

**THEORY & PRACTICE
IN BRITISH POLITICS**

**P O L I T I C A L
P A R T I E S
& P A R T Y S Y S T E M S**

**COMPARATIVE APPROACHES
& THE BRITISH EXPERIENCE**

Moshe Maor



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Political Parties and Party Systems

This introduction to the theme of political parties presents a wide variety of theoretical approaches—illustrating these ideas by applying comparative approaches to the British case.

Political Parties and Party Systems covers all the key subjects of study, including: the classification of party definitions; change in the party system; party institutionalisation; models of party organisation; cohesion and dissent; intra-party conflicts and legislative bargaining; and multi-party electoral competition. Moshe Maor argues that the intra-party arena is the key to the understanding of political party behaviour. Strategic decisions made by party leaders often reflect the internal conflicts with which they are confronted. This study addresses the ways in which intra-party actors solve these trade-offs and in the process how the parties' definitions of activities and motivations are constantly reinterpreted.

This is a clear and accessible introduction to modern political science analysis of parties and party systems which will be essential reading for students of politics.

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Preface

The orientation of this textbook is very general. As a comparativist, I have long been convinced that the logic of comparison is the best way to establish theoretical and empirically refutable propositions that explain—in terms of causality—regularities in the relationships between parties, society and political institutions. My purpose in writing this textbook is therefore to introduce students of politics to the study of political parties; its basic conceptual paradigms, salient theories and sets of theoretical hypotheses which are derived from comparative inquiries. In doing so, I have made no effort to ‘summarise the literature’. Instead, attention is given to those theoretical works—representing several sub-disciplines and spanning a number of decades—that have the most direct bearing on the theme being discussed. To illustrate the ideas, I apply comparative approaches to the British case with a view to their clarification. In no way, then, do I claim to present an encyclopaedic coverage of what has become a vast and highly diverse body of literature. Readers who expect such an encyclopaedic coverage will, therefore, be doomed to disappointment. In my view it is far preferable to understand why things happen the way they happen, than to describe what happened. This is basically what theory is all about.

In writing this book, I have received much help. I am particularly indebted intellectually to Gordon Smith. My work has been improved grammatically by volunteers reading chapter drafts, particularly Sidonie Beresford-Browne, Barnie Sluman and Rebecca Stokes. Over the years I have also gained much from the scholarship and personal support of Gideon Doron, Patrick Dunleavy, Desmond King, Peter Mair, Howard Machin, Jan-Erik Lane and Gunar Sjöblom. I should like to thank the staff of the LSE Library, in particular Ms Francis Shipsey, as well as Ms Jane Pugh from the LSE Drawing Office, for the considerable help which they have given me. I thank also Caroline Wintersgill, Patrick Proctor and their colleagues in the Politics Division of

Routledge for the care which they have taken in preparing the manuscript for publication.

I have drawn somewhat upon the following article that I have published: 'Intra-Party Determinants of Coalition Bargaining', *Journal of Theoretical Politics* (1995a), 7(1):65–92. In addition I have drawn upon two articles written jointly with Gordon Smith, 'Government-Opposition Relationships as a Systemic Property: A Theoretical Framework' (presented at the ECPR Joint Sessions of Workshops, Leiden, 1993), and 'On the Structuring of Party Competition: The Impact of Maverick Issues', in Bryder, T. (ed.), *Party Systems, Party Behaviour and Democracy*, Copenhagen: Copenhagen Political Studies Press, 1993, pp. 40–51.

The final acknowledgement is the most important. I thank Didi Maor for help and encouragement too vast to be quantified. This book could have never been written without her warm friendship and love.

1

Classifying party definitions

Sometimes the closest seat offers the poorest view. Just as people sit back from a wide-screen motion picture to gain perspective, students of political science seeking to understand political parties need a broader view. They must raise their thinking to an abstract level by generalising about parties.¹ They do so by asking questions such as: What do particular parties have in common? What are their distinguishing characteristics? How many of these parties have these characteristics? These questions aim at 'learning' from the experience of parties in other countries by looking for certain consistencies that can be observed, measured and then generalised. The generalisations are often simple descriptive summaries of a given situation, an approximate quantitative measure of the numbers of objects belonging to a class, or a statement about common properties of objects: e.g. 'most parties in advanced industrial democracies depend on state funding for their electoral campaigns; '25 per cent of Labour Party members are low-paid workers'. Sometimes they incorporate the ambiguous term 'tend' as in 'American parties tend to be élitist and loosely-organised', which might suggest a causal link.

But do the generalisations hold? By looking around, that is, by comparative checking, one can examine whether generalisations hold. Comparing is therefore checking (verifying or falsifying) whether generalisations are valid across the cases to which they apply (Sartori 1991). To illustrate, take the topic of party cohesion. Party cohesion in China, for instance, is very different from the idea of party cohesion as westerners perceive it. In China, 'voting similarly' means 'voting according to party lines'. In western democracies, 'voting similarly' means 'voting according to party lines, but, being able to dissent'. One who uses the comparative methodology will conclude that voting according to party lines (with the ability to dissent) is the 'normal' practice in advanced industrial democracies; rare in Communist regimes and non-existent in religious ones. The comparativist thus assesses

the extent to which, in different countries across the world, party members vote in the legislature according to party lines.

The comparativist's need for a general knowledge on political parties may result, however, in neglect of country-specific (context) variables. A comparative analysis of coalition formation in twenty countries, for example, may fail to take into account variables, such as political culture and constitutional constraints, which differ from one country to another. One way of dealing with this problem is to link the study of comparative politics to that of political parties. That is, to link the study of macro-level politics—referring to units denoted by words such as 'political system', 'state', 'nation-state', 'society' and 'government' (Scarrow 1969)—to that of political parties. A classic example is to look at political parties as an intervening variable between government institutions and society. As Giovanni Sartori states in a comprehensive treatment of political parties *Parties and Party Systems*:

But when the society at large becomes politicised, the traffic rules that plug the society into the state, and vice versa, are established by the way in which a party system becomes structured. At this point, parties become channeling agencies and the party system becomes the system of *political canalization* of the society.

(Sartori 1976:41)

Indeed, the main party definitions are based, implicitly or explicitly, on the link between macro-level politics and political parties. However, there is no one generally accepted party definition: rather there exists sharp competition between alternative concepts and approaches. The lack of one generally accepted party definition lies one step further back, in the contested approaches to macro-level politics; meaning the variety of attempts to interpret macro-level units, how they persist and how they perform (see Appendix). The various views of comparative politics have generated a bewildering variety of party definitions. It is therefore hardly surprising that attempts to address party-related problems have resulted in a simultaneous use of both functional and descriptive elements, a mix of theoretical and empirical elements, and different positions of parties in theoretical conceptualisations, i.e. as explicans of other political phenomena or as explicanda in and of themselves.²

The purpose of this introduction is to provide students of politics with a scheme of organisation for various party

definitions.³ Thus, this chapter engages in a cataloguing exercise; it classifies the main party definitions, rather than the parties themselves.⁴ The discussion is selective and does not claim to be comprehensive, as the purpose is only to examine and clarify the main party definitions.⁵ This work is important in itself since efforts to establish a final dictionary of political terms have turned out to be short-lived. As laymen and political scientists continue to use and abuse political terms it is essential to clear up the logical and semantical confusion. In addition, ideas regarding party definitions can have their own impact, leading to new interpretations and even changes in traditional views. If we first explore the conceptual foundations of parties we may understand parties better.

A SCHEME OF ORGANISATION FOR PARTY DEFINITIONS

A simple way to execute our task is to organise party definitions according to three groups of research questions: (i) What does a party do? (ii) What motivations underlie a party's behaviour? and, (iii) How does a party operate? and why does it operate the way it does? As analytical tools, these groups direct attention largely to descriptive rather than normative definitions. They address actual party behaviour rather than definitions which deal with what parties can and should do. Although the groups are imprecise, and since the lines between any two are always blurred, their purpose is solely to call attention to the general differences in the ways parties have been defined.

What does a party do?

Party definitions which address the question of what parties do can be roughly classified into two categories: normative definitions which address questions such as what parties can or should do; and descriptive definitions which focus either on party traits, such as the collective nature of parties, or on the various aspects of a party's activity, such as, selection of candidates, participation in elections, and so on. Regarding the former category, academic convention requires that we begin with Edmund Burke's (1770: 317) definition: 'Party is a body of men united, for promoting by their joint endeavors the national interest, upon some particular principle in which they are all agreed.' From the standpoint of understanding politics and the role of political parties this definition does not take into account the vital aspects of political

structure and decision-making with which politics is concerned. It presents a normative standard according to which a party is motivated solely by 'principle' rather than by some mix of policy influence, vote-maximisation or office-maximisation. In this light the party is considered 'good', whereas a political faction which is motivated by other interests—especially personal ambition—is considered 'bad'.

Burke's definition also leads to critical evaluations of parties because it implies that there must be something wrong with a party or governmental system when the party in power fails to behave in accordance with the values it advanced when seeking power. In reality, there may be numerous reasons, such as group pressures and public opinion, for a party to move away from the policy aims it professed. Thus, Burke's definition highlights the pitfalls of approaching parties in normative terms by focusing on what a party can or should be, instead of what parties actually do.

An advance towards a more descriptive definition was proposed by James Madison who defined a faction (which at that time was not distinguished from a party) as:

a number of citizens, whether amounting to a majority or minority of the whole, who are united and actuated by some common impulse of passion, or of interest, adverse to the rights of other citizens, or to the permanent and aggregate interests of the community.

(Madison 1787:54)

Madison's definition is important for two reasons: (i) because it draws attention to the requirement, particularly important under democratic conditions, that the party would execute a unified effort to affect government, involving both group interests and popular passions; and (ii) because it is associated with a second idea, not at all the same as the first, namely, the 'adversity' with other groups which implies some degree of, or a potential for, competition over the direction of government.

Madison's ideas lingered well into the twentieth century. The premises underlying his definition—the collective character of a political party and its electoral focus—have been used partly (MacIver 1964; Chambers 1963) or fully (Epstein 1980a) as the foundation for party definitions. Epstein, for instance, adopted a general way of looking at political parties by stating that some properties—most notably the degree of organisation—are responses to parties' environments, and could therefore be excluded from a definition. This, in turn, led him to define parties

as: 'Any group, however loosely organised, seeking to elect governmental officeholders under a given label. Having a label (which may or may not be on the ballot) rather than an organization is the crucial defining element' (Epstein 1980a:9).

Epstein views parties as the only true linkage between society and government. The premise underlying this view is that democracy is best served by the majoritarian principle: 'More than one-half of a community's electorate may be mobilised to support a policy or set of policies, and the majority thus mobilised ought to have the means to enact its policy. The means are to be provided by an organised party' (Epstein 1980a). This perspective, termed 'responsible' or 'party government', views parties as articulators of demands, aggregators of interests and educators of the electorate. The objective for responsible parties is the implementation of clearly defined policies, with elections serving only as the means to this end.

A similar perspective was adopted by many scholars who called attention to the role of parties in the manifestations of social divisions in the political process and in the process of policy formation. Expressions such as 'workers' parties', 'bourgeois parties' and 'peasant parties' are utilised in this perspective in order to describe the prevalent social composition of a party's electorate, membership, policy, and sometimes even a party's behaviour. Neumann provides a good example which falls within this framework. According to Neumann, we may define a 'political party' generally as:

the articulate organisation of society's active political agents, those who are concerned with the control of governmental power and who compete for popular support with another group or groups holding divergent views. As such, it is the great intermediary which links social forces and ideologies to official governmental institutions and relates them to political action within the larger political community.

(Neumann 1963:352)

What is common to all parties is, therefore, partnership of individuals in a particular organisation, taking part in electoral contests and participation in the decision-making process, or at least the attempt at, and a chance for, such a mobilisation of action. This ever-present readiness alone, Neumann argues, makes them political in a genuine sense, for only in their fight for control and in their conscious influence on political forces, do parties gain meaning and importance. Thus, only parties openly

claim to link the general public to political power by placing representatives of their organisations in positions where they may exercise that power on behalf of that public.

Alternative formulations which follow Neumann's orientation are provided by Lawson (1980:3) who defines the party as an agency 'for forging links between citizens and policy-makers', and Eldersveld (1964:6) who defines it as 'a structural system seeking to translate or convert (or to be converted by) social and economic interests into political power directly'. Power, according to Eldersveld (1964:9), is characterised by a 'reciprocal deference structure' due to the party's need to 'cope with widely varying local millii of opinion, tradition and social structure... [that] encourages the recognition and acceptance of local leadership, local strategy, [and] local power'. The party, in this sense, exists as an intermediary group representing multiple social interests for the achievement of direct control over government.

The weak point in the 'party as an agent' orientation is that it leads to reading party competition and conflicts as modes of interaction between representatives of different social interests. It tends to represent divergences in the sociological profile and composition of the party leadership, parliamentary group, members and electorate as being caused by 'distortions' in the representation of social interests. Further, it ignores the fundamental process through which factors internal to the process of party competition can produce or sustain party differentiation (Dunleavy 1991). That is, it ignores the parties ability to shape voters' preferences because of their control over the political agenda, their control over the 'rules of the game', their ability to use state power to try to produce favourable changes in the social structure, and their ability to intervene to alter their relative social and economic positions in order to strengthen their support among a target category. Thus, the 'party as an agent' orientation underestimates the ability of parties and candidates to use state power in order to tip the scales of electoral competition decisively towards the party of government.

Descriptive definitions which address what parties do can also be made once the process of candidate nomination is understood as part of a party's role. By indicating that parties must be able to nominate candidates, such formulations restore the distinction between parties and their factional sub-groups, in that whereas factions, interest groups and financial contributors may propose the candidates, it is the party that obtains their election. Definitions which fall within this framework are Riggs (1968:51) who defines a party as 'any organisation which nominates

candidates for elections to a legislature', and LaPalombara and Weiner (1966:29) who argue that to deserve the name of party an organisation must set up local units, seek electoral support from the general public, play a part in political recruitment and be 'committed to the capture or maintenance of power, either alone or in coalition with others'. In addition, Sartori (1976:64) advances the characterisation of a party as a group that 'presents at elections, and is capable of placing, through elections, candidates for public office'. For Sartori, the electoral process—wherein a party competes under its official label—is taken as a discriminatory tool between parties and interest groups. Thus, the occurrence of an election suffices to distinguish the single party from those political groups that do not have recourse to 'electoral rituals'.

To sum up, descriptive definitions which address the question of what parties do suggest that parties form a distinctive political group. What makes parties unique is that they are a combination of collective team and 'common impulse of passion or of interest', they are significantly oriented towards elections, and they engage in the process of candidate nomination. The question will immediately occur to the student: if parties are moulded and created by groups of individuals, what are the goals which underlie party behaviour?

What motivations underlie party behaviour?

There are two broad categories of definitions which fall within this framework of analysis: the first relates to the ideological aims of the party, while the second—the so-called minimal definition—relates to those aims that all parties are supposed to share. The former category would include affirmation of the following: (i) 'The assumption which explains my focus of attention is that...it is a party's objectives, its *Weltanschauung*, which represent its most characteristic features and are most influential in moulding its structure and mode of action' (Shell 1962:4); and (ii) 'A political party is an organized group, an association, oriented toward political goals, which attempts by its actions to maintain the status quo or to change the existing social, economic and political conditions by means of influencing achievement or conquest of political power' (Gross 1967: 702).

These definitions (and many others) are based on two presuppositions, namely, that parties are groups that pursue goals, and that a party's ideology is the best indicator of its goals. The weak point in the first presupposition is that 'it takes for

granted precisely what has to be demonstrated: that parties are goal-oriented groups. In other words, it takes as a simple matter of fact something which... constitutes a *problem*' (Panebianco 1988:5). The weak point in the second presupposition is that the dual assumptions that parties are goal-oriented groups and that the 'declared goals' are the 'real goals' undermine the relevancy and utility of social analysis. As Panebianco (1988:5) puts it: 'If we consider it sufficient to rely upon the definitions that actors or institutions proffer of their own goals, we will never be able to go beyond simple descriptions of their ideological self-representations.'

For the second category of definitions, rational choice theorists have developed a set of theories wherein the party is defined according to its stipulated objective. Kare Strom (1990a) distinguishes between: (i) vote-seeking; (ii) office-seeking; and (iii) policy-seeking parties.⁶ The first—vote-seeking—approach is expressed most clearly in Anthony Downs' seminal account of party competition wherein a 'party' is defined as:

a team of men seeking to control the government apparatus by gaining office in a duly constituted election. By *team*, we mean a coalition whose members agree on all their goals instead of on just part of them.

