministers to be secure enough to use the prerogatives to set difficult choices in the first place, depend on the electoral factors. One would expect that there is an interaction effect between institutions and electoral success and popularity, that is, that electoral popularity is more important where the institutional framework favours executive dominance. This was found in the data.

The fact that many institutional prerogatives are not absolute, and that they are contingent, to some extent, on electoral popularity, shows that democracy is working, and that prime ministers once elected are not 'elected dictators'. The case of José Luis

Rodríguez Zapatero, the bland politician who became Spanish prime minister, shows that can be increased by political power. Zapatero, who came to power almost by accident, used his influence over policy to consolidate his position and become seen as the driving force behind liberal reform in Spain. This in turn increased his popularity, which in turn strengthened his position within his party. The relationships, we can see are complex and multi-directional.

Appendices A & B

The survey and cover letter

In the following pages are a copy of the cover letter sent to the respondents of the expert survey and the survey. The cover letter included the Trinity College letterhead. The survey sent to non-coalition countries, i.e. those countries that have not had coalition governments or were so rare as to be negligible, did not have questions 2 and 4 in the coalition countries survey. The Dutch survey is shown below.

UNIVERSITY OF DUBLIN
DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE
TRINITY COLLEGE
DUBLIN 2, IRELAND

FAX: +353.1.677.0546 **E-MAIL: omallee@tcd.ie**

17th November, 2001

Prof. «first_name» «second_name»
«address_1»
«address_2»
«address_3»
«address_4»
«address_5»

Dear Professor «second_name»,
We are conducting an expert survey dealing with the powers of prime ministers in 22 established parliamentary democracies, in order to establish the institutional prerogatives and powers of ministers in each country. Within each country we also wish to compare the relative power that recent prime ministers have had over policy.

As an expert in the politics of «country» we hope that you are able to respond to the attached survey, comprising just nine questions. It really should only take a few minutes to complete. We have sent out only a very limited number of questionnaires for any one country, since we seeks only the highest-quality respondents!

The aggregated information collated from the responses will be quickly made available to other scholars to help them with their own research. In particular, we expect this new expert dataset to give new information on a number of countries that have previously been neglected. As soon as these are available, we will send everyone who responds a full report on our results.

We very much hope that you will be able to complete the survey. We ask you to return it to the address below or fax it to the number above. A label with our return address is included. You may return the survey anonymously by cutting off the identification code in the top left-hand corner of the form, but in this case please accept our apologies now for future reminders. If you have any queries please contact us at the e-mail address above. Thanking you in advance for your co-operation.

Yours sincerely,

Michael Laver Eoin O'Malley

EXPERT SURVEY ON PRIME MINISTERS,
DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE, TRINITY COLLEGE,
NO. 1 COLLEGE GREEN, DUBLIN 2, IRELAND

EXPERT SURVEY ON PRIME MINISTERS IN ESTABLISHED PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACIES

Below are some questions about the role and power of the prime minister in the Netherlands. There are a total of nine questions to be answered and this should take about ten minutes.

1. In general, how much practical political freedom does the prime minister in the Netherlands have to select members *of his/her own party* as cabinet members? Please place an X somewhere on the scale below where 1 means the prime minister usually has very little freedom to do this and 9 means the prime minister usually has a great deal of freedom.

Very little freedom **Great deal of freedom**

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

2. In general, how much practical political freedom does the prime minister in the Netherlands have to select members of *other government parties* as cabinet members? Please place an X somewhere on the scale below where 1 means the prime minister usually has very little freedom to do this and 9 means the prime minister usually has a great deal of freedom.

Very little freedom **Great deal of freedom**

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

3. Once the individual members of the cabinet have been decided upon, how much practical political freedom - in the following months and years of the government – does the prime minister have to move and remove *his/ her own party's Ministers* from the cabinet? Please place an X somewhere on the scale below where 1 means the Dutch prime minister usually has very little freedom to remove individual cabinet ministers and 9 means the prime minister usually has a great deal of freedom to remove individual cabinet ministers when he/she wants to.

Very little freedom **Great deal of freedom**

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

4. Once the individual members of the cabinet have been decided upon, how much practical political freedom - in the following months and years of the government – does the prime minister have to move and remove *Ministers from parties other than his/ her own* from the Cabinet? Please place an X somewhere on the scale below where 1 means the Dutch prime minister usually has very little freedom to remove inidividual cabinet ministers and 9 means the prime minister usually has a great deal of freedom to remove individual cabinet ministers when he/she wants to.

Very little freedom **Great deal of freedom**

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

5. In general, how much practical political freedom does a Dutch prime minister have to call an election when he/she wants to? Please place an X on the scale below where '1' means the Dutch prime minister usually has very little freedom to call an election when he/she wants to (and is constrained by constitutional or political factors) and 9 means the Dutch prime minister usually has a great deal of freedom to call an election when he/she wants to (and is not very constrained by either constitutional or political factors).

Very little freedom to call an election **Great deal of freedom to call an election**

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

6. In terms of the issues discussed and determined by the cabinet, in some countries the prime minister has no choice but to give significant amount of time for discussion of proposals coming from individual ministers. In other countries that the prime minister can easily restrict what goes on the cabinet agenda. What do you think? Please place an X on the scale below where 1 means that the Dutch prime minister has very little freedom to restrict access to the cabinet agenda and 9 indicates that he/ she has a great deal of freedom to restrict access to the cabinet agenda.

Very little power to restrict Cabinet agenda **Great deal of power to restrict Cabinet agenda**

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

7. In terms of debate and decision making in cabinet, in some countries the prime minister has no ability to raise his/ her preferred policy proposals at cabinet, and to force a decision on these. In other countries that the prime minister can easily put his/ her preferred policy proposals to cabinet. How would you describe the situation in the Netherlands? Please place an X on the scale below where 1 means that the Dutch prime minister has very little power to set the cabinet agenda and 9 indicates that he/ she has a great deal of power to do this.

Very little power to set Cabinet agenda — **Great deal of power to set Cabinet agenda**

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

8. In some countries the government has little control over the agenda of parliament. In other countries the government seems to have complete control. What do you think is the situation in the Netherlands? Please place an X on the scale below to indicate the control the government has over the parliamentary agenda where 1 indicates very little control and 9 a great deal of control.

Government has very little control over agenda of parliament — **Government has great deal of control over agenda of parliament**

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

9. In some countries the prime minister has very little influence over the policy output of his/her government. In others the prime minister has a great deal of influence over the policy output of the government and is usually able to get his/ her preferred policies enacted.

   Below is a list of recent Dutch prime ministers. How much influence do you think each had in terms of getting his preferred policies accepted and enacted. For each prime minister please indicate your views on the 1-9 scale where '1' means you think that particular prime minister had very little power to influence government policy and get his/her preferred policies accepted and '9' means you think that prime minister had a great deal of power to get his favoured policies enacted

WIM KOK (1998to date)

Not much influence on policy — **Great deal of influence on policy**

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

WIM KOK (1994-98)

Not much influence on policy								Great deal of influence on policy
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

RUUD LUBBERS (1989-94)

Not much influence on policy								Great deal of influence on policy
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

RUUD LUBBERS (1986-89)

Not much influence on policy								Great deal of influence on policy
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

RUUD LUBBERS (1982-86)

Not much influence on policy								Great deal of influence on policy
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

Appendix C- Responses

Response rates

The overall response rate for the survey was 60 percent. This is a response of 249 completed questionnaires from a total number of requests of 413. In addition 14 wrote back refusing to do the survey or pleading ignorance. 15 of the completed surveys returned were anonymous. These were from Ireland (3), Israel, Japan, New Zealand (2 each) and one each from Australia, Austria, Belgium, Italy, Spain and the UK. The response by country is reported below in alphabetical order. The highest number in each column is in bold and the lowest in italics.