(Downs 1957:25)

In Downs' approach a party is viewed as a monolith. An absolute consensus is assumed to exist within the party about the preference ordering of the alternative strategies and policies of that party. It is assumed that every member of a party has goals identical to those of every other member. Thus, a party can be regarded as a unitary actor. This implies that a party can be considered as a decision-making agent separated from voters and other actors, such as interest groups.

Assuming that parties are concerned only with the rewards of office, Downs builds a model on one basic hypothesis: 'Parties formulate policies in order to win elections, rather than win elections in order to formulate policies' (1957:28).⁷ This implies that each party seeks to receive more votes than any other. The more votes a party gets, the higher its bargaining power in the coalition negotiation (i.e. in multi-party systems), and hence the higher its chances to gain office and formulate policies which would contribute to its reelection. Thus, Downsian parties are not only vote-seekers but also vote-maximisers.⁸

For the office-seeking approach, Riker (1962) and Leiserson (1968) identify parties as maximisers of their control over political office. Both saw the yearning for office as the desire to control some sort of fixed prize, a prize captured by the winning coalition and divided among its members. Control of elected office is operationalised in terms of government portfolios or ministries, and coalition bargaining is thus viewed as a competitive process which determines how these portfolios will be allocated. Strom (1990a:567) enlarges the scope of 'office benefits' to include private goods bestowed on recipients of politically discretionary governmental and subgovernmental appointments. Seeking office implies therefore a consistent pursuit of such goods over and above their electoral or policy value.

Illustrative of the policy-seeking approach to the definition of parties is the work of Chappell and Keech (1986), Hanson and Stuart (1984) and Axelrod (1970). Parties are identified here as groups which maximise their effect on public policy. According to Strom (1990a), the premise underlying this assertion is that no party should join or support a government without effecting policy change in its favour. This supposition has a fundamental impact on the entire process of electoral competition and coalition bargaining because most policy outputs are public goods that apply to all, whether or not the actors concerned have participated in the policy process, whether or not, indeed, they are in cabinet (Laver and Schofield 1990:47).⁹

Criticism of all three of these models revolves foremost around their empirical fit.¹⁰ Critics of the vote-seeking model use the desertion of the median voter by both major British parties since the mid-1970s, in evidence (see [Chapter 7](#)).¹¹ Illustrative of this point is the electorally suicidal platform adopted by the British Labour Party in 1983 (Tsebelis 1990). Labour's Manifesto, entitled *The New Hope for Britain* (1983), proposed a policy of expansion through public investment, to be funded largely by borrowing, in order to reduce unemployment. It also pledged that a Labour government would withdraw from the European Community, end the sale of council houses and create a new price Commission with powers to order price cuts. Additional examples are parties which cater for declining social groups such as the unsuccessful Communist parties in western Europe, notably in France and Italy.

Critics of the office-seeking characterisation point to the high incidence of minority governments in many parliamentary democracies which indicates a disinclination on the part of party élites to hold office (Luebbert 1986; Strom 1990b). According to

Luebbert, the key to understanding the phenomenon of minority governments is the powerful extra-parliamentary mechanisms for influencing public policy outputs which exist in 'consensual systems'. These channels enhance potential opposition influence of public policy-making, and thereby reduce the party's need to actually join a coalition. This, in turn, increases the probability of minority government formation.¹² Strom, on the other hand, proposes that the presence of parliamentary channels for opposition influence, such as parliamentary committees, leads to a similar outcome.

Critics of the policy-seeking characterisation point to Ireland's Fine Gael. The party has received minimal policy pay-offs in its electoral and governmental coalitions with the Labour Party. A possible explanation for the apparent success of Labour in getting its policies into the coalition agreement can be found in the need to get the accord agreed by a special Labour delegate conference before the party is allowed under its rules to enter a coalition (Laver 1992). Such a mechanism for determining the party's coalition strategy provides a barrier for significant policy demands by potential coalition partners.

In conclusion then, party definitions which address the issue of the motivations underlying party activity attribute goals to parties, and explain party behaviour on the basis of those goals. The first category of definitions refers to the ideological aims of the parties, while the second category relates to those aims that all parties are supposed to share. This is a simplistic way of understanding the relations that exist in any complex organisation between goals and organisational activities. The reason for this is that parties are not unitary actors, but rather are 'political systems' in themselves. They are complex organisations comprised of many individuals and subgroups which are trying to influence party programme and strategy. 'The interaction of these individuals is the driving force of party life' (Katz and Mair 1990:12). The question which arises is, if party goals cannot be predetermined, how can we distinguish parties from other organisations?

How do parties operate? Why do they operate as they do?

These questions draw on the developing literature on party organisation which focuses on the internal arena as the key for understanding party behaviour and goals (Luebbert 1986; Panebianco 1988; Harmel and Janda 1994; Katz and Mair 1995; Maor 1992a, 1995a; Mule 1995). They allow us to focus on

definitions which consider parties as ‘institutions’, implying durable and recurring patterned ways of doing things. Differences between parties are therefore explained in terms of their mode of internal management. According to McDonald (1955), the issue of party management can be conceptually divided into two categories. The first category refers to the party way of running the government, that is, the way it ensures binding decisions and allocation of resources. This mode directs attention to the ways by which the party parliamentary group, the extra-parliamentary organisation and the party sub-groups adapt themselves to being a part of a governing machine. The second category refers to the party managers’ way of running a party. This mode relates to the ways by which party officers deal with constitutional, procedural and behavioural problems within the party.

Despite the many causal references to parties as ‘institutions’ it is surprising that there is very little in the way of explicit discussion of the significance of these modes of internal management. One of the few examples of the first category (but with a government formation focus) is provided by Luebbert who argued that:

a legislative group will be classified as a party when it has at least one profile, has numerical relevance to some legislative majority the formateur [i.e. government builder] might construct, and placed candidates for office on a single list or holds a common parliamentary caucus... A party is classified as a member of government when at least one of its representatives holds a cabinet position and its pertinent decision-making body (the parliamentary party, central committee, leadership bureau, as the case may be) endorses participation in the government. The only exception to this is in the event of a party of such small size that it does not receive a cabinet position because of its smallness, but nonetheless binds itself to the government through formal endorsement.

(Luebbert 1986:254)

Such a definition pinpoints some institutional imperatives—such as endorsement of participation in government by party organs—which have been so far neglected by other definitions. Yet, it presupposes a multi-party environment which places a high premium on participation in government. It is therefore too restricted for cross-country party research.

One of the few examples of the second mode of party management —the way party managers run a party—is Holcombe's (1950) view of parties as a kind of *process* involving the coordination of factional interests, the presentation of a leading personality element, and the sublimation and merging of interests. According to this view, factions continuously shape the opportunities faced by the party, as well as its structure and character. As Holcombe notes:

Parties are more than their leaders. Leadership seems to be the most important factor in the original organisation of political parties, but when a party becomes a going concern, its character is determined in some measure by its followers.... [For opposition parties] the opportunities are always conditioned by the membership of the factions from which the opposition is organised and which determine its character. It is easier for the major opposition party to leave the pioneer work on behalf of new principles to the minor parties. The latter are not embarrassed by the necessity of coordinating such a variety of special interests as the major parties...

(Holcombe 1950:102, 103)

The stress upon the interplay of these elements suggests what might be regarded as an institutional approach to the definition of political parties. This is emphasised by the suggestion that a party's character is determined by the conditions which make for durability in the factions' relations in a party. To understand these conditions one should address the modes of internal management across different parties.

Discussions about party management as the crucial defining element of political parties requires, among other things, an appreciation of four organisational problems faced by party managers. First, the presence of individuals and groups within the party whose interests must somehow be adjusted and coordinated. Second, the existence of differences among individuals and subgroups in terms of involvement and information regarding party activity which may lead to differences in their behaviour. Third, the need to apply discipline and authority by the party leadership if the aims of the party are to be achieved. Fourth, the establishment and maintenance of conditions, however loose they are, whereby the authority of representatives and officials is limited and made to conform with the preferences of the party supporters.

These problems can be found in parties irrespective of political ideology and constitutional settings. While they are present in other types of organisation, in the political realm these problems are of particular significance because they bear directly upon party competition—the key component of the liberal democratic order. As Michels (1915:365) notes: ‘it is organization which gives birth to the dominion of the elected over the electors, of the mandatories over the mandators, of the delegates over the delegators. Who says organisation, says oligarchy’.

Discussions which revolve around the ways party managers deal with these problems are related to the ability of various élites within the party to generate and sustain different types of change. Coalitions of these élites exercise control over party behaviour through their ability to manipulate access to major institutional arenas and their control over the allocation of resources among the party’s sub-units and social groups. Such coalitions also control the interpretation of information central to the structuring of orientations and preferences of party members and specific societal groups. As well as structuring both the major conception prevalent in the party and the major preferences of different social groups, the various party élites exercise different types of control through a combination of organisational measures (Maor 1995a). Different coalitions of élites and the diverse modes of control exercised by them shape the major characteristics and boundaries of their respective institutional arenas.

Following the insights provided by the literature which relates party organisation to party behaviour and goals it now becomes necessary to examine more closely the numerous arenas within which organisational problems are set, and within which the relations among different parties and social groups, their respective environments and the range of sensitivities and responses to such environments, are addressed. The premise underlying this need is that components of party behaviour—such as party roles, goals, decision-making procedures, organisational structure, and so on—are not distinct and autonomous, but rather analytical dimensions of various patterns of political interaction (Katz and Mair 1990, 1995). These components are interwoven at every level of political interaction, and contrary to the assumptions of behaviouralists and post-behaviouralists, no single component has a natural predominant place in a cybernetic hierarchy. Rather, at different levels of political interaction, such components are interwoven in different modes.

This implies that in any pattern of political interaction, the tension and trade-off between processes of change and processes

of control (i.e. which arise from the potential for conflicts) results in interpretations and reinterpretations of the party's definitions of situations, activities, motivations and arenas of political interaction. This, in turn, directs attention towards the numerous trade-offs confronting parties and their sub-units across time and in various arenas. With all the infinite variations in detail from party to party, state to state, country to country, and one electoral system to another, the degree of similarity in the trade-offs faced by parties and their sub-groups is amazing. Wholly aside from questions regarding party role and party

Table 1.1 Trade-offs faced by parties and their sub-units

The task of organising popular support among newly enfranchised voters	⇔	The parliamentarians' room for manoeuvre within the party
The 'rewards' activists get from the party leadership	⇔	The constraints activists impose upon the party leadership
The need of the party élite. to modify the party's electoral strategy	⇔	The need to accommodate party organisation to changes in electoral strategy
The need to produce cohesive legislative party	⇔	The need to accommodate diverging views within the parliamentary party
The need to commit the party to co-operative relationship	⇔	The need to ensure party cohesion
The need, in the long run, to extend the party's electoral support beyond its traditional voters	⇔	The need to simultaneously mobilise traditional voters
The wish to maintain and advance electoral strength	⇔	The need to respond to pressures arising from the electorate, as well as those arising from interlinked political markets

goals, students of politics should consider one or more of the trade-offs—shown in [Table 1.1](#)—as a starting point in their comparative study of parties. My mission in this book is therefore to explain these trade-offs and their consequences for party organisational strategy and behaviour. To enhance the reader's understanding of the theoretical approaches to the various trade-offs, the subsequent chapters apply a specific trade-off to the British context.

THE FORMAT OF THE BOOK

'One key task of political science is to criticise other political science and political conceptions in general' (Vedung 1982:13). The present work presents the basic approaches of political parties and criticises them according to their ability to encompass the severity of trade-offs faced by party élites in different situations, the conditions which exacerbate them and the various solutions adopted by party élites in order to neutralise or minimise negative effects derived from trade-offs.

Chapter 2 sets out for the reader the context within which political parties operate. It focuses first on the main concepts of party systems which could be divided into two categories: the first treats the party system as a dependent variable whereas the second treats it as an independent variable. The chapter describes the conception of the 'party system' which underlies each approach, the derived systemic properties, and the main ways for measuring them in order to gauge the extent of party system change. By systemic properties I mean those variables which have important consequences for the system as a whole, their effects being directly registered in the party system. The empirical section describes the context within which British politics take place, and evaluates the way changes in the British party system are interpreted by models of party system change.

The chapters which follow are divided into two pillars. The first pillar addresses three basic concerns of most writers on intra-party politics: concepts that pertain to party institutionalisation, party organisational models and intra-party competition. The second pillar focuses on inter-party competition: concepts that pertain to multi-party electoral competition. Linking these two pillars is a discussion of the impact intra-party conflicts have on inter-party legislative bargaining.

Chapter 3 deals with the historical development of political parties by elaborating the concept of 'institutionalisation'. It addresses the trade-off faced by parliamentarians between the task of organising popular support for themselves among the newly enfranchised voters and the derived consequences in terms of their room for manoeuvre. This trade-off is highlighted by the fear of parliamentarians at the emergence of extra-parliamentary party organisations which may bring pressure to modify their economic and social stances and force them to sacrifice their judgement to that of their constituents.

Chapter 4 introduces students to the face of parties as membership organisations by building upon the concepts of

‘organisational structure’ and ‘membership’. It enumerates the sharply differing attributes of two broad types of party organisation models: the exchange model and the development model. The former is essentially related to the trade-off between the ‘rewards’ activists get from the party leadership and the constraints they impose upon it in return. The party development model addresses the trade-off between the need of the party élite to modify the party’s electoral strategy, for example, following societal changes, and their need to accommodate their party organisation to these changes.

Chapter 5 further delves into intra-party politics by exploring two aspects of ‘coherence’, namely, cohesion and factionalism. It addresses the trade-off party élites face between the need for a cohesive legislative party and the need to maintain party unity (e.g. the need to accommodate diverging views within the parliamentary party). The relationship between intra- and inter-party competition is theoretically and empirically addressed in Chapter 6, key concepts in this discussion are ‘intra-party conflict’, ‘bargaining power’ and ‘coalition bargaining’. This chapter addresses the trade-off faced by party élites between the need to commit the party to co-operative relationships and the need to ensure party cohesion.

The dynamic nature of party interaction and its impact on the party system is then discussed. Chapter 7 explores the topic of multi-party electoral competition using the concepts of ‘inter-party competition’. It addresses the dilemma which stems from the need to counterbalance effective electoral participation with a party’s relationships with specific societal sections (e.g. class). This dilemma assumes an electoral trade-off between the need, in the long run, to simultaneously extend the party’s electoral support beyond its traditional voters and mobilise these traditional supporters.

This book aims to achieve a manageable and coherent focus by concentrating on comparative approaches to the conceptualisation of political parties. It attempts to do so by using a self-explanatory terminology. For readers new to the study of political parties it may be worthwhile to make clear in some more detail the areas not covered in the following chapters. A large literature which applies game theory to modelling political behaviour has not been described, since little progress has been made to connect this mainly algebraic literature with empirical analysis. Nor have I systematically reviewed the work on party-government relations for reasons of space. Finally, I have not discussed or criticised prescriptive approaches—especially regarding political parties

which are exposed to integrative pressures —except in so far as recommendations have been adopted by parties and hence can be analysed as empirical strategies.

2

Party system change

When and how party systems change or remain the same, with a particular emphasis on the British party system, is the central theme of this chapter. This question is both theoretically and instrumentally important for political scientists, sociologists and economists. Theoretically, the question is related to the general problem of state formation, and societal consolidation within the state and its political structure. It is also related to the development of political parties and their patterns of interaction. Instrumentally, when and how party systems change or remain the same reflects the reality of global changes, such as the technological and communication advancements during the last quarter century, domestic changes, such as demographic and societal developments, and the growing centrality of political parties in liberal democracies.

The study of parties and party systems normally focuses on the present: the policy positions and the party élites that define current party image and strategy. And yet it is also clear that historical factors have influenced the framework of the party system. In Britain, for example, the regional preferences of Welsh members, Scottish Presbyterians and Irish Catholics can be traced back to the conflict over nation-building. Across Europe, the differences in socio-economic preferences of the working class can be explained by the differences in timing and character of the Industrial Revolution. In the United States, the Democratic preferences of American southerners can be traced back to the consequences of the Civil War, whereas the Democratic tendencies of American Catholics can be explained by their class, ethnic origins and the way in which these groups were integrated into American society and history.