Country	***No. of Responses***	***No. of Targets***	***% Response***
Australia	12	23	52
Austria	7	13	54
Belgium	8	16	50
Canada	14	22	64
Denmark	10	16	63
Finland	12	18	66
Germany	18	31	58
Greece	13	18	**72**
Iceland	*2*	*6*	*33*
Ireland	10	16	63
Israel	13	18	**72**
Italy	17	25	68
Japan	14	22	64
Luxembourg	*2*	*6*	*33*
Malta	4	8	50
The Netherlands	15	22	68
New Zealand	13	21	62
Norway	12	20	60
Portugal	7	17	41
Spain	12	22	55
Sweden	11	18	61
UK	**23**	**35**	66
Overall	249	413	60

The results

Below I report the full results of the expert survey on prime ministerial power. All means potentially range from one to nine. The first column gives a short title for the variable or name and dates for the prime minister in question (see the expert survey in

appendix A for the full question). The second column has the number of respondents to the survey for that question. This is followed by the estimate and its standard error.

Gaps in the time periods are where there was a caretaker government or a prime minister was in office for too short a period of time to yield a result. Other prime ministers who were in office for relatively short periods of time are sometimes included because otherwise there would be few or no prime ministers to test. These countries include Italy and Japan. Also there are times when a prime minister is in power for two consecutive short periods, which I combine the two or three to create longer periods. In these cases I take the data relating to that prime minister, i.e. their parliamentary backing, to be from the longest time period. All these prime ministers are marked with an asterix.

Some estimates are not used in the statistical analyses in this thesis because of disagreement among the experts. Where the standard error of the mean is greater than one these estimates are not used, and are marked below with a cross.

Australia

Name/ issue	No.	Mean	Std. Error
Hire ministers (own party)	12	6.20	.2496841
Hire ministers (oth. party)	12	2.70	.5166117
Fire ministers (own party)	12	6.70	.3340428
Fire ministers (oth. party)	12	3.41	.642065
Call election	12	6.91	.4839599
Cabinet agenda (neg.)	12	6.58	.4120961
Cabinet agenda (pos.)	11	8	.3302891
Parliamentary agenda	12	7.33	.3389675
J. Howard 1998-2001	12	7.83	.2071939
J. Howard 1996-98	12	7.58	.2599048
P. Keating 1993-96	12	7.33	.3553345
P. Keating 1991-93	12	7.16	.3445096
R. Hawke 1990-91	12	5.25	.37183
R. Hawke 1987-1990	12	6.66	.2247333
R. Hawke 1984-87	12	7.083	.192996

Austria

Name/ issue	*No.*	*Mean*	*Std. Error*
Hire ministers (own party)	7	7.14	.1428571
Hire ministers (oth. party)	6	1.5	.2236068
Fire ministers (own party)	7	6	.3086067
Fire ministers (oth. party)	7	1.14	.1428571

Call election	7	5.14	.6700594
Cabinet agenda (neg.)	7	3.57	.8123201
Cabinet agenda (pos.)	7	5.71	.993174
Parliamentary agenda	7	7.42	.2973809
V. Klima 1997-2000	7	4.14	.7046976
F. Vranitzky 1996-97	7	5.28	.7781016
F. Vranitzky 1994-96	7	5.71	.7142857
F. Vranitzky 1990-94	7	6.14	.4592215
F. Vranitzky 1987-90	7	6.28	.1844278
F. Vranitzky 1986-87	7	6.14	.2608203
F. Sinowatz 1983-86	7	4.28	.680136

Belgium

Name/ issue	*No.*	*Mean*	*Std. Error*
Hire ministers (own party)	8	6.37	.5324304
Hire ministers (oth. party)	8	3.62	.5649747
Fire ministers (own party)	8	4.5	.7791937
Fire ministers (oth. party)	8	2.37	.2630521
Call election	8	4.12	.7180703
Cabinet agenda (neg.)	8	6.12	.3503824
Cabinet agenda (pos.)	8	6.62	.375
Parliamentary agenda	8	6.62	.5649747
G. Verhofstadt 1999-2003	8	7.12	.3503824
J.L. Dehaene1995-99	8	7.62	.375
J.L. Dehaene1992-95	8	6.5	.3273268
W. Martens 1988-92	8	5.25	.5261043
W. Martens 1985-87	7	5.42	.4809288
W. Martens 1981-85	7	6	.6172134