The first proposition linking contemporary party systems to historical events had been suggested by Seymour Martin Lipset and Stein Rokkan (1967) who treated the party system as a dependent variable. They sought to explain the genesis of the

system of contrasts and cleavages within western societies and the conditions for the development of a stable system of cleavages in national political life. Lipset and Rokkan described contemporary cleavage structures as resulting from complex historical processes triggered by two revolutions, the National Revolution and the Industrial Revolution. The former has resulted in an increased diversity between European nations, whereas the latter initiated a countervailing development as working-class parties emerged in all of the countries. Varying from country to country, this pattern established the framework, that is, the cleavage structure, within which contemporary party systems developed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The introduction of universal suffrage, they argued, proved a crucial catalyst which 'froze' this framework into place; 'the party systems of the 1960s reflect, with few but significant exceptions, the cleavage structures of the 1920s' (Lipset and Rokkan 1967:50).

An alternative proposition—based on treating the party system as an independent variable—most owes its development to Giovanni Sartori (1968, 1969). In response to the Lipset-Rokkan freezing hypothesis, Sartori confronted the question of how party systems maintain themselves. The notion underlying his view is party control, which means that issues and conflicts become relevant to politics largely because parties make them so. This implies that societal changes need not effect a transformation of the party system. Since the effect of societal changes is registered through the individual parties, party control over the public agenda could neutralise societal influences by, for example, depoliticising issues which threaten to destabilise the electoral, the institutional or the intra-party environments. This implies that '...a freezed party system is simply a party system that intervenes in the political process as an independent *system of channelment*, propelled and maintained by its own laws of momentum' (Sartori 1968:21).

The problem of formulating and testing propositions about party systems is compounded by the shifting, complex nature of parties and party systems themselves. At one level party systems are configurations of citizen voting support, at another they are groupings of representatives in legislative and executive bodies. This chapter prepares for the transition from a description of the complex nature of party systems to an analysis of the processes which directly impact upon party systems. I shall begin by looking at the two approaches for the study of party systems. I describe the conception of 'party system' which underlies each approach, the derived systemic properties, and the main ways for measuring

them. By systemic properties I mean those variables which relate to the 'system'; such variables have important consequences for the system as a whole. Their effects are directly registered in the party system, hence, the properties can be considered on their own rather than as surrogate indicators of some other phenomenon. In the empirical section I describe the context within which British politics takes place, and evaluate the way changes in the British party system are interpreted by models of party system change. To understand the link between society and politics, I start by introducing the concept of 'cleavage'.

THE CONCEPT OF CLEAVAGE

Fundamental to social life is the competition between individuals and organisations for scarce resources. A variety of wishes, demands and interests which are often incompatible need to be related to priorities according to which resources would be allocated. This role is fulfilled by political systems which set the policy priorities, as well as the mechanisms for resource allocation and conflict resolution. Politics is therefore endlessly played out within this institutional context with different coalitions of forces and actors striving for dominance. The patterns of conflict between these coalitions of forces and actors, however, are often conditioned partly or largely by cleavages. In other words, political phenomena should be understood in terms of their social correlates. The electorate in democratic political systems, for instance, is fully mobilised along cleavage lines and the development of cleavages and voter alignments constitute vital aspects of the building process of these nations (Lipset and Rokkan 1967; Rokkan 1970, 1975; Rokkan and Urwin 1983).

In the contemporary literature on cleavages there is no agreement on either what is a 'cleavage' or what a fruitful typology of cleavages would look like. Cleavages are often conceived of as issues, policy differences or political identifications related to certain long-standing conflicts in a particular society. Yet, this is a sociological focus according to which cleavages are traditional divisions implied by 'demographic attributes'—such as occupation and race—which, in turn, implies social stratification. Some authors—such as Dahl (1966a, 1966b) for example—attempt to free the concept from an emphasis on the link with social structure by speaking of political cleavages which are primarily defined in terms of political attitudes and behaviour. Others emphasise the 'cultural' (i.e. a set of beliefs) aspect of a cleavage which, in turn, implies a trait quite distinct from traditional

cleavages.¹ An interesting distinction, which does not involve any specific reference to culture or ideology, is between structural and non-structural cleavages. Structural cleavages correspond to those differentiated social groups within which solidarity (i.e. cultural attribute) and cohesion (i.e. organisational attribute) already exist on other than purely political grounds, whereas non-structural cleavages lack this correspondence (Allardt and Pesonen 1967).

The amount of agreement as to the employment of dimensions in a cleavage typology is also low. Rae and Taylor (1970:1), for example, suggest that 'the relevant cleavages are those which divide members into groups with important political differences at specific times and places'. They propose that there are three types of cleavage worthy of study: (i) ascriptive or trait cleavages, such as race or caste; (ii) attitudinal or opinion cleavages, such as ideology or preference; and (iii) behavioural or act cleavages, such as those elicited through voting or organisational membership. Flanagan (1973:64) proposes another typology of cleavages which he defines as 'potential lines of division within any given society'. According to Flanagan, cleavages can be classified in the following way: (i) segmental cleavages: racial, linguistic or religious differences; (ii) cultural cleavages: young-old, urban-rural, traditional, modern, authoritarian-libertarian; and (iii) economic-functional cleavages: class, status, or role differences. Hans Daalder (1966:67-8) arrives at another list of cleavages on the basis of an analysis of European history: (i) class or sectional interest: parties representing sections of agriculture, industry, etc.; (ii) religion: Catholics, Protestants, clerical, etc; (iii) geographical conflicts: centre-periphery; (iv) nationalistic conflicts: nationalistic or ethnic movements; and (v) regime: revolutionary or status-quo parties.

The above attempts to conceptualise cleavages are largely vague and ambiguous. According to Bartolini and Mair a substantial reason for this is that:

The concept of cleavage lies in its intermediary location between the two main approaches of political sociology: that of social stratification and its impact on institutions and political behaviour, on the one hand, and that of political institutions and their impact on social structure and change, on the other. At the level of individual empirical research the two approaches are often mixed; at the theoretical and analytical levels, however, their synthesis is clearly difficult, and for this reason the concept of cleavage is often either

reduced 'down' to that of 'social cleavages' or raised 'up' to that of 'political cleavage'.

(Bartolini and Mair 1990:215)

To bridge the two approaches of political sociology, Bartolini and Mair (1990) propose that every cleavage has three elements: an empirical element which can be defined in social-structural terms; a normative element which reflects the self-consciousness and awareness of the referent social group; and an organisational/behavioural element, reflecting the actors—be they individuals, institutions or organisations—which develop as part of the cleavage. The term 'cleavage' should, therefore, be restricted to a division in a polity which combines all these aspects. In other words, social divisions become cleavages only when they are organised as such, rather than simply being deduced from social stratification. The organisational focus reflects the importance of both the historical evolution of the divisions in society during state and nation formation, as well as the politicisation of the divisions in order to facilitate the mobilisation of the electorate during the process of democratisation.

Viewed thus, a cleavage should be looked at as 'a form of closure of social relationships' (Bartolini and Mair 1990:216). The social basis of class, for instance, emerged out of the long process of social differentiation which is linked to industrial and capitalist developments, and it is this which established the structural conditions for group attitude, motivation and resources. However, class cleavage derives its importance only in relation to other divisions, that is, it develops in response to the capitalists' attempts to maintain low level labour costs, and when the opportunities to express dissent and to organise opposition become available. Thus, 'cleavages develop initially on the basis of a social stratification which sets the structural conditions for group identity, and only later do they become fully political, particularly with the development of mass democracy' (Bartolini and Mair 1990:217).

A key aspect in the study of cleavages relates to their role. To briefly appreciate the (potentially) encompassing role cleavages may play, scholars often refer to studies of democratic regimes in plural societies; that is, societies which are characterised by a high degree of sub-culture pluralism based on language, religion, ethnicity or some combination of these attributes.² In democracies characterised by a high level of sub-cultural pluralism various aspects of social life are organised into separate blocs or pillars. Each of these parts of society has a distinctive set of values and

orientations. In such societies, social relations tend to take place within, not between, the separate sub-cultures. Informal social relations as well as formal organisational life, tend to be encapsulated within the sub-culture. Most importantly from our point of view, society is organised politically on a segmental basis. Political parties are attached to one or another of the segments. They gather their voting support from the members of the segment; and do not seek support from other parts of society. The phenomenon of the three 'pillars' of Dutch society, particularly from the 1950s to the 1970s, for instance, is a classic example of the encompassing role of cleavages (Lijphart 1975, 1977).

The role of a cleavage in a given society significantly depends on the relationship between that society and party competition, which takes place within a constitutional setting. This relationship is derived, at least during earlier stages of development, from a polity's historical specificity. Thus, it can only be understood once two factors have been considered: (i) the particular issues which 'trigger off' the initial process of mobilisation and politicisation in any given polity, and (ii) the specific model of interaction among cleavages which determines their relative importance. It is here that the work of Lipset and Rokkan becomes particularly important.

PARTY SYSTEM AS A DEPENDENT VARIABLE: THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PARTS OF THE SYSTEM

Lipset and Rokkan (1967) have approached the problem of party system change as a matter concerning the development of the parts of party systems—that is, the political parties. They set out to enquire how cleavages come about as well as to discover the factors which consolidate cleavages within the political system. Lipset and Rokkan claim that much of the history of Europe since the beginning of the nineteenth century can be described in terms of the interaction between two processes of revolutionary change, the National Revolution triggered in France and the Industrial Revolution originating in Britain. Both had consequences for the cleavage structure of each nation, and thereby to the initial format of each nation's party system.

The 'freezing' hypothesis

Table 2.1 indicates four cleavage patterns arising as a result of successive waves of opposition to major transformations of

society. The first wave—the National Revolution—refers to the original construction of the state as a territory governed by a single central

Table 2.1 Cleavages, critical junctures, issues and party families: an amended version of the Lipset/Rokkan model

<i>Cleavage</i>	<i>Critical juncture</i>	<i>Issues</i>	<i>Party family</i>
Center-periphery	Reformation-Counter-Reformation, 16th–17th centuries	National vs supra national religion; national language vs Latin	Ethnically and linguistically based parties
State-Church	National Revolution, 1789 and after	Secular vs religious control of mass media	Religious parties
Land-Industry	Industrial Revolution, 19th century	Tariff levels for agriculture products; control vs freedom for industrial enterprise	Agrarian parties; Conservative and Liberal parties
Owner-Worker	The Russian Revolution, 1917–19	Integration into national polity vs commitment to international revolutionary movement	Socialist and Communist parties
Materialists vs Post-Materialists, 1968 and after	The Cultural Revolution	Environmental quality vs economic growth	Green/Ecology parties

Sources: Lipset and Rokkan (1967:47); Klingemann et al. (1994:6).

authority in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This process stimulated two kinds of social cleavage. The first involved church-state conflict. The centralising, standardising and mobilising national governments were brought increasingly into conflict with the organised interests of the Catholic Church over the control of the national educational system and the maintenance of the Church's established privileges. In Britain (except Northern Ireland), this conflict was settled hundreds of years ago, contributing to the lack of religious parties.

The second cleavage was a centre-periphery cleavage. The new and expanding agencies of the central state had to face the

relatively autonomous, regionally-based communities. Thus the centre-periphery cleavage pitted the dominant national culture against ethnic, linguistic or religious minorities in the peripheral sectors of society. Britain is a classic example of a country with a long-standing division between centre and periphery. The Labour Party has always been the party of the industrial areas of England, as well as Scotland and Wales, while the Conservatives' strength lies in the regions around London and the South East. The recent emergence of nationalistic parties in Scotland and Wales further implies that the centre-periphery conflict in Britain has not yet been resolved.

The second wave—Industrial Revolution in the nineteenth century—also generated two new social tensions. The first was the land-industry cleavage. This was a conflict over tariffs (i.e. free trade versus protectionism) between industrial and commercial interests, on the one hand, and agrarian interests on the other. The landed gentry of Britain, for instance, was challenged by industrial entrepreneurs over property rights. As the industrial sector became dominant, a second cleavage emerged between owners and workers. This cleavage developed as a class conflict between the working class and the middle class, composed of business owners and the self-employed. Where trade unions created parties representing the working class—as in the case of the British Labour Party—they have had the most impact on the party system. Conflict within Labour movements across Europe, which reached a climax in the Bolshevik Revolution, later precipitated a rift between revolutionaries (communists) and reformists (socialists) over whether to support the international revolutionary movement to integrate the working class into the national state. This conflict led to the formation of Communist parties all over Europe.

Some scholars consider the Cultural Revolution in 1968 as the energiser of a new wave—the Post-Industrial Revolution (Inglehart 1977, 1987, 1990). They argue that affluent society, the growth of service industries and the importance of education as the key to one's social mobility, to name only a few, have produced more confident, outward-looking people, concerned with broad social and environmental issues. These people challenge the political order by seeking a new content and style of politics. They emphasise 'New Politics' issues, such as ecology, women's rights, peace, rather than 'economic growth', and encourage a participatory style of politics. This wave contributed to the emergence of New Social Movements—some of which were later transformed into political parties, such as the Green parties of

Germany, Belgium, Austria, Denmark, France, Italy and Switzerland.

According to Lipset and Rokkan, specific national conditions and differences in the timing and character of the National and Industrial Revolutions produced a variety of cleavage structures and patterns of political conflict. As social groups started to draw support from entrenched social interests, they won access to the political process before the extension of the franchise. When mass voting rights were granted, citizens were mobilised into supporting the party groups that were already represented in the political process. The Conservative Party in Britain, for example, became the representative of the middle-class establishment, and the Labour Party catered for the interests of the working class. The viability of political parties was therefore considerably enhanced by their ability to participate in elections and shape the institutional and electoral arrangements of their respective political systems. As new voters entered into the electorate with pre-existing partisan loyalties, the threshold for new social groups seeking a place in the party system became almost insurmountable. Cleavage structures became, therefore, the main determinant of the potential social bases of political conflict in each country.

The powerful association between religious orientations of the population and the pattern of voter alignment exemplifies Lipset and Rokkan's link between historical events and contemporary party systems. In countries where Catholicism had triumphed in the National Revolution, as in Austria, France, Belgium and Italy, citizens' religious involvement and attitudes toward the church were the most powerful predictor of party support.³ In countries where Protestantism was predominant, the role of religion in politics was largely unimportant by the early twentieth century. In Britain and the Scandinavian countries, for instance, occupational divisions were much more important than religious ones. In the religiously divided countries—the Netherlands, Germany and Switzerland—the religious factor was critical and included both a Protestant-Catholic division and a division between secular and religious forces.

By contrast, in the United States, the political consequences of social divisions have been muted (Lipset 1963). The separation of church and state has reduced the intensity of a religious cleavage, the mobility of the social and economic structure has reduced the intensity of the class differences, and the federal system of governance has produced inconsistent patterns of alignment, hence reducing the intensity of regional cleavages. As the voting

franchise was granted earlier and social groups were less polarised, the variety of alliance patterns among the leaders of the various groups has reflected the experiences of the Civil War and class alignments created later in the 1920s, rather than the diverse and polarised patterns which are more evident in Western Europe.

At whatever point it took place, however, the effect of mass democratic participation was to 'freeze' the party alternatives of a given national polity into a party system:

the party systems of the 1960s reflect, with few but significant exceptions, the cleavage structures of the 1920s. This is a crucial characteristic of Western competitive politics in the age of 'high mass consumption': *the party alternatives, and in remarkably many cases the party organisations, are older than the majorities of the national electorates.*

(Lipset and Rokkan 1967:50)

Thus, the 'freezing' hypothesis implies that when parties form, they reflect the political cleavages that are relevant, but they may survive and 'freeze' these cleavages even after they have become less salient. In such a case, the party organisation can still mobilise individuals to political activity even if the individual no longer shares the particular concerns that led to the formation of the group in the first place.

Richard Rose and Derek Urwin came to the same conclusion with an analysis of post-1945 developments:

Whatever index of change is used—a measure of trends or any of several measures of fluctuations—the picture is the same: the electoral strength of most parties in Western nations since the war had changed very little from election to election, from decade to decade, or within the lifespan of a generation. The consistency of this finding increases confidence in the indicators used. In short, the first priority of social scientists concerned with the development of parties and party systems since 1945 is to explain the absence of change in a far from static period in political history.

(Rose and Urwin 1970:295)

Many scholars set out to test Lipset and Rokkan's (1967) 'freezing' hypothesis. Treating party systems as a dependent variable, the argument went as follows: if cleavages have been frozen since the 1920s, party systems should be characterised by low levels of

volatility through time. If this is not the case, then the freezing hypothesis is incorrect. Attention now turns to the systemic variables used by those scholars who test the hypothesis whilst treating party systems as a dependent variable, and the ways these variables are measured.

The study of parties and their electorates

Scholars who approach the problem of party system change as a matter concerning the development of the parts of the party system have singled out four 'systemic' properties (Lane and Ersson 1994). Subsequently they use these properties to examine the extent of system change: (i) the number of parties and their relative strength; (ii) the ideological distance maintained by the parties, that is, the extent of polarisation; (iii) movement in party support—party system volatility; and (iv) societal cleavages as they are reflected by the parties.