Canada

Name/ issue	*No.*	*Mean*	*Std. Error*
Hire ministers (own)	14	7.78	.2385527
Fire ministers (own)	14	8.14	.253701
Call election	14	7.57	.4996074
Cabinet agenda (neg.)	13	7.76	.3028465
Cabinet agenda (pos.)	14	8	.2567763
Parliamentary agenda	13	8.07	.2106625
J. Chrétien 1997-2000	14	8.14	.2058791
J. Chrétien 1993-97	14	8.14	.1771925
B. Mulroney 1988-93	14	8.21	.2605694
B. Mulroney 1984-88	14	8.21	.2385527
P. Trudeau 1980-83	14	8.5	.1738384

Denmark

Name/ issue	*No.*	*Mean*	*Std. Error*
Hire ministers (own party)	10	8	.2108185
Hire ministers (oth. party)	10	3.2	.6110101

Fire ministers (own party)	10	7.6	.305505
Fire ministers (oth. party)	10	3.5	.5821416
Call election	10	8.1	.2768875
Cabinet agenda (neg.)	10	6.3	.4229526
Cabinet agenda (pos.)	10	6.6	.3399346
Parliamentary agenda	10	6.2	.2494438
P. Rasmussen 1998-2001	10	6.3	.4229526
P. Rasmussen 1996-98	10	6.3	.4229526
P. Rasmussen 1994-96	10	6.2	.4163332
P. Rasmussen 1993-94	10	6.1	.3480102
P. Schlüter 1990-93	9	5.33	.5270463
P. Schlüter 1988-90	9	5	.5
P. Schlüter 1984-88	9	5.22	.3643021

Finland

Name/ issue	*No.*	*Mean*	*Std. Error*
Hire ministers (own party)	12	6.58	.192996
Hire ministers (oth. party)	12	2.41	.3361622
Fire ministers (own party)	12	4	.5075192
Fire ministers (oth. party)	12	2.33	.4322831
Call election	12	2.08	.2599048
Cabinet agenda (neg.)	12	4.91	.4515685
Cabinet agenda (pos.)	12	6	.4264014
Parliamentary agenda	12	7.41	.2599048
P. Lipponen 1999-2003	12	6.75	.3916747
P. Lipponen 1995-99	12	6.41	.5143153
*E. Ahø 1991-95	12	5.33	.5270463
*H. Holkeri 1987-90	12	4.41	.4515685
K. Sorsa 1983-87	12	5.91	.4166667

Germany

Name/issue	*No.*	*Mean*	*Std. Error*
Hire ministers (own party)	18	5.72	.4630501
Hire ministers (oth. party)	18	2.27	.3687601
Fire ministers (own party)	18	6.44	.381108
Fire ministers (oth. party)	18	3	.4428074
Call election	18	2	.4644204
Cabinet agenda (neg.)	18	6.5	.294281
Cabinet agenda (pos.)	18	7.16	.2458811
Parliamentary agenda	18	6.11	.3605451
G. Schröder 1998-02	17	6.35	.2703644
H. Kohl 1994-98	18	6	.3791976
H. Kohl 1991-94	18	7.27	.3314215
H. Kohl 1987-90	18	6.83	.258831
H. Kohl 1983-97	18	6.11	.3694979
H. Schmidt 1980-82	18	5.16	.372678

Greece

Name/ issue	*No.*	*Mean*	*Std. Error*
Hire ministers	13	8.03	.1831135
Fire ministers	13	7.76	.2307692
Call election	13	7.15	.4399323
Cabinet agenda (neg.)	13	7.69	.2627423
Cabinet agenda (pos.)	13	7.84	.2220578
Parliamentary agenda	13	8	.2531848
C. Simitis 2000-2004	13	7.15	.2795636
C. Simitis 1996-2000	13	6.76	.2808834
A. Papandreou 1993-96	13	7.03	.4177992
K. Mitsotakis 1990-93	13	5.53	.3511042
A. Papandreou 1985-89	13	7.65	.3552925
A. Papandreou 1981-85	13	8.5	.1790287