Traditionally political scientists have been very much preoccupied with the number of parties, because this number was considered important for the mechanics of the party system. Since the late 1960s it has become customary to describe the format of a party system in terms of the number of parties as well as the distribution of party strength within it. Duverger (1964) is famous for his classification scheme of the single-party, the Anglo-Saxon two-party and the multi-party system. In the same vein Blondel (1968) talks of two-party systems, two-and-a-half-party systems and multi-party systems with or without dominant parties. More recently, Sartori's (1976) analysis also begins with numbers—'the number of parties immediately indicates, albeit roughly, an important feature of the political system'—building a distinction between two-party systems, and systems of moderate and extreme pluralism, before going on to also incorporate the notion of ideological distance between the parties as an intervening variable.

Many attempts have been made to provide single number quantitative indices of party system format which would make it possible to compare party systems and to describe changes in them.⁴ Scholars who examined party system polarisation have focused on Sartori's (1976) notion of left-right polarisation. Based on the assumption that party systems throughout the world can meaningfully be profiled in terms of polarisation along the left-right continuum, Sartori categorised party systems in terms of the number of ideological 'poles' upon which they pivot and the 'distance' in left-right terms between poles. According to Sartori,

party systems are 'bipolar' if support revolves around two poles in the left-right scale, regardless of the number of parties involved, and 'multi-polar' if support pivots upon more than two poles. The number of poles depends upon the ideological distance between poles. 'Left-right polarisation', then, essentially maps the level of support for political parties at various points along the left-right continuum.

A more specific understanding of left-right polarisation translates party system polarisation into a quantitative score. This is done in a variety of ways: as the distances and contiguities perceived by political élites, generally legislators, in terms of how close or, conversely, how alien they feel the other parties to be;⁵ or as the distance resulting from a content analysis of electoral manifestos or ideological stands of the parties.⁶ For any party system, however, the measurement of polarisation consists of plotting each party's left-right score against its share of votes in a national election. One indicator, the left-right score, shows the point on the left-right scale that a party system reaches at a certain election, and this value is weighted on the basis of the electoral strength of the parties. Another indicator is Taylor and Herman (1971) and Sigelman and Young's (1978:357) index of polarisation; a system is polarised maximally when 50 per cent of the electorate is at their respective poles, whereas there is no polarisation if all are in the centre of the political map.

Electoral volatility is the propensity for individuals to vote for different parties at successive elections. There are two measures of electoral volatility. Net volatility refers to the net change in voting support between two elections, and as such it is a measure of temporal change in party support. By contrast, overall volatility indicates the total number of vote switchers between consecutive elections, and as such it is a measure of voter constancy. While net volatility is often postulated to be an indicator of overall volatility the measures need not be related: a change in one can occur without a commensurate change in the other (Crewe 1985).

The more frequent conceptualisation of volatility involves drawing an explicit link between the Lipset-Rokkan (1967) theory and the electoral fortunes of individual parties. The cumulative empirical evidence derived from studies which measure volatility at the level of the individual party offers little to sustain Lipset and Rokkan's theory. Post-war trends in aggregate party support suggest that even if the thesis was valid through to the end of the 1960s (Rose and Urwin 1970), the volatility of the 1970s and 1980s has undermined its continued relevance (Wolinetz 1979, Maguire 1983, Pedersen 1983, Franklin 1992). The longer-term

aggregate trends are even more damaging, for they indicate a prolonged pattern of instability which can be traced back to the 1920s (Lane and Ersson 1994) and beyond (Shamir 1984).

By contrast, Bartolini and Mair's (1990) study validates Lipset and Rokkan's theory, as it indicates an overwhelming stability in the level of electoral mobility across the class boundary between 1885 and 1985. This conclusion was reached by using the measurement of bloc volatility; bloc members were considered to be those sharing a similar class orientation. Bartolini and Mair justified Lipset and Rokkan's theory (1967:52-3) partly on the grounds that it was never intended to apply to specific parties, but to electoral 'alternatives' which might vary in their 'organisational expressions', and partly on the grounds that 'it is impossible to interpret a change in the level of volatility as being necessarily the result of a change in the level of cleavage hold' (Bartolini and Mair 1990:36), meaning that total volatility is an inadequate indicator of cleavage persistence because it is sensitive to a variety of factors (such as cleavage strength). In addition they suggested that the increase in electoral volatility recorded by those scholars who measure it on the basis of individual parties was due to the increase in electoral choice, that is, in terms of the growing number of competing parties, rather than changes in traditional ties of loyalty to class or party.

Developments in party systems can also be explained in terms of social cleavages; the evolution of social cleavages, the decline of existing cleavages and the replacement of cleavages by different bases for electoral choice. Exploring these developments often requires surveys which provide data on voter choices which are then correlated with variables, such as community size, educational attainment, gender, income, religiosity, social class and so on. The measure of alignment draws, for example, on the concept of 'class voting' introduced by Alford (1963) and explored further by Lijphart (1979). In each country the citizens are divided into two major groups, each containing at least one third of the citizenship. The groups are based on occupation of the head of the family. The percentage of workers voting for parties on the left is then compared with the percentage of non-workers voting for these parties. The difference between the two percentages is called the 'index of class voting'. Religious, demographic and ethnic orientations may be treated similarly, producing index scores which can be interpreted as the intensity of party-social group alignment.

An explicit link between changes in such alignments (i.e. electoral change) and the work of Lipset and Rokkan (i.e. cleavage

development/decline) focuses on cleavage persistence. Using survey data in the analysis of cleavage persistence, scholars direct attention to the crucial 'cyclical pattern' inherent in the development of any cleavage, whereby the divide is sharply polarised when first mobilised, then characterised by convergence, and finally, as it becomes institutionalised, generates less commitment within the mass electorate, resulting in 'dealignment', that is, a decline of party alignment and popular attachment. This may lead to a situation in which there is no longer so much need for voters to rely on political cues provided by social reference groups. Using this method, Dalton, *et al.* (1984: 454–60), for example, have emphasised that a pattern of decline is evident in the case of class cleavage in Western Europe. A number of possible cleavages have been proposed as defining new bases of electoral choice, such as public versus private employment, public versus private consumption, post-bourgeois versus materialistic values and male versus female concerns.

The 'systemic' relevance of societal cleavages can be challenged, however, on the grounds that:

the cleavage structure relates to the social make-up of support accruing to individual parties—not to the 'system', not that is if we follow a definition based on interaction. Social cleavages, and changes in them, naturally do have important consequences for the system as a whole, but those effects are registered through the individual parties and expressed by the other dimensions—the number and relative size of parties, the extent/intensity of polarisation, the volatility of the party system.

(Smith 1989a:251)

According to Smith, the number of parties and their relative size, polarisation and electoral volatility have a far greater claim to be direct systemic variables than do societal cleavages. Although the three indicators are determining factors, they are only indirectly related to the 'system' as such and are mediated through parties. The implications of Smith's view is that cleavage change may not in itself imply party system change. This view—questioning the systemic relevancy of cleavages—takes the discussion one step further to the evaluation of the party system as an independent variable.

**PARTY SYSTEM AS AN INDEPENDENT
VARIABLE: THE DEVELOPMENT OF A SYSTEM
OF INTERACTION**

The properties of the party system are not just those of its component parts; they also involve the totality of inter-party relationships. These relationships can be seen as 'streams of interaction' (Sjöblom 1968: 174), justifying a definition of the 'party system' as 'the system of interactions resulting from inter-party competition' (Sartori 1976: 44). If a party system is comprised of an independent set of interparty relationships then we must examine the impact the system has on society, and the way political parties operate in a governmental setting. For the former, it may be asked how issues and conflicts become relevant to politics, and whether societal changes necessarily lead to political changes. For the latter, it may be inquired how the parties and the party system relate to political stability.

The place of parties: Sartori's framework

These issues are addressed by Giovanni Sartori (1968, 1969) who, in response to Lipset and Rokkan's (1967) freezing hypothesis, has confronted the question of how party systems maintain themselves. That the organisations that translate societal cleavages into electoral alternatives remain in control of the political agenda, and that 'frozen' party systems should result is, according to Sartori, intriguing only:

as long as we persist in understanding party systems as dependent variables. It is not intriguing, however, if we realise that a frozen party system is simply a party system that intervenes in the political process as an independent *system of channelment*, propelled and maintained by its own laws of momentum.

(Sartori 1968:21)

In other words, if political parties and party systems are looked upon as factors intervening between society and government then we must look for the 'strategic' capabilities of parties, i.e. in terms of their ability to initiate moves and countermoves, rather than accommodate their strategy and organisation to the changing environment. In this sense, issues and conflicts become relevant to politics partly, if not largely, because parties make them so. The use of this notion allows Sartori to suggest that parties and party

systems change only to the extent that they lose control of their agenda-setting role. If we then accept that parties share this control with other organisations, such as interest groups, we could suggest that a party system changes to the extent that either there is a weakening of the link between the parties and these organisations, or that these organisations develop and operate independently of parties.

If political parties are an important link between society and the political system, how are systems of interactions (i.e. party systems) to be analysed? Sartori (1976) moves away from purely numerical classifications and gives a new valuation to the ideological dimension and the question of how far away from each other parties are in terms of ideas, the intensity of the conflict between them and their role in government. Sartori thus proposes an articulate typology combining the number of parties (fragmentation) with the extent of ideological distance between the parties in a party system (polarisation). His criteria for counting —‘relevant’ parties are those which have (i) coalition potential or (ii) blackmail potential—allow him to construct the first dimension of the typology: with less than five parties, there is low fragmentation, with more than five parties, high fragmentation. The second dimension is polarisation: the greater the overall ideological distance between the parties, the more the system is polarised, and vice versa. Based on these dimensions Sartori divides competitive party systems into two basic types, each with its own mechanics. The first type comprises two-party systems and moderate pluralist systems. Two-party systems are characterised by a format of two parties, each is sufficiently strong to govern alone. The competitive strategy is centripetal, both are fighting for the centre votes. In other words, each side moderates its political position in an attempt to win a majority of parliamentary seats in general elections. Centripetal drives are therefore moderating drives which result in stable and effective forms of parliamentary government. Moderate pluralism defines systems with the following features: (i) three to five parties with relatively slight ideological distance between major parties; (ii) an inclination to ‘coalition alternation’ rather than party alternation; and (iii) predominantly centripetal competition, that is, the fight for the centre votes. The only difference between two-partism and moderate pluralism, since the direction of party competition is the same, is that in the former, one party governs alone while the opposition is sufficiently strong to be considered a viable alternative; whereas in the latter no party is sufficiently strong to govern alone.

The second type identified by Sartori characterises fragmented (more than five parties) and highly polarised party systems. The most classic examples of this are polarised pluralist systems. Although Sartori specifies eight conditions which determine whether a system would be classified as polarised pluralism, six of them are derived from two conditions. The first is the presence of anti-system parties, such as the French and Italian Communist and Fascist parties during the 1950s and 1970s. In contrast to parties which protest while accepting the rules of the game, anti-system parties abide by a belief system which does not share the values of the political order within which they operate. Such a party 'undermines the legitimacy of the regime it opposes' (Sartori 1976:133), that is, it aims at changing the system of government rather than just the government *tout court*. The second condition is the existence of a bilateral opposition which exists when the opposition is located on both sides of the government. In polarised pluralism we find therefore two oppositions which are mutually exclusive.

These factors condition political processes in both the electoral and parliamentary arenas. In the electoral arena, the presence of anti-system parties at both extremes of the left-right political spectrum results in centrifugal drives, that is the fight for extremes, which is conducive to immoderate or extremist politics. In the parliamentary arena, because anti-system parties are considered unacceptable as coalition partners, governing majorities must be formed from the remaining pro-system parties. The result is perpetual rule from the centre, that is, a permanent coalition with a peripheral participation of centre-left and/or centre-right parties. Given the 'fixed menu' from which coalition partners are chosen, parties can withdraw from government knowing their chances of returning to office are excellent. Consequently, government turnover in polarised pluralist systems is rather high. Finally, in policy terms, the consequence of the diversity of coalition partners (given the polarisation of the party system) is immobilism: since consensus among members of the coalition government is difficult to achieve, no action is often the dominant mode and the status quo is maintained. This immobilism, in turn, contributes to a shift of popular support towards the anti-system parties and thereby adds to the overall instability of such party systems.

An additional category proposed by Sartori is the predominant party system which is characterised by a dominant party which is sufficiently strong to govern alone, with other parties permitted to exist as legal and legitimate—if not necessarily effective—

competitors of the predominant party. The predominant party is consistently supported by a winning majority thereby obtaining a monopolistic permanence in government. It follows that a predominant party can cease at any moment to be predominant. According to Sartori, four consecutive absolute majorities can be sufficient indication for a predominance of a party, provided that the electorate appears stabilised, and the party surpasses the absolute majority threshold. To the extent that any of these conditions do not obtain, a judgement will have to await a longer period.

Sartori's typology enables us to detect party system change insofar as one defines 'change' as a shift from one type of party system to another, and as long as one recognises that the typology is not sensitive to variations in the 'extent' of change. In some cases, the shift may follow the appearance or disappearance of a party which, in turn, may change the direction of competition. In other cases, as in the predominant party system, even a very small electoral change may necessitate reclassification. The typology also assists in understanding how a system functions (i.e. the 'mechanics' of the system) as long as one accepts the assumption of left-right predominance. Sartori's analysis also encompasses government stability and instability, that is, a high or low rate of government turnover. However, the analysis is not without criticisms. It raises a number of problems which are discussed elsewhere (von Beyme 1985; Allum 1995). These problems—the numerical criterion in the classification of party systems, the concept of the anti-system party, the role of alternation, and the number of electoral victories required to define a system as a predominant one, to name only few—ought to be addressed on theoretical and empirical terms by further research.

Sartori's definition of a party system points to the multiplicity of inter-relationships that could be relevant to the delimitation of a 'system'. Perhaps the most important set of relationships is between government and opposition interaction. Government-Opposition interaction has a far greater claim to be a direct systemic variable than, say, 'societal cleavages' or 'electoral volatility'. Important as they are as determining factors, the latter are only indirectly related to the 'system' as such and are mediated through the parties. In contrast, the conjoining of Government-Opposition refers directly to the 'system of interaction'. It is also inclusive in the sense that all individual parties belong to one group or the other.

**Government-Opposition relationship as a
systemic property: Maor and Smith's framework**

Maor and Smith (1993a, 1993b) focus on the ways government and opposition deal with difficult issues. Two important distinctions underlie their analysis; a distinction between conforming and non-conforming issues, and a distinction between value- and resource-related issues. Conforming issues can be counted as matters which can, without too much difficulty, be absorbed into the dominant dimension of party competition. Non-conforming issues are those issues that—with the party competition itself restricted to a single dimension—show themselves highly resistant to a unilateral ordering. The second distinction is between resource-related issues, i.e. matters of allocation, distribution, and redistribution, and value-related issues, i.e. matters of beliefs.

At the risk of undue simplification, Maor and Smith propose that in the case of Western Europe four issue dimensions are especially relevant: (i) the left-right dimension; (ii) issues of new politics versus old politics; (iii) nationalistic issues (immigration, European integration, foreign policy questions, etc.); and (iv) 'maverick' issues. For any party system, the presence of a multiple-ordering dimension of party competition—such as the left-right—enables issues derived from other dimensions to be accommodated under it. Such a dimension is assumed to prevail over other dimensions because 'in a mass communicating world characterized by mass politics a maximum of visual simplicity coupled with a maximum of manipulability represent an almost unbeatable combination' (Sartori 1976:342). This description, according to Maor and Smith (1993a), points to a process during which non-conforming issues are being transformed into conforming issues; and value-related issues are being transformed into resource-related issues. This squeezing process is comprised of three stages: (i) transferring value-related issues into resource-related ones; (ii) subsuming these issues within the most accommodating dimension; and (iii) transferring these issues to the most accommodating area.

Regarding the former stage, illustrative of value-related issues which are accommodated within the left-right dimension in Western Europe, for instance, are civil-rights, privacy, civil liberties, law and order, homelessness and corruption. During parliamentary competition, government and opposition may compete over these value-related issues. However, in the course of electoral competition, these issues are often subsumed into the

left-right axis by being transformed into resource-related issues. This is done by government and opposition treating these issues in terms of allocation of resources. Instead of focusing on the merits of law and order, for instance, attention is directed to its cost in terms of the resources allocated to the police force or other crime prevention agencies.

In the New-Politics versus Old Politics axis, there are also numerous value-related issues, such as the 'right to enjoy a healthy environment', women's rights, peace, etc. These issues may be a focus of parliamentary competition. However, during electoral competition they are often transformed into resource-related ones by treating them in 'allocation of resources' terms (for instance, the resources directed at environmental protection or environmental education programmes). In relation to the Nationalism axis, a host of value-related issues include 'loss of sovereignty', the democratic deficit, EU Bill of Rights and so on. During electoral competition these issues are often transformed into resource-related matters once emphasis is redirected, for example, to the financial benefits accruing to a Member State as a result of EU membership. Alternatively, an appeal to 'national sovereignty' could be the result of EU budgetary claims, i.e. resources to values.

Regarding the second stage of the 'squeezing process' — subsuming of issues within the most accommodating dimension — a convenient starting point is that the competitive framework of European party systems is determined principally by the predominance of the left-right dimension. Voters perceive political competition according to the distribution of parties on the left-right axis, and the electorate is faced with alternatives as they are shaped by parties who wish to maintain the loyalty of their traditional voters by emphasising left-right issues. It could be argued that issues which are transformed from value- to resource-matters can usually be accommodated within the existing pattern of party competition, and that this pattern is normally restricted to the single left-right dimension. In fact, Sartori appears only to allow for multi-dimensional party competition in systems, 'in which another "unsqueezable" dimension calls for two parties (at least) to compete among themselves in such a way as to operate a distinct subsystem' (Sartori 1976:342). A case in point would be the competition for the same electorate between, say, two national minority parties, which is carried on without reference to the left-right competition of the major system.

In the second phase, thus, the main parties attempt to keep the divisive issue off the political agenda until it can be subsumed. As

the saliency theory predicts, parties automatically deemphasise the aspects of the issue which cannot be expressed in line with the parties' positions on the left-right scale. Government and Opposition parties are also able to collaborate to control the political agenda (Dunleavy 1991). This can be through the implicit avoidance of the issue in parliamentary and electoral confrontation. For example, in Britain the issue would not be raised in Prime Ministers' Question Time by any of the Labour and Conservative front-bench spokesmen. However, there may also be more explicit government-opposition 'co-operation' on the issue. This can range from simple coordination measures, such as the establishment of an 'all-party' parliamentary committee, to more drastic measures, such as the formation of a 'grand coalition' on a particular piece of legislation. The level of coordination will thus depend on the potential of the issue to challenge the party system core.

Regarding the third stage of the 'squeezing process'—transferring the issues to the most accommodating arena—a convenient starting point is the fact that resource-related issues are bargainable issues. Thus, electoral competition often revolves around such issues. After the election, parties can undertake a smooth transfer to the parliamentary bargaining arena without undermining each others' electoral appeal. By competing over bargainable issues voters in multi-party systems are faced with questions regarding party co-operation after the election. Each party must, to some extent, make it clear who it intends to bargain with after the electoral battle. By contrast, value-related issues are non-bargainable issues. Raising such issues on the public agenda in the course of electoral competition may add another dimension to the established uni-dimensional character of electoral competition. This, in turn, may threaten parties' traditional support base, as well as draw into the electoral game citizens who never bothered to vote. In addition, issue parties which try to compete over value-related issues find very soon that—if they want to survive—they are forced to define themselves on the left-right dimension. In other words, they have to state who they intend to co-operate with in order to advance their policy aims. At this stage in party life there is often a split since there was never a discussion over coalition participation (for instance, the German Green Party split in 1993).

According to Maor and Smith (1993a), when a 'maverick' issue emerges the 'squeezing process' may be disrupted. A maverick issue is a value-related question which emerges in a bottom-up way, and is derived from an unrepresented dimension of party

competition. Such an issue has a 'maverick' impact since government and opposition are neither able to deal adequately with the issue themselves nor yet successfully exclude it from the public agenda. One possible development is a split in an existing party or a formation of a new party and, if it succeeds in crossing the threshold of representation, its maverick qualities work directly on the structure of party competition. Thus, in the first instance it will have taken support from an established party (or parties), and this impact in turn has two distinct effects. One is to force an affected party to make a response to the issue raised, the other is to force the new party into the major axis of party competition. Assuming that this major axis is the left-right one, if both kinds of effect are strong the outcome is a change in the content of left-right discourse coupled with the new party having to take its place somewhere within the left-right ordering. Once this restructuring in both respects is complete, then the maverick potential of the new party will have been exhausted.

According to Maor and Smith (1993a) both government and opposition, as well as parties making the two blocs, may find themselves forced to deal with non-conforming issues. It is following this process—especially when maverick issue arises—that challenges to government and opposition come, and they have to respond. They argue that they may implement three modes of interaction: conflict mode, cooperative mode and convergence mode. The former implies that no government-opposition co-operation is initiated, but rather a series of unilateral activities by the parties affected by the emergence of the non-conforming issues. The second mode refers to the evolution of a short-term, *ad hoc* and informal co-operation between government and opposition (such as, joint agenda-setting or joint institutional manipulation). The third mode relates to the development of a long-term, informal co-operation between government and opposition. Maor and Smith (1993a) argue that these various modes are directly related to the party system as a whole since the system is not an actor, but dependent on party interaction. The outcome of the challenges derived from the emergence of non-conforming issues is therefore a significant element according to whether it leads to increased conflict or to forms of co-operation and coordination between government and opposition. Thus, party systems could be classified according to modes of government-opposition interaction; a change in the mode indicates a party system change.

The discussion so far tries to draw a clear line between the study of parties and their electorate on the one hand and the

system of inter-party interactions on the other. The study of parties and their electorate is based on the view of the party system being a dependent variable, hence, attention is mainly directed at the format of the party system. By contrast, the study of the system of interaction is based on the view of the party system as an independent variable, hence, attention is directed mainly at the mechanics of the system. Not surprisingly, each approach produces its own explanation to the problem of party system change.

The empirical section which follows elaborates the arenas for government-opposition interaction in the British polity. It then examines the political dimension of party competition, i.e. the dominant dimension over which parties compete during general elections, and the societal dimension of party competition, i.e. the dimension along which voting behaviour changes. Finally I explain how the arenas and dimensions of party competition relate to each other, and the implications in terms of changes in the British party system.

CONTINUITY AND CHANGE IN THE BRITISH PARTY SYSTEM

If one reflects on the format of the British party system, the most striking conclusion is that a single party—the Conservative Party—has controlled the governmental arena since 1979, and—during the period of 1918–1993—has exercised state power with an overall majority more than four times as often as Labour politicians. If the Conservatives retain office until the end of 1996, either under John Major or under another leader, this ratio will carry on rising past 4.5 to one (Dunleavy 1994:145). And yet both the electoral arena and citizens' political attitudes generally, remain resolutely two-party during 1918–74, and multi-party during 1974–95. If one reflects on the direction of party competition in the British electoral arena, the conclusion is that centripetal trends were recorded as early as the 1930s, reaching a climax during 1945–79. These trends were replaced by centrifugal trends throughout Mrs Thatcher's term in office but were largely reversed during Mr Major's premiership (see [Chapter 7](#)). Understanding these developments in the British party system requires first and foremost an appreciation of the 'arenas' of government-opposition interactions and the 'dimensions' over which such interactions take place. Consider first the sites where government and opposition employ their resources to attain electoral victory.

Arenas of interaction

The British state is highly centralised—there is a central governing authority located in the government, directed by the Prime Minister—and the government's parliamentary majority provides it with the power to enact laws. To achieve parliamentary majorities, parties must win general elections. The electoral arena in the British polity is therefore the decisive one. After the elections, the Prime Minister, who is drawn from the majority party, chooses the other ministers. Because of party unity the Prime Minister can count upon its majority in the House of Commons to support the government's policies. The absence of a written constitution puts great formal power in the hands of the incumbent government, although the presence of a strong opposition party does mean that the government has to be careful about what it does, but this is because of potential troubles at the next general election, not because of any veto the opposition could impose in Parliament. Parliamentary authority is unlimited: it can make or unmake law on any subject whatsoever; and it can do so retrospectively. It is important to note, however, that Britain's membership of the European Union impaired the doctrine of parliamentary sovereignty as it imposes constraints on what the Parliament can actually do, and enables the European Court of Justice to overturn or change Acts of Parliament.⁷ In addition, parliamentary sovereignty is restricted by public opinion, and is constantly challenged by demands for devolution of authority and regional autonomy.

A key reason for the decisiveness of the electoral arena for political parties in Britain is the 'plurality' election system, which tends to produce a majority party in the directly-elected House of Commons. The electoral system, often described as 'first-past-the-post' or relative majority method, stipulates that, in single-member districts, voters can cast one vote each and that the candidate with the most votes wins. Five countries have used plurality and have used it almost without exception: Canada, India, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the United States. In the UK, in each of the 651 constituencies, the candidate with the largest number of votes wins the seat.⁸ The plurality system, as well as all other majoritarian methods, make it difficult for small- and medium-sized parties to gain or increase their representations unless their support is geographically concentrated. This is because they need to win majorities or pluralities of the vote in electoral districts. For this reason, all majoritarian systems tend to systematically favour the larger parties, to produce

disproportional election outcomes, and to discourage multipartism (Lijphart 1994). In other words, they usually have the effect of turning the largest single minority of votes cast in the national electorate into a clear majority of seats in Parliament for the largest single party.

Rae (1971) describes four possible outcomes of elections: (i) an *earned majority* of seats won by a party that has also won a majority of the votes; (ii) a *manufactured majority* in the legislature won by a party that has won less than a majority of the votes; (iii) a *natural minority* where no party wins either a vote or a seat majority; and (iv) an *artificial minority* where one of the parties does win a vote majority but not a majority of the seats. Analysing electoral systems and party systems during 1945–90, Lijphart (1994) has found that the British parliamentary elections have produced 92.3 per cent majorities, all of which have been manufactured majorities. Indeed, at the fourteen General Elections since the Second World War—shown in Table 2.2—the Conservative’s average score has been 43 per cent of the popular vote whereas Labour’s average score has been 41 per cent. During the post-war period, no party has ever won more than half of the votes cast, although individual candidates often achieve this in safe seats.

The plurality system also has a dramatic effect on the mechanics of the party system. It stands out as a system in which strategic behaviour by parties—aiming to accommodate themselves to the preferences of the voters, thereby fighting for the centre vote— operates to drastically reduce the effective number of parties. According to Lijphart (1994:96) the effective number of parties is reduced to an average of three parties, which is further reduced to just over two

Table 2.2 Patterns of discrimination for the major British parties caused by the plurality election system

	1945	1950	1951	1955	1959	1964	1966	1970	1974 (Feb.)	1974 (Oct.)	1979	1983	1987	1992	Average
Conservative	32	46	53	55	55	42	44	55	44	44	56	30	58	56	48
Labour	3	7	1	4	7	8	0	2	6	3	3	1	7	1	9

	19 45	19 50	19 51	19 55	19 59	19 64	19 66	19 70	19 74 (Feb.)	19 74 (Oct.)	19 79	19 83	19 87	19 92	Average
ats won															
% of votes cast	3 9. 8	4 3. 5	4 8. 0	4 9. 7	4 9. 4	4 3. 4	4 1. 9	4 6. 4	3 7. 9	3 5. 8	4 3. 9	4 2. 4	4 3. 4	4 2. 3	4 3. 4
Dif fer en tial	(- 6. 6)	(4 . 1)	(3 . 3)	(4 . 9)	(8 . 5)	(4 . 8)	(- 1. 9)	(5 . 9)	(8 . 8)	(7 . 8)	(9 . 4)	(1 8. 6)	(1 4. 4)	(9 . 3)	
La bo ur															
% of seats won	6 1. 4	5 0. 4	4 7. 2	4 3. 9	4 0. 9	5 0. 3	5 7. 6	4 5. 5	4 7. 4	5 0. 2	4 2. 3	3 2. 1	3 5. 2	4 1. 6	4 6. 1
% of votes cast	4 7. 8	4 6. 1	4 8. 8	4 6. 4	4 3. 8	4 4. 1	4 7. 9	4 3. 0	3 7. 1	3 9. 2	3 6. 9	2 7. 6	3 1. 7	3 5. 2	4 1. 1
Dif fer en tial	(1 3. 6)	(4 . 3)	(- 1. 6)	(- 2. 5)	(- 2. 9)	(6 . 2)	(9 . 7)	(2 . 5)	(1 0. 3)	(1 1. 0)	(5 . 4)	(4 . 5)	(3 . 5)	(6 . 4)	
Li be ral Pa rty															
% of seats won	1. 8	1. 4	0. 9	0. 9	0. 9	1. 4	1. 9	0. 9	2. 2	2. 0	1. 7				1. 4 5

	19 45	19 50	19 51	19 55	19 59	19 64	19 66	19 70	19 74 (Fe b.)	19 74 (Oc t.)	19 79	19 83	19 87	19 92	Av era ge
% of vot es ca st	9. 0	9. 1	2. 6	2. 7	5. 9	1. 1. 2	8. 5	7. 5	1 9. 3	1 8. 3	1 3. 8				9. 8
Dif fer en tia l	(- 7. 2)	(- 7. 7)	(- 1. 7)	(- 1. 8)	(5 . 0)	(- 9. 8)	(- 6. 6)	(- 6. 6)	(- 1 7. 1)	(- 1 6. 3)	(- 1 2. 1)				
Li be ral / SD P All ia nc e															
% of se ats wo n												3. 5	3. 3	3. 0	3. 2
% of vot es ca st												2 5. 4	2 3. 2	1 8. 3	2 2. 3
Dif fer en tia l												(- 2 1. 9)	(- 1 9. 9)	(- 1 5. 3)	

Source: Election results were obtained from Butler and Butler (1994:213-19)
Note: SDP/Liberal Alliance total for 1983 includes 17 Liberals and 6 SDP, and for 1987 17 Liberals and 5 SDP

by the mechanical effect of the plurality formula. This phenomenon is exemplified, for example, in the 1992 General

Election where for each 42,356 votes cast for it, the Conservative Party won an MP, and for every 42,875 votes cast for it, Labour won an MP. But it took the Liberal Democrats 304,183 votes to get each of its MPs elected.

This very high effective threshold has been discernible throughout the post-war period where the two leading parties have benefited from the plurality electoral system, which often produces a parliamentary majority on the basis of the minority of the votes cast. As Table 2.2 shows, the Conservative Party enjoyed a positive differential (that is, between the percentage of seats won and votes cast) of 18.6 per cent in 1983 and 14.4 per cent in 1987, while the Labour Party's highest differential reached 13.6 per cent in 1945 and 11 per cent in October 1974. On the other hand, the Liberal Party has been the most notable victim of the system in the post-1945 period. From 1945 to 1979 the Liberal share of the popular vote ranged from 2.6 per cent in 1951 to 18.3 per cent in February 1979. Yet the system prevented the Liberals from winning more than 2.2 per cent of the seats in the House of Commons. In February 1979 they obtained only 2.2 per cent of the seats despite gaining 19.3 per cent of the votes cast. In the 1983 and 1987 General Elections this multiplier effect worked even more dramatically against the interest of the Alliance of Liberals and Social Democrats which won 25.4 and 23.2 per cent of the votes cast, but only 3.5 and 3.3 per cent of the seats, respectively. This is not to say that the 'first-past-the-post' system discriminates against small third parties. In the 1992 General Election, for example, Plaid Cymru with just 0.3 per cent of the UK vote won twice as many seats as it would have received under a purely proportional system (Curtis and Steed 1992). Rather, the system discriminates against not only small but even medium-sized parties whose vote is geographically evenly spread.

The House of Commons itself then, is not an arena for genuine encounters between opposition and government so much as it is a forum from which to influence the next election. Parliamentary debate is not intended to influence Parliament so much as the public—and hence future elections. Bagehot (1887) was the first scholar to appreciate this situation, which was later theorised by Dicey (1959), Duverger (1964) and Lijphart (1984). Perhaps most influential was the latter who introduced the distinction between the *Westminster model* of democracy and the *Consensus model* of democracy. The essence of the Westminster model is that the party after an election can command a majority in the lower House of Parliament and is entitled to form the government. Once a government has been formed, it can remain in office until it is

defeated in a vote on a motion that the House has (has not) confidence in the government. The democratic conception underlying this basic element of the model is that of government by the majority of the people rather than government by as many people as possible. The Westminster model consists of the following nine inter-related elements: concentration of executive power; one-party and bare-majority cabinets; fusion of power and cabinet dominance; asymmetric bicameralism; two-party system; one-dimensional party system; plurality system of election; unitary and centralised government; unwritten constitution and parliamentary sovereignty; and exclusive representative democracy (Lijphart 1984:6–9).