Iceland

Name/ issue	*No.*	*Mean*	*Std. Error*
Hire ministers (own party)	2	6	1
Hire ministers (oth. party)	2	1	0
Fire ministers (own party)	2	2.5	0.5
Fire ministers (oth. party)	2	1	0
+Call election	2	6	2
Cabinet agenda (neg.)	2	5	1
Cabinet agenda (pos.)	2	8	1
+Parliamentary agenda	2	4	3
+David Oddssonn 1999-2003	2	7.5	1.5
+David Oddssonn 1995-99	2	7	2
+David Oddssonn 1991-95	2	6.5	2.5
S Hermannsson 1989-91	2	4.5	.5
S Hermannsson 1988-89	2	4.5	.5
T Palsonn 1987-88	2	2	0
S Hermannsson 1983-87	2	4	1

Ireland

Name/ issue	*No.*	*Mean*	*Std. Error*
Hire ministers (own party)	10	6.7	.1527525
Hire ministers (oth. party)	10	2.3	.2134375
Fire ministers (own party)	10	6	.4714045
Fire ministers (oth. party)	10	2.1	.314466
Call election	10	7	.1490712
Cabinet agenda (neg.)	7	6.3	.680136
Cabinet agenda (pos.)	10	7.5	.2687419
Parliamentary agenda	10	7.6	.4521553
B. Ahern 1997-2002	10	6.4	.2666667
J. Bruton 1994-97	10	5.1	.3480102
A. Reynolds 1992-93	10	6.1	.3480102
A. Reynolds 1991-92	10	6.4	.2666667

C. Haughey 1989-91	10	5.6	.5206833
C. Haughey 1987-89	10	7.3	.3349959
G. Fitzgerald 1982-87	10	5.7	.3349959

Israel

Name/ issue	*No.*	*Mean*	*Std. Error*
Hire ministers (own party)	13	6.19	.61378
Hire ministers (oth. party)	13	1.92	.1776462
Fire ministers (own party)	13	4.38	.5493406
Fire ministers (oth. party)	13	2.53	.5950155
Call election	13	5.84	.7324542
Cabinet agenda (neg.)	13	7	.2995723
Cabinet agenda (pos.)	13	7.38	.2664694
Parliamentary agenda	13	5.76	.5083135
E. Barak 1999-2001	13	5.30	.6343239
B. Netanyahu 1996-99	13	6	.4236593
*Y. Rabin 1992-95	13	7	.4935481
Y. Shamir 1990-92	13	6.61	.5493406
Y. Shamir 1988-90	13	6.46	.4615385
Y. Shamir 1986-88	12	6	.5640761
S. Peres 1984-86	12	6.08	.5701984

Italy

Issue	*No.*	*Mean*	*Std. Error*
Hire ministers (own party)	17	5	.3929526
Hire ministers (oth. party)	17	2.64	.2836368
Fire ministers (own party)	17	4.41	.5290031
Fire ministers (oth. party)	17	2.64	.4613055
Call election	17	2.35	.3084732
Cabinet agenda (neg.)	17	4.76	.3268546
Cabinet agenda (pos.)	17	5.41	.4117647
Parliamentary agenda	17	4.35	.3084732
M. D'Alema 1998-2000	17	4.11	.3077713
R. Prodi 1996-98	17	5.85	.3024554
S. Berlusconi 1994-95	17	5.41	.493031
C. Ciampi 1992-93	17	6.23	.3789441
G. Amato 1992-93	17	5.76	.3379154
G. Andreotti 1991-92	17	3.82	.4043449
G. Andreotti 1989-91	17	3.70	.3404658

Japan

Name/ issue	*No.*	*Mean*	*Std. Error*
Hire ministers (own party)	14	4.5	.5108708
Hire ministers (oth. party)	14	2.71	.4964553
Fire ministers (own party)	14	5.07	.6242735
Fire ministers (oth. party)	14	4.14	.5532833
Call election	14	5.92	.5184962
Cabinet agenda (neg.)	13	4.23	.482433

Cabinet agenda (pos.)	14	5.42	.488486
Parliamentary agenda	14	7.28	.3695642
K. Obuchi 1998-2000	13	5	.4529108
*R. Hashimoto 1996-98	14	6.07	.3846546
T. Murayama 1994-96	14	3.28	.4500131
M. Hosokawa 1993-94	14	4.85	.4174378
K. Miyazawa 1991-93	14	4.42	.4021137
*T. Kaifu 1989-91	14	2.85	.4174378
N. Takeshika 1987-89	14	5.78	.3805515

Luxembourg

Name/issue	*No.*	*Mean*	*Std. Error*
Hire ministers (own party)	2	7	0
Hire ministers (oth. party)	2	3.5	.5
Fire ministers (own party)	2	7.5	.5
Fire ministers (oth. party)	2	4	1
Call election	2	6	0
Cabinet agenda (neg.)	2	7	0
Cabinet agenda (pos.)	2	7.5	.5
Parliamentary agenda	2	7.5	.5
J-C Juncker 1999-2004	2	7.5	.5
J-C Juncker 1995-99	2	7.5	.5
J Santer 1994-95	2	5.5	.5
J Santer 1989-94	2	5.5	.5
J Santer 1984-89	2	5.5	.5
P Werner 1979-84	2	7.5	.5

Malta

Name/ issue	*No.*	*Mean*	*Std. Error*
Hire ministers	3	5.33	.33333
Fire ministers	3	5	0
+Call election	3	6	2
Cabinet agenda (neg.)	3	6.66	.8819171
+Cabinet agenda (pos.)	3	6.33	1.20285
Parliamentary agenda	3	8	0
Adami 1998-2003	3	6.33	.8819171
Sant 1996-98	3	8	0
Fenech Adami 1992-96	3	7	.5773503
Fenech Adami 1987-92	3	7.33	.333
Bonnici 1984-87	3	5.33	.8819171
Dom Mintoff 1981-84	3	9	0

Netherlands

Name/ issue	*No.*	*Mean*	*Std. Error*
Hire ministers (own party)	15	6.93	.2481679
Hire ministers (oth. party)	15	2.66	.2872972

Fire ministers (own party)	15	2.86	.5058389
Fire ministers (oth. party)	15	1.53	.1652319
Call election	15	1.93	.4078593
Cabinet agenda (neg.)	15	5.6	.5673665
Cabinet agenda (pos.)	15	5.6	.5327378
Parliamentary agenda	15	5.26	.5973486
W. Kok 1998-2002	15	6	.3518658
W. Kok 1994-98	15	5.53	.3500567
R. Lubbers 1989-94	15	5.6	.3625308
R. Lubbers 1986-89	15	6.66	.4327835
R. Lubbers 1982-86	15	6.66	.421637

New Zealand

Name/ issue	*No.*	*Mean*	*Std. Error*
Hire ministers (own party)	13	6.19	.3820427
Hire ministers (oth. party)	12	3.16	.5341849
Fire ministers (own party)	13	7.26	.3947386
Fire ministers (oth. party)	13	3.76	.482433
Call election	13	6.15	.677913
Cabinet agenda (neg.)	13	7	.531085
Cabinet agenda (pos.)	12	8	.3015113
Parliamentary agenda	13	7.26	.3781508
H. Clark 1999-2002	13	8.07	.2391636
*J. Shipley 1997-99	11	6.09	.4945989
J. Bolger 1993-96	12	6.04	.3506397
J. Bolger 1990-93	11	6.36	.6778673
G. Palmer 1989-90	10	6.1	.6227181
D. Lange 1987-89	11	4.81	.6580713
D. Lange 1984-87	11	5.63	.4723775