Let us consider fusion of power and cabinet dominance which exemplifies the low significance of the parliamentary arena as a site for encounters between government and opposition. The Westminster system has built into it a capacity for direction by a few central actors, combined with informal checks and balances. Research into the concentration of power in the British executive became possible in 1992 when John Major released details of the Cabinet committee system for the first time. Analysing the make-up of committees suggests that a British Prime Minister is a minority shareholder in his or her own government, directly controlling no more than 15 per cent of the influence in the Cabinet committee system as a whole (Dunleavy 1994). However, once a Prime Minister assembles a group which includes two out of the three other key Cabinet positions (Defence Secretary, Chancellor of the Exchequer and Foreign Secretary), plus the two non-portfolio ministers who chair the Cabinet's domestic committees (the Lord Privy Seal and Lord President of the Council), plus two other loyalist ministers heading substantial departments, he or she can do anything. As Dunleavy notes:

A prime ministerial coalition of seven ministers constructed on these lines can easily control the full Cabinet of twenty-three, and exercise 'majority control' over the twenty-six standing Cabinet committees. The Cabinet in turn controls the other 'members' of the government, the ninety assorted MPs, tied into the promotion ladder on lower rungs as Ministers of State, Parliamentary Under-secretaries, or Parliamentary Private Secretaries—each of whom is 'voiceless', able only to accept and implement prime ministerial or Cabinet decisions or to resign. The government members in total thus constitute more than a third of the 330 MPs needed for an overall working majority. A further

third of any parliamentary party will inevitably be loyalist MPs, who will support their current party leadership under almost any conceivable circumstances. So although a numerical minority, the government members normally have no difficulty in controlling the parliamentary party as a whole... Thus, it is that seven ministers can concentrate the power of the whole Chinese box structure, and exercise it in a formally unfettered way, now unique amongst contemporary liberal democracies.

(Dunleavy 1994:149-50)

Thus, the party which after an election can command a majority in the lower House of Parliament is entitled to form a cabinet government wherein a few ministers have the capacity to override other centres of decision-making within the state apparatus. With such a strongly committed prime minister as Mrs Margaret Thatcher in power, the heart of the governmental machine was concentrated into the hands of even less than 'a few'. Under this kind of system, opposition parties are faced with the need to concentrate on winning round public opinion to its cause and its candidates so that it can win a future parliamentary majority. Every other use of its resources must be subordinated to this controlling purpose.

Dimensions of interaction

The theoretical section has called for the need to differentiate between the political dimension of party competition, that is, the dominant dimension of party competition during general elections, and the societal dimension of party competition, i.e. the dimensions along which voting behaviour changes. The former could be evaluated by analysing party manifestos and electoral speeches by the party leadership, whereas the latter refers largely to voting behaviour. The distinction between the political and the societal dimension has an important methodological implication, namely, party manifestos must be distinguished from the characteristics of the voters the parties represent. For instance, the fact that a party receives exceptionally strong support from rural voters does not automatically make it a rural party or necessarily indicate that rural/agriculture is an important issue dimension. Thus, electoral behaviour should be distinguished from party competition. The discussion which follows is therefore structured according to this distinction between the political and the social dimensions of party competition.

The political dimension of party competition

In the Westminster model, the political parties typically differ from each other along a single issue dimension, the socio-economic left-right dimension. According to Harmel and Janda (1982:28), there are four leftist versus rightist party positions on socio-economic policy:

- 1 governmental versus private ownership of the means of production;
- 2 a strong versus a weak governmental role in economic planning;
- 3 support for versus opposition to the redistribution of wealth from the rich to the poor; and
- 4 the expansion of versus resistance to governmental social welfare programmes.

Based on analyses of party manifestos, the dimension comprising these four basic components appears to be the most important issue dimension in Britain from 1945 to 1980 (Lijphart 1984:130). In fact, according to Lijphart, the distance between the political parties on the left-right spectrum appears to be greatest in the UK, as well as in Scandinavian countries, Finland, Iceland, Australia and New Zealand.

The British party system is also characterised by a medium-salience dimension concerning foreign policy, namely, the parties' attitudes towards European integration. Although both the Labour and Conservative parties share a recognition regarding the importance of Britain being at the heart of Europe, the former is enthusiastically embracing an increased power for the European Union whereas the latter favours maintenance of the *status quo*. Perhaps the most striking trend is that party leaders in Britain are far more strongly polarised about Europe than voters (Norton 1994). Not surprisingly, EC policy has been the most conspicuously poorly integrated issue, one which divided Labour from the early 1970s to the mid-1980s, and then progressively sapped the cohesion of the Conservative's government from 1985 to 1990—helping to trigger the resignations of Nigel Lawson, Geoffrey Howe, and thereby Thatcher's demise. Conflicts over EC policy were suppressed in the run-up to the 1992 elections in both major parties following the Maastricht Treaty but they returned to haunt the leaderships of both parties in 1992—following Britain's exit from the European Exchange Rate Mechanism (ERM). Discussions concerning European Monetary Union and the

agenda for the 1996 Inter-Governmental Conference further contributed to internal party tensions, mainly within the Conservative Party.

A similar conclusion to that drawn by Lijphart (1984) was reached by Robertson (1987) and Laver and Ben Hunt (1992). In Laver and Ben Hunt's study British academics were asked to rate the salience of each policy dimension, which was then computed to yield a general estimate of the relative salience of different policy dimensions in the country. The study indicates that the 'taxes versus services' dimension explains 58 per cent of the variance in the experts' scoring of party positions on eight policy variables. An additional 17.2 per cent of the variance in the experts' scoring is explained by the public ownership dimension. Viewed in purely inductive terms, this might seem to be very nearly a 'uni-dimensional' party system.

Perhaps the most important conclusion of Laver and Ben Hunt's study is that different parties (i.e. party leaders) have different salience weights in almost every dimension observed. This diversity of actors' perceptions of the importance of the main policy dimensions is shown in [Table 2.3](#). It is immediately clear that there are major differences between British parties in terms of the perceived salience of the main policy dimensions. To take a couple of examples at random, consider the salience of the economic and foreign policy dimensions. There is widespread disagreement between British parties over the importance of economic and foreign policy in party competition. The Conservative Party is judged to rate economic policy (i.e. 'increase services versus cut tax') as well as foreign policy as being almost twice as important as do the nationalist parties. By contrast, the Liberal Democrats consider the environment and decentralisation of decisions as being much more important than do any of the other parties.

Let us also consider left-right trends in the British polity, that is, the post-1945 programme emphases of the leading parties. Klingemann, Hofferbert and Budge (1994) have examined such trends between 1945 and 1987 as follows; the percentage of space devoted to 'right-wing' emphases (defence, law and order, freedom and initiative) has been subtracted from the percentage given to 'left-wing' themes (social services, peace, and international co-operation, among others). The more right-wing emphases, the more the party finds itself at the bottom of the graph; the more left-wing the emphases, the higher up it goes. [Figure 2.1](#) shows that the left-right trends are very consistent in terms of British post-war political history. Labour and Conservative parties came

close to each other in a leftward direction during the era of consensus in the 1950s (see [Chapter 7](#)), but moved rightward in the 1960s as Labour stressed such new topics as technology, while the Conservatives adopted New Right thinking. During the 1980s the Conservatives under Margaret Thatcher's premiership

Table 2.3 The salience of issue dimensions in Britain, by party (1=lowest; 20=highest)

<i>Dimension</i>	<i>Parties</i>				
<i>Cons.</i>	<i>Labour</i>	<i>Social & Lib. Dem.</i>	<i>Plaid Cymru</i>	<i>SNP</i>	
Increase services vs cut tax	17.5	14.7	12.5	9.4	10.4
Pro friendly relations with USSR vs anti	14.1	12.0	10.5	5.9	7.4
Pro public ownership vs anti	16.3	13.6	9.6	8.4	9.1
Pro permissive social policy vs anti	11.9	14.8	13.1	10.9	11.2
Anticlerical vs proclerical	5.6	4.6	3.7	5.8	5.4
Pro urban interests vs anti	9.8	9.5	9.8	11.2	9.5
Pro decentralisation of decisions vs anti	11.7	12.4	15.3	16.2	16.6
Environment over growth vs growth over envir.	10.8	12.9	15.5	13.1	12.5
No influence on party policy vs high influence	6.3	12.2	13.3	13.6	13.4
No influence on participation in government vs high	5.6	8.7	9.3	10.0	9.9
Do not look to future vs look many years	2.8	3.2	3.2	2.8	2.8
Give up office vs give up policy	13.5	11.5	13.0	7.0	7.2
Can use groups vs not	9.5	9.4	14.7	13.9	13.1

<i>Dimension</i>	<i>Parties</i>				
<i>Cons.</i>	<i>Labour</i>	<i>Social & Lib. Dem.</i>	<i>Plaid Cymru</i>	<i>SNP</i>	
Close to resp vs not	12.1	7.0	6.4	11.0	9.4
Antinuclear vs pronuclear	19.0	12.8	13.0	13.5	12.2

Source: Laver and Ben Hunt (1992:157–60)

continued to move right, while Labour moved first left in the early 1980s, and then back to the centre following the emergence of a moderate leadership (Klingemann, *et al.* 1994). In addition, as both parties set a left-right agenda, the most important Liberal topics, such as, co-partnership in industry, additional concern for regional interests and electoral reform did not get in. Consequently, '[t]he Liberals oscillate wildly between left and right, leapfrogging over the other parties. Only after 1970 do they stay between the other two, but even then they maintain a see-saw motion'. (Klingemann, *et al.* 1994:85)

So far we have examined the dimensions of party competition in terms of generalised left-right differences derived from analyses of party programmes. Policy positions in party programmes are relevant to party competition in the electorate since they will, among other things, be taken into account by voters when deciding how to behave at election time. The extent to which party policy positions are related to electoral success has to do, among other things, with the preferences of voters and their subsequent electoral behaviour, to which we now turn.

The societal dimension of party competition

The electorate is not an unchanging entity, nor is it stable. Changes will occur because cleavage structures change; modern societies present many features that are quite different from those that dominated when the party systems of the 1960s were established, and in particular their inhabitants are better educated and have the opportunity to be better informed about politics. Changes may also be seen as resulting from other factors, rendering such social cleavages increasingly irrelevant to electoral choice. The rise of issues such as European integration, environment and women's rights, which do not easily fit within the confines of pre-existing cleavages, provide classic examples. Generational change should also be taken into account as another potential source of electoral change. These various sources of



Figure 2.1 Left-right programme trends, 1945–87

Source: Klingemann, Hofferbert and Budge (1994:60)

electoral change will now be discussed and the link between social changes and party system change in Britain explored.

Until 1918, the dominant cleavage in British politics had been religious, with support for the Conservative Party coming mainly from members of the established national churches in England and Scotland, and with support for the Liberal Party coming mainly from non-conformist Protestant sects (Wald 1983). An important secondary cleavage involved another subject—culture in Ireland—with the Irish Nationalist Party, until 1918 being the third largest party in the House of Commons, representing the majority of Catholic voters in Ireland. This cleavage was diffused considerably in 1921 when the Irish Free State (Eire) was established leaving only six northern counties with a minority of Catholic voters in the UK. But by 1964 these earlier cleavages had almost completely lost their political salience.

'Class is the basis of British politics', argued Peter Pulzer (1975: 102), 'all else is embellishment and detail'. Indeed, from the Second World War to the end of the 1960s, most voters were strongly aligned with one or other of the two major parties where social class was by far and away the most important determinant of electoral choice. As shown in Table 2.4, on average during 1964–70, 62 per cent of

Table 2.4 Social class and the vote, 1979–92 (%)

	<i>Average 1964–70</i>		1979		1983		1987		1992	
	<i>Non-manual</i>	<i>Manual</i>	<i>Non-manual</i>	<i>Manual</i>	<i>Non-manual</i>	<i>Manual</i>	<i>Non-manual</i>	<i>Manual</i>	<i>Non-manual</i>	<i>Manual</i>
Conservative	62	28 (34)	60	35 (25)	55	35 (20)	54	35 (19)	49	35 (14)
Liberal/Other	14	8 (6)	17	15 (2)	28	22 (6)	27	21 (6)	25	20 (5)
Labour	24	63 (39)	23	50 (27)	17	42 (25)	20	45 (25)	26	45 (19)

Note: Alford Index in brackets

Sources: 1964–83 data from Heath et al. (1985:30); 1987 data from Denver (1989:54–5); 1992 data from Crewe (1993:99)

non-manual workers combined with 28 per cent of manual workers voted for the Conservative Party. By contrast, 63 per cent of manual workers combined with 24 per cent of non-manual

workers voted for the Labour Party. The high intensity of the class cleavage is well demonstrated by the Alford Index. The index for the Labour Party vote—calculated by subtracting Labour's share of the non-manual vote from its share of the vote among manual workers—yields 39 (average) during 1964–70, 27 in 1979 and 25 in 1987. The index for the Conservative Party vote—calculated by subtracting Conservative's share of the manual vote from its share of the vote among non-manual workers—yields 34 (average) during 1964–70, 25 in 1979 and 20 in the 1983 election. Thus, if you knew a person's class there was a good chance that you could predict how he or she was going to vote. There was, then, class alignment: the working class tended to vote Labour and the middle class tended to vote Conservative.

Added to this was partisan alignment, which refers to 'a situation in which voters align themselves with a party by thinking of themselves as supporters of it, by having a party identification' (Denver 1989: 29). As Table 2.5 shows, in 1964, for instance, no less than 81 per cent of the electorate identified with either Labour or the Conservatives. Of these, 42 per cent were Labour identifiers whereas 39 per cent identified themselves with the Conservative Party. Similar levels of party identification were recorded in 1966 and 1970. In these election years, identification with the Labour and Conservative parties was around 81

Table 2.5 Party identification, 1964–92 (%)

	<i>Conservative</i>	<i>Labour</i>	<i>Combined Con-Lab</i>	<i>Liberals*</i>	<i>Others</i>	<i>None</i>
1964	39	42	81	12	1	7
1966	36	45	81	10	1	9
1970	40	43	83	8	1	8
Average 1964– 1970	38	43	81	10	1	8
1974 Feb	35	40	75	13	2	10
1974 Oct	34	40	74	14	2	10
1979	38	36	74	12	1	13
1983	36	31	67	17	2	14
1987	37	30	67	16	2	14
1992	43	31	74	12	3	11

* 'Liberal' refers to the Liberal 1964–79; Liberal, SDP or Alliance 1983–87; Liberal Democrats 1992

Source: Curtice (1994:15)

and 83 per cent, respectively. But, whereas Labour identifiers declined slightly from 45 to 43 per cent during 1966 and 1970, in the same period Conservative identifiers grew from 36 to 40 per cent. Given the fact that the socialisation process which determined party identification took place in the 1950s and 1960s within a class context, it is hardly surprising that voting took on a class character. That is to say, occupational class positions were a good guide to electoral choice 'not because class is an "issue" or a "problem" that is consciously perceived by voters, but because knowing someone's occupational class is the best summary index that we have of the kind of contexts in which he or she passes his or her daily life' (Dunleavy and Husbands 1985:4).

But in the early 1970s claims began to emerge that party identification was decreasing, and that social class was declining as an influence on voting behaviour. The premise of the first argument, known as partisan dealignment, is that the electorate's dependency on the psychological cues afforded by party identification has decreased. This process, it is argued, has been a consequence of a combination of increased knowledge and sophistication about politics, the increased and changed nature of television coverage of politics, the relatively poor performances of the parties in office and the decline in support for collectivist values among Labour supporters (Denver 1989). The premise of the second argument, known as class dealignment, is that social class has declined as an influence in people's social lives. Changes in occupational and industrial sectors (namely, a shift from manual to non-manual work, a shift from employment in manufacturing to the service sector, and the contraction of heavy industries combined with the emergence of 'knowledge' industries), combined with the growth of female employment and greater geographical mobility have undermined the general level of class consciousness and class solidarity which underpinned the class-party relationship. In addition, it is argued that these social changes served to reduce the impact of one's job-type, and the impact of one's parents' job-types, on how a person gets on in life or the kind of lifestyle that they lead (Franklin 1985). In other words, working-class individuals found it easier to get into middle-class jobs, and, following the growing affluence of society, to enjoy some of the material benefits associated with middle-class lifestyle. This situation, it is argued, has reduced the potential for class solidarity in electoral behaviour.

Evidence supporting the 'party dealignment' thesis is shown in [Table 2.5](#). At first glance, a decline in the combined party identification figure for both the Labour and the Conservative

parties is evident, although it revived in 1992. However, the most dramatic development could be seen in the distribution of party identifiers. In the 1960s and 1970s rather more people described themselves as Labour than Conservative. But between 1974 and 1983 the number of Labour identifiers dropped and has shown no sign of recovery since. In fact, by 1983 Labour had lost a fifth of its identifiers. As the table shows, among people who voted, only 31 per cent had a Labour Party identification in 1992, while as many as 43 per cent were Conservative identifiers. And despite the substantial improvement in its share of the vote between 1983 and 1992, Labour none the less failed to win back the hearts of a significant portion of the electorate which formerly described themselves as party identifiers. There is little doubt that this change is one of the reasons, perhaps the most important, why the Conservatives keep on winning. Exactly why this is the case remains speculation. According to Curtice (1994), the fall in party identification is evidence of Labour's political difficulties in the late 1970s and the early 1980s, such as the 'winter of discontent', the party split in 1981 and the divisions over nuclear weapons.

Regarding the 'class dealignment' thesis, numerous studies using the conventional measure of the proportion of all voters voting along class lines (i.e. non-manual versus manual workers' vote) yield evidence of decreasing class voting. Table 2.4 shows the Alford scores for the main parties and the level of class voting by manual and non-manual workers. All measures indicate a decline in class voting in elections since 1964, although a slight revival was recorded in the 1992 elections and can be attributed to Labour recapturing some of the working-class voters it had lost to the alliance in the 1980s. Class dealignment within the post-1974 era of party competition is illustrated, for instance, by a comparison of the Alford Index in the 1979 and the 1992 elections. The Alford Index for the Labour and Conservative vote has declined from 27 to 19, and 25 to 14, respectively. The Index suggests that class voting still takes place (the scores are greater than 0) but its level in 1992 was considerably lower than it was in the mid-1970s. To sum up, advocates of the party dealignment thesis argue that both social classes have shifted away from their 'own' class party since 1974. Nevertheless, class still remains the single most important social factor underlying the vote (Crewe 1993: 100).

However, dealignment theses have come under considerable fire in recent years. Goldthorpe (1987), for instance, has questioned the claim that social class has declined as an influence in people's lives. Goldthorpe suggested that despite the fact that in post-war

Britain the chances of men of all social origins gaining entry into the expanding higher levels of the occupational and class structures have increased, the difference between the respective chances of these social origins has not changed. In other words, increasing 'room at the top' affords people from working- and middle-class backgrounds a better chance of social mobility, but without the members of any class having become less advantaged than before in absolute terms. Class, according to Goldthorpe, remains important as an influence in people's lives.

The logic of looking at differences between the classes also under-lies Heath *et al.*'s (1985) claims that social class has not evidently declined as an influence on electoral choice. As noted in the theoretical section, in this context it is customary to distinguish between net volatility and overall volatility. Net volatility refers to the change in the distribution of the vote between elections. Overall volatility on the other hand refers to the total amount of vote-switching that takes place. The point is that a great number of people change their votes at successive elections but most of these switches cancel out. Table 2.6 shows the trends in net and gross volatility. As we can see, neither net nor gross volatility seem to be following a long-term rising trend, although net volatility increased somewhat in 1992 as Labour made

Table 2.6 Trends in volatility, 1959–92

<i>Pedersen Index</i>	<i>Net volatility</i>	<i>Gross volatility</i>	
	<i>% of eligibles who changed</i>	<i>% of voters who changed</i>	
1959–1964	5.9	35	18
1966–1970	6.0	34	16
1970–Feb 1974	13.3	42	24
Oct 1974–1979	8.2	37	22
1979–1983	11.9	40	23
1983–1987	3.2	37	19
1987–1992	5.4	37	22

Source: Heath *et al.* (1991); Heath *et al.* (1994)

Notes:

Pedersen Index: sum of the change in each party's share of the vote between the two elections divided by two (Pedersen 1979)

'eligible': people who were eligible to vote in both elections

'voters': people who were eligible to and voted in both elections

slightly larger gains than they had done in 1987. Heath *et al.*'s (1994) conclusion is that class dealignment had not taken place

on such a large scale as previously thought. Instead, they argue, the long-term pattern in class voting is one of 'trendless fluctuation', not inexorable decline. In addition, their analysis suggests that the contraction of the working class (i.e. the shift during 1950-90 from a predominantly blue-collar society to a mainly white-collar one) could not account for the political trends. Rather, fluctuations in support for the parties could be attributed to political influences, reflecting changing confidence in the parties. 'There is no need', they argue, 'to introduce the concept of "class dealignment" to explain them.'

Perhaps the most fatal blow to the advocates of the theory of 'party dealignment' comes from William H. Field's (1994) study of electoral volatility and the structure of electoral competition in Britain. Field confirms the conclusion reached by Bartolini and Mair (1990), who suggest that the higher net volatility in Europe since the 1970s is due to an increase in the number of competing parties, rather than from a fundamental change in the electorate. Using election surveys and controlling for the presence of the Liberal candidates, Field concludes that there has been no increase in overall volatility in Britain between 1959 and 1992. Specifically, between 1951 and 1970 the number of Liberal candidates fluctuated considerably, but at no election did the Liberals contest more than half of the seats. The rise in Liberal candidacies took place in February 1974: from competing in around 50 per cent of constituencies in Britain in 1970 to 83 per cent in 1974, and around 100 per cent from then on. The product of this increased number of candidates offered by the Liberal Party has been voters facing more choice. This, according to Field, accounts for the small increase in electoral volatility which Britain has experienced since 1970.

Both government and opposition, as well as the parties making up the two blocs, have to deal with the problems that arise in any one of the arenas of interaction as well as with issues arising from conforming and non-conforming dimensions of interaction. As Maor and Smith (1993a) argue, the arenas and dimensions cannot be held apart: every issue dimension has to find a 'site' in one or more arenas. Attention now turns to the ways issues and arenas of party competition relate to each other.

How dimensions and arenas in the British polity relate to each other

The premise underlying the following discussion is that during elections each party tries to promote its own favourite issues,

usually quite different ones, so that reading different party statements made in the course of the same campaign fosters the illusion that several quite separate elections are taking place. Therefore, parties do not compete—as Bryce (1929:124) notes—by arguing directly with each other, but by trying to render their own areas of concern most prominent (Budge and Farlie 1977:304–55, 1983:22–6; Robertson 1976:78–89). Since particular parties normally benefit from the importance of a particular general issue they will do all they can to emphasise this general ‘issue dimension’ within their policy statements, inducing voters to think in terms of these broad issues.

The way parties provide most electors with political guidance can be further refined by distinguishing between ‘issue dimensions’ and their components. An ‘issue dimension’ is a general policy area held by parties, the media and electors, whereas its ‘components’ refer to aspects of the policy area. Under the issue dimension ‘civil order’, for instance, a party may decide to stress one or more of the following aspects: law and order; rioting, strikes and demonstrations; measures against crime; and capital punishment. Under the issue dimension of ‘foreign affairs’ a party may try to render the following areas of concern: NATO membership; EU membership; contribution to peace-keeping forces; national prestige abroad; humanitarian aid; and attitudes to Islamic fundamentalists. Under the issue dimension of ‘ethnicity’ a party may decide to emphasise the following specific issues: assimilation questions; controlling immigration; attitudes towards minority groups; and foreign workers. These examples indicate the range of aspects which may fall under the umbrella of an issue dimension. For a layman, therefore, party competition may be viewed as one which covers ‘many’ issues. This is often a misconception. Although parties would tend to stress their favourite aspects, there would often be one issue dimension which dominates the decisive arena for party competition.

In the British case, it has already been noted that the socio-economic dimension is the most salient dimension of party competition in the electoral arena, with ‘foreign affairs’ rated less salient. This fact did not preclude parties employing selective emphasis and party ownership of specific aspects. Comparing counts of sentences within the Conservative and Labour manifestos during 1924–79, for instance, Budge and Farlie (1983: 133) found that the Conservatives stress the Empire, regions, freedom, incentives and enterprise considerably more than Labour. They are also disposed to pay more attention to farmers and the military. By contrast, the Labour Party heavily

emphasises economic control and planning (as opposed to the Conservative preference for regulation), supports internationalism more and advocates the importance of Labour groups and social justice (in contrast to the Conservative neglect of the topic). Above all, Labour stresses the social services—devoting to them more than twice the references than are received by any other area of policy. A similar mode of selective emphasis is recorded in Topf's (1994:156) study of coverage of policy domain in the Conservative, Labour and Liberal/ Alliance's manifestos during 1979–92. Topf found that four policy domains, namely Citizenship, Economy, Environment and Welfare, comprise between 70 and 77 per cent of each manifesto. A striking fact is that four policy areas which have been major areas of party political debate during parliamentary competition since 1979 (namely: defence, European integration, law and order and public ownership) have consistently comprised less than a fifth of the manifestos of all three parties.

The major question raised by this account is how can the main parties maintain one issue dimension in the decisive arena of party competition? In other words, how do parties subsume issues which may threaten the stability of their electoral, institutional and internal environments? At the outset there may be particular issue dimensions over which the main parties are: (i) internally divided (e.g. European integration during the 1980s and 1990s); (ii) have policy views which are considerably different from the electorate's stand (e.g. capital punishment; electoral reforms etc.); and (iii) have a general negative record for which they are held responsible (e.g. crime, representation of women, etc.). As the prominence of some of these issue dimensions in a campaign may affect the electoral fortunes of the main parties quite considerably, it is interesting to look at the methods they employ to subsume these issues within the dominant dimension of party competition.

There are at least four strategies intended to subsume issues: (i) not to raise the issue on the public agenda during party competition in the decisive arena; (ii) if the issue is raised, the main parties adopt a similar position, combined with diversified policy stands over aspects of the issue dimension; (iii) the issue is 'devolved' to party competition at sub-national levels; and (iv) the issue is 'devolved' to the choice of the people by referendum. A few examples suffice.

European integration

The ways British parties have dealt with the issue of European integration at different periods illustrate the first, second and fourth strategies. According to Jones (1994), the European Community is a unique issue in that it has largely failed to divide into a neat two-party problem. Yet, at the same time, within both the Conservative and Labour parties there have been stark divisions between pro- and anti-Community members and, more recently, between pro- and anti-Maastricht, as well as between pro- and anti-European Monetary Union members. Britain applied twice for membership of the then-named Common Market in the 1960s before eventually joining in 1973. Between 1974 and 1976, Harold Wilson's cabinet was divided over the issue of Community membership: Enoch Powell and Tony Benn were both on the anti-membership platform, while the party leadership of each of the major parties were tacitly in favour. To minimise the potential damage to the Labour Party's internal unity a referendum was held in 1975 to enable EC membership to be fought beyond party lines.

In 1979, when the first direct elections to the European Parliament were taking place, the main parties did not raise the issue of the European Community on the public agenda. As Butler and Kavanagh (1980:173) argue: 'Despite the impending European elections, virtually no news from the Common Market or its members impinged on British consciousness during the election.' The 1983 general election is the only example of a clear division between the stances of the two major parties on the issue of the European Community. The Labour Party's manifesto announced that Britain would leave the European Community within the lifetime of the next Parliament, whereas the Conservatives did not bother to address the issue following Mrs Thatcher's success in gaining a large rebate from the EC budget. Consequently, the issue of the European Community did not arise during the 1983 campaign. After Labour's electoral defeat in the 1983 elections and the election of Neil Kinnock as party leader, the Labour leadership became increasingly enthusiastic about Community membership. Not surprisingly, in the 1987 and 1992 general elections, the issue was either ignored or there was merely some very general reference made to continued membership. In the most recent general election of 9 April 1992 there was further evidence of this, with all the major parties stating their support for the EC and the Maastricht Treaty (see also [Chapter 7](#)).

Ethnicity

The ways British parties have dealt with the ethnicity issue illustrate the third strategy available to parties when they want to subsume a particular issue. At the outset, ethnicity refers to the linguistic and cultural practices through which a dynamic sense of collective identity is produced and transmitted from generation to generation (Bulmer 1986). Ethnicity does not necessarily connote innate characteristics, although race always implies ethnicity. It does so in two ways: either by reducing linguistic or cultural identity to biology, or by naturalising linguistic or cultural identity within a fixed hierarchy of 'social traits'. In other words, ethnicity is racialised in either social or cultural terms.

Britain has experienced considerable demographic change in terms of immigration. The British Nationality Act of 1948 allowed citizens of the Commonwealth to settle in Britain and this facilitated a new era in which most of those people who made new homes in Britain were from the West Indies and the Indian sub-continent. These immigrants formed numerous ethnic communities, based on language, religion and race, which were distinctively segregated. In other words, they did not attempt to 'blend in' with the British way of life. Rather, they tried to maintain their original behavioural and attitudinal code. Politically, this situation has contributed to significant prejudice expressed by the white majority against the non-white minority. Racial discrimination has been recorded with regard to housing and employment. Recent years have seen a significant growth in racial attacks and in many parts of the country racial violence has taken place. It is currently estimated that 70,000 racist incidents are occurring each year.⁹ An ICM poll conducted in early 1995 revealed that 79 per cent of white Britons polled think there is prejudice towards black people.¹⁰ This figure represents only an 11 per cent drop on those asked the same question in 1983, a few years after the first riots in Brixton and Toxteth.¹¹ These figures indicate that racism remains a significant feature of British life, leaving black Britons increasingly alienated.

Racial discrimination and coloured immigration did not become an issue in British politics until the beginning of the 1960s (Macfarlane 1986). Immigration did not feature in the manifesto of any party at the 1959 general election, although by that date about 200,000 coloured immigrants had entered Britain. The upshots were a few resolutions during the 1960s, the 1970s and the early 1980s regarding immigration control (e.g. the Commonwealth Immigrants Act 1962 and 1968, the Immigration

Act 1971 and the Nationality Act 1981) and anti-discrimination measures (the Race Relations Act 1965, 1968 and 1976). Besides a few well-publicised deplorable incidents, an example of which is a controversial contribution made by Enoch Powell in 1968 when he called for a halt to black immigration and for moves to repatriate blacks already settled in Britain, the main political parties have consistently claimed during general elections that race was no longer an issue in British political life.

Yet, this assertion is not accurate. Race is clearly an issue in British political life, albeit at the local government level and at the constituency level during party selection. At the local government level, right-wing and fascist groups campaign on the 'race' issue and have made some electoral impact where the issue was at the top of the local agenda. The New British National Party, for instance, won 27 per cent of the vote in Southall in 1963 and in 1976 it won (together with the National Front) 44.5 per cent in Deptford. In September 1993 the British National Party won a local government by-election victory in Millwall. At the constituency level, Britain's ethnic minorities are questioning whether they are fully included in and represented through political institutions in general and political parties in particular. It is not surprising that the issue of political representation has become a key question. During the early 1990s there have been local contests in which the question of minority access to political influence was the issue. This has had a major impact on the Labour Party, and to a lesser extent on the Conservative Party. Recent controversies in Small Heath in Birmingham about the selection of the Labour candidate for the 1992 general election highlighted the contested nature of power and influence in many inner city constituencies (Solomos and Back 1993). At the same time, racial conflict emerged during the selection of a black Conservative candidate, John Taylor, to fight the Cheltenham seat in the 1992 general election. Taylor was confirmed as the Conservative candidate although he failed to win the seat. In sum, despite the issue of ethnicity being important in British political life, it is untraceable during national electoral campaigns. The only indications of its political importance are recorded at the constituency level, and during elections at the local level.

Environment

Environmental issues are absent from the inter-party debate during elections despite the fact that public awareness of the environment has grown considerably in Britain. A large number of

Britons are now interested in environmental issues, and longitudinal data from Eurobarometer, the British Social Attitudes' reports and numerous books, indicate that interest has gradually grown over the past decade. According to Dalton (1988:111), for instance, Britons are nearly unanimous in agreeing that 'stronger measures should be taken to protect the environment against pollution'. Over 90 per cent of the British sample endorse this position. Similarly, Witherspoon and Martin (1992:7) have found that across their sample as a whole, pollution is more a source of public concern than either nuclear power or global green issues. They note that:

Where the problem is more visible, where the environmental degradation takes effect with relative speed, where deep fears about dirt and danger are linked, and where there is felt to be a readily identifiable culprit, it seems that concern over environmental issues are at their highest. They may even be linked to public support for policy remedies....

(Witherspoon and Martin 1992:21)

However, the spread of green attitudes in Britain has been so far a process of 'wider permeation rather than one of deepening commitment' (Young 1991:124-5). Most people are not prepared to make even the fairly modest changes to consumption patterns that are called for by environmental activists. Britain has also seen relatively few US-style locally-based environmental movements which demand facilities such as door-step recycling from local authorities. Politically, most people are not prepared to vote for a green party. Except for the European Parliamentary elections in 1989, when the party won 15 per cent of the vote though no seats, the British Green Party has failed to make electoral progress.

Despite the growing awareness of environmental problems, political debate remains confused since there is no consensus on how best to promote sustainable development. Added to this is a lack of scientific certainty over the causes and effects of environmental problems. Thus, the kind of compromises politicians need to make in order to design effective environmental policies remain unclear. Not surprisingly, the environment issue has been conspicuously absent from the campaigns of the mainstream political parties during the 1980s and the early 1990s. As Witherspoon and Martin note in regard to the 1992 general election:

It is not so much that the main parties seem to agree on the issues. Rather it is that none of them seems anxious to engage in informed debate on environmental issues—and in the process, to create a better-informed public. Without this debate, understanding of the environmental implications of individual behaviour and support for public regulation of such behaviour for the sake of the environment is bound to remain weak. And the public will remain unable or unwilling to make choices about new environmental regulations or about changes in costing the earth.

(Witherspoon and Martin 1992:22)

Hence, while environmental policy is becoming a priority issue for many citizens, it clearly suits the mainstream parties that neither of them take up the issue with greater vigour. Since the parties do not attempt to distinguish themselves from one another on this issue, the question of who will pay for a greener Britain is bound to remain unresolved.

So far we demonstrated that voters make voting choices which rest on beliefs, explicit or implicit, about party behaviour. This is because parties provide the main political guidance for most electors. They do so by 'simplifying' the complex world of politics in terms of their policies and stands. As Sartori (1976:342) notes 'in a mass communicating world characterized by mass politics a maximum of visual simplicity coupled with a maximum of manipulability represent an almost unbeatable combination'. Simplification starts at selective emphases of issues. However, it cannot stop there since decisions on the basis of specific issues would require the electors to trace their developments and likely consequences. Thus, in British politics the manipulative process is taken one step further. Various issues often related to socio-economic policy areas are grouped into a multiple ordering left-right dimension which becomes the dominant dimension for party competition in the electoral arena. Its multiple ordering characteristics enable issues derived from other dimensions to be accommodated or subsumed under it. It is therefore largely on the basis of the alternatives presented by the mainstream parties that most British voters make their only direct political decisions.

CONCLUSION: PARTY SYSTEM STABILITY?

Between 1970 and 1992 two-party aggregate support in Britain declined from around 90 per cent to around 75 per cent. There has also been a rise in levels of electoral volatility; and the main

parties have had to face a third-party challenge (i.e. the Liberals—joined in 1983 by the Social Democratic Party), as well as the challenge of nationalist parties (e.g. the Scottish National Party) and New Politics parties (e.g. the Greens). This chapter has described the rival explanations for these phenomena as well as the approaches according to which they may be interpreted. The premise underlying this description was the highly restrictive electoral system. Despite losing four consecutive elections, the Labour Party still considers itself a beneficiary of the current electoral system. Together with the Conservative Party they defend the electoral system on the grounds that it enables voters to choose between alternative governments and that it encourages governments to be responsive to the wishes of the electorate. 'These qualities are ascribed to the system because it supposedly exaggerates leads in votes into larger leads in terms of seats, that is, systematic "unfairness" can be a virtue' (Curtis and Steed 1986: 209). Indeed, the post-war period has demonstrated that the two large parties have been able to secure parliamentary majorities with less than half of the overall vote. It is also clearly evident that a new party making a decisive electoral breakthrough is a remote prospect.

As in any West European party system, social changes as well as changes in electoral behaviour have been recorded in Britain. We have shown that there have been major long-term changes in the shape of class structure, especially the contraction of the working class. Consequently, many scholars have suggested that the parties now have to contend with a less committed electorate, less anchored by class loyalties and traditional party ties. Recent studies, however, cast major doubt on this proposition, arguing that most of the electoral volatility observed could be explained by the growing choice available to the British electors as the Liberals became a national force fielding candidates in all constituencies. Similarly, it has been argued that the British electorate has become more sophisticated and more open to rational argument. Yet, recent studies conclude that voters have displayed a fair amount of rationality and sophistication throughout the last twenty-five years. Overall, seen within the constraints set by the electoral system, post-war changes in society and electoral behaviour have failed to change the general two-party format.

Whilst there have been some important social changes, especially during the last twenty-five years, political changes may have been as important. We saw the extension of the franchise, increasing numbers of Liberal candidates, the formation and demise of the SDP and changed positions held by the Labour and

Conservative parties. Yet, until the 1980s there was never a decade in which one party held office throughout. The foundation of the two-party system was therefore alternating single-party government. One may reasonably suggest that since the Conservative Party has won four times in a row between 1979 and 1992, it is possible to classify the British system as —what Sartori calls—a predominant party system. Yet, the category of 'predominant party system' is very sensitive to variation in the 'extent' of change; even a very small electoral change may necessitate a reclassification.

At this point, it may be interesting to introduce the term *restabilisation*, that is, the tendency of a party system to bounce back after a restricted change to its original mode, and consider the British party system as a candidate. Under the assumption of a restabilisation of the British party system in the general elections which will be held in 1996 or 1997 (i.e. following a possible Conservative defeat), I would argue that the stability of the bipartite format was (until 1979), and after a Conservative defeat would probably continue to be, the central feature of British party government and competition. The electoral system still maintains the dependency of the British party system on its established structure. The argument that a change in the electoral system would lead to it becoming multipartite (Bogdanor 1983b:256) is beside the point, since a form of proportional representation could only be introduced once the party system had itself already changed.

This implies that a change in the two-party format as the expression of the central feature of party government and competition could only come from within. Indeed, various forces in the Labour Party from the late 1960s onwards caused it to move sharply to the left. Other forces in the party from the mid-1980s onwards caused it to move significantly to the centre and even to the centre-right on issues such as the managing of macro-economic policy. Perhaps the most visible change—drawing up a new Clause IV which recognises the discipline of competition and consigns its socialist creed to the dustbin—was undertaken by Tony Blair, the Labour leader, and approved by the National Executive and most members. Similarly, the Conservatives under the leadership of Mrs Margaret Thatcher responded to Labour's leftist extremism in the early 1980s by moving sharply to the right. This move has been partly reversed during Mr Major's term in office.

The energisers of change in the British polity are therefore existing parties. As Gordon Smith argues:

A peculiarity of the British two-party system is the freedom that Conservative and Labour have to define their own competitive space—hence the possibility of a sudden switch from consensus politics to acute polarisation. There is the underlying drive of electoral competition which has a centripetal effect, but in the short term the pressure from *within* the parties does not necessarily lead to a strategy to maximize electoral support... Despite the vulnerability of the major parties, it appears that electoral change has to act within the constraints set by the party system. The system itself can adapt only through inner fragmentation, and the occasions for a decisive rupture are few and far between.

(Smith 1989b:360)

What emerges from the review of the British experience is that, whatever else may be changing—and given the assumption of ‘restabilisation’—the central feature of party government and competition is remarkably stable. Indeed, although the main parties suffered a decline in their aggregate support, they soon implemented strategies of adaptation and recovered a substantial part of their support. This process of accommodating voters’ preferences—evident now in 1995 as the two main parties ‘compete’ with each other to deliver a stable economy, both claiming to eschew boom and bust, and both arguing over how to raise the economy’s long-term rate of growth—may sound boring compared to the colourful ideological bombast of past decades. However, if the core of the British party system remains intact, then we can now proceed to examine the terms on which it has been able to do so.

3

Party institutionalisation

Before a political party can persist, it must exist. The institutionalisation of a party starts from the foundation meeting and proceeds through years of elections in which candidates mobilise support in their fight for seats in parliament. This is true whether the party is postmaterialist, populist, ethnic, a splinter or action group supplementing an established party. However, one factor which does have obvious implications for the formation of a party is the enfranchisement of new voters at the time of the party's inception. With a limited electorate it is easy for parties to direct elections; an enlarged electorate, however, demands the establishment of some form of extra-parliamentary party organisation. Thus, as the electorate expands in successive waves, parliamentarians face a trade-off between the task of organising popular support for themselves among the newly enfranchised voters and the derived consequences in terms of their room for manoeuvre. This trade-off is highlighted by the fear of parliamentarians at the emergence of new extra-parliamentary party organisations which may bring pressure to modify their economic and social stances and force them to sacrifice their judgement to that of their constituents.

In this chapter I elaborate upon this trade-off and its implications by examining numerous accounts of party 'institutionalisation'. Two broad directions of research are discussed: the first views institutionalisation as a process; the second considers it a property or state. For each approach I explore its premises, how it interprets party development, its account of development strategies, and its expectations about the outcome of this process. Thereafter I advance a conceptual framework that seems useful in the building of a realistic analysis of the topic and apply this framework to the development of the British political parties.

COMPARATIVE APPROACHES OF PARTY INSTITUTIONALISATION

Institutionalisation as a process

Studies which treat institutionalisation as a process are actually applying a specific framework of organisational analysis. The under-lying premise of this analysis is to reaffirm a fundamental intuition of classical—particularly Weberian—sociology, concerning the importance of the founding moment of institutions. That is, the way in which the organisation solidifies conditions the life of the organisation even decades afterwards. The organisation may undergo modifications and even profound changes in interacting with the continually changing environment, yet the way in which it was formed will leave an indelible mark.

Maurice Duverger (1964), has outlined two models of development, namely, internally versus externally generated parties. Internally generated parties develop in a three-stage process. First, groups of parliamentarians are formed. Second, local election committees are formed in the electorate. Third, some kind of connection between the first two stages is established. The externally generated parties follow the same pattern, but instead of groupings of parliamentarians, Duverger has mentioned the activity of non-political organisations, such as trade unions in the development of socialist parties, as independent factors in the first stage. In both cases the extension of the suffrage is considered to be the generator of election committees, but relatively little is said about how one phases from one stage to another.

Contending that parties are 'profoundly influenced by their origins', Duverger (1964) further saw a link between institutionalisation types and a party's year of origin. Internally generated parties seem to correspond to an old type and externally generated parties to a modern type. Although Duverger did not expand on the concept of party ideology, his study also linked institutionalisation types with ideological families, as for example in the case of leftist ideology extra-parliamentary interventions during the development of party organisation. In addition, Duverger viewed party centralisation as a consequence of party institutionalisation. He hypothesised that a party which has come into being outside parliament is likely to be more centralised than one arising from within. Testing these hypotheses reveals a substantial confirmation for the link between leftist orientation and externally-generated parties: leftist ideology correlates, among

other factors, with externally-generated origin. However, Duverger's other principal propositions involving the party origin variable are not supported empirically (Janda and King 1985: 162).

A similar view of party development is presented by Huntington (1965:394) who defines 'institutionalisation' as 'the process by which organisations and procedures acquire value and stability'. Huntington divided the process into four phases: factionalisation, polarisation, expansion and institutionalisation. Factionalisation is defined as a situation where politics is dominated by only a few people within unorganised and unstable groupings. This is identical to the first stage in Duverger's model of internally-generated parties. Polarisation is the stage where politics has broken out of its 'clique' character to become linked to social forces, and where participation is expanding. The political leaders will try to bind the polarised masses into effective organisations in the expansion phase; while with an established party system, institutionalisation—phase four—is reached.¹

Although both the Duverger and Huntington's models follow the same steps, there are important differences between them. First, Duverger's first stage is restricted to internally generated parties, while Huntington's first phase takes into account any factional group inside or outside parliament. Second, while Duverger considers electoral committees in addition to groups of parliamentarians, Huntington is more general, speaking about 'social forces' which are linked to political parties. Most important, Duverger's model relates to the development of single parties, whereas Huntington presents a model for the development of a party system (Svåsand 1975). In other words, both authors point to the building of party organisations, but for Huntington the process does not stop there. While Duverger's internally-generated party is implicitly meant to refer to party-building by individuals who are already in the electorate, Huntington includes both the internally and externally generated parties in his model. Viewed thus, the incorporation into the party system of those already in the electorate often leads to a two-party system, and the incorporation of new groups facilitates multi-party systems.

An inadequacy common to both these models is that they fail to take into account the great variations that actually took place in the organisation-building of political parties in Western Europe. Duverger's model of the internally-generated party, for example, is superficial in so far as it does not allow us to distinguish between the various steps involved in the process of party institutionalisation. I hope to demonstrate this later when I apply

the theory to the cases of the Conservative and Liberal parties in late nineteenth-century Britain. Although both parties started out as parliamentary groupings, there were important differences in the way they came to be organised at the national level. While the Conservative Party was organised from the centre outwards, the national Liberal Party came about primarily as a result of extra-parliamentary pressure group activity. Britain also saw a development which does not correspond to Huntington's model since several kinds of local organisation with indirect linkage to political parties were as important in the party-building process as those with direct linkage. Thus it is reasonable to argue that while the Huntington/Duverger step-by-step model of party development may be intuitively acceptable, it is hardly sufficient for an empirical analysis.

*Panebianco—an integrated theory of
institutionalisation*

While the work of both Duverger and Huntington stimulated an intense flurry of intellectual activity, it was only much later that any serious attempt was made to marry the different social scientific disciplinary traditions to approaches of organisational development, thereby producing an integrated theory of institutionalisation. Most significant of such recent efforts has been Panebianco's (1988) attempt to apply a specific framework of organisational analysis to the examination of the formation of European political parties.

Parties, according to Panebianco, can primarily be distinguished according to the degree of institutionalisation they attain. Institutionalisation—defined as 'the way the organisation "solidifies"' (p. 49)—can be measured on two scales: (i) that of the organisation's degree of autonomy *vis-à-vis* its environment; and (ii) that of its degree of systemness, that is, the degree of interdependence among its internal actors. According to the former measurement, a position of autonomy is reached when the organisation can directly control exchange processes (e.g. party finance) with its environment. An organisation is, on the other hand, dependent when its resources are partly controlled by other organisations (e.g. during the formative stages, the British Labour Party depended on the trade unions for funding necessary to sustain its activities and its electoral campaigns). The second measure of institutionalisation, the degree of systemness, refers to intra-organisational coherence. When an organisation affords its internal actors relatively large room for manoeuvre, its degree of

systemness is low. A high degree of systemness, on the other hand, implies a relatively high level of interdependence among the internal actors, most often assured by a centralised control over both the party's relations with its environment and the interactions among its internal players. These two dimensions of institutionalisation are related since a low degree of systemness often implies little autonomy *vis-à-vis* the environment, and vice versa.

Two 'ideal' types of political party emerge from Panebianco's conceptualisation: (i) a weakly institutionalised party which is characterised by a low degree of autonomy and a low degree of interdependence among its sub-groups; and (ii) a highly institutionalised party which is characterised by a high degree of control over its environment and a high degree of interdependence among its subgroups.² The type of party that emerges depends primarily upon the way the party forms.

Two factors help us define the way the party forms. The first is the way party associations spread, that is, organisational construction. We can look at the spread of associations as arising from either a process of diffusion or a process of penetration. The former occurs when development results from a spontaneous germination whereby party associations are constructed by local élites and are only later integrated into a national organisation. By contrast, territorial penetration envisages a centre working deliberately for the creation of associations. Although these ideas are apparently clearcut, it may sometimes be difficult to decide which process played the dominant role when applied to specific cases. To discover this we can also look to the location of the party-building efforts. A party may be seen either as a structure generated from a political centre (i.e. from a downwards pressure), or as a movement generated from the grassroots upwards. Note however that just as it is possible for diffusion and penetration to work simultaneously, so it is the case for upwards and downwards organisational construction.

The degree of cohesion attained by a party will be clearly affected by the form of organisational construction it has experienced. Development through penetration implies the presence of a cohesive 'centre' right from the start, thus tending to produce a cohesive élite. By contrast, development through diffusion implies a turbulent process of leadership formation due to the presence of many competing élites controlling local associations. Thus the organisation is forced to develop through compromise and negotiations among a plurality of groups.

The second factor which helps us to define a party's genetic model is the presence or absence (at party origin) of an external 'sponsor' institution, since this affects the élites' source of legitimacy. We should distinguish therefore between externally legitimated parties and internally legitimated parties. Overall, the presence of an external 'sponsor' institution leads to 'shifting loyalties' of party élites and thereby shapes the intra-party power struggle. The very fact of such external legitimation of the party élites impedes the creation of a cohesive and independent leadership; this is because the external institution has an interest in limiting the strengthening of the party in order to sustain its influence over its partisan arm. Thus, an external 'sponsor' organisation would inevitably reduce the party's dependence upon the party élite. Following this reasoning, it is easier for an internally legitimated party to produce a cohesive party élite.

The relationship between the genetic model and the degree of institutionalisation