Norway

Name/ issue	*No.*	*Mean*	*Std. Error*
Hire ministers (own party)	12	7	.1740777
Hire ministers (oth. party)	12	3.91	.4515685
Fire ministers (own party)	12	5.66	.3956838
Fire ministers (oth. party)	12	3.25	.4286165
Call election	12	1	0
Cabinet agenda (neg.)	11	5.27	.30424
Cabinet agenda (pos.)	11	6.27	.30424
Parliamentary agenda	12	4.16	.4051437
K. Bondevik 1997-2000	12	4.58	.4993683
T. Jagland 1996-97	12	5.08	.3785605
G. Brundtland 1993-96	12	6.41	.3579896
G. Brundtland 1990-93	12	6.66	.2842676
J. Syse 1989-90	12	4.41	.2875796
G. Brundtland 1986-89	12	6.16	.2071939
K. Willoch 1983-85	12	6.75	.3046359

Portugal

Name/ issue	*No.*	*Mean*	*Std. Error*
Hire ministers (own party)	7	8	.3086067
Hire ministers (oth. party)	7	4.57	.6116777
Fire ministers (own party)	7	6.85	1.033454
Fire ministers (oth. party)	7	5	1
Call election	7	2.71	.7468756
Cabinet agenda (neg.)	7	6.85	.5532833
Cabinet agenda (pos.)	7	6.28	.6441785
Parliamentary agenda	7	4.28	.9440108
A. Guterres 1999-2001	7	4.71	.7468756
A. Guterres 1995-99	6	6	.6831301
A. Cavaco Silva 1991-95	6	7	.5773503
A. Cavaco Silva 1987-91	6	7.66	.3333333
A. Cavaco Silva 1985-87	6	6.833	.7031674
M. Soares 1983-85	6	5	.7302967

Spain

Name	*No.*	*Mean*	*Std. Error*
Hire ministers (own)	12	7.91	.2599048
Fire ministers (own)	12	7.25	.3508647
Call election	12	6.66	.4322831
Cabinet agenda (neg.)	12	7.58	.2875796
Cabinet agenda (pos.)	12	7.91	.3128155
Parliamentary agenda	12	7.08	.3785605
J.M^{a}. Aznar 1996-2000	12	6.58	.4839599
F. González 1993-96	12	5.91	.3980698
F. González 1989-93	12	6.91	.3361622
F. González 1986-89	12	7.33	.3553345
F. González 1982-86	9	7.88	.3513642

Sweden

Name	*No.*	*Mean*	*Std. Error*
Hire ministers (own party)	11	8	.4264014
Hire ministers (oth. party)	11	3.54	.6232413
Fire ministers (own party)	11	7.36	.5439373
Fire ministers (oth. party)	11	3.72	.6192504
Call election	11	3.36	.7169725
Cabinet agenda (neg.)	11	5.90	.45636
Cabinet agenda (pos.)	11	6.54	.4545455
Parliamentary agenda	11	6.09	.3425717
G. Persson 1998-2002	11	6.81	.4225073
G. Persson 1996-98	11	6.63	.4527236
I. Carlsson 1994-96	11	6.36	.4723775
C. Bildt 1991-94	11	4.90	.4146092
I. Carlsson 1990-91	11	5.63	.4321769

I. Carlsson 1988-90	11	5.81	.400413
I. Carlsson 1986-88	11	5.90	.45636

UK

Name/ issue	*No.*	*Mean*	*Std. Error*
Hire ministers (own)	23	6.82	.2787052
Fire ministers (own)	23	6.73	.2608696
Call election	23	6.93	.3615737
Cabinet agenda (neg.)	23	7.17	.223626
Cabinet agenda (pos.)	23	7.80	.2149068
Parliamentary agenda	23	8.08	.1768526
T. Blair 1997-2001	23	7.69	.1825899
J. Major 1992-97	23	5.13	.3224434
J. Major 1990-92	23	5.95	.2392202
M. Thatcher 1987-90	23	7.34	.2319252
M. Thatcher 1983-87	23	7.86	.1811726
M. Thatcher 1979-83	23	6.82	.2487294

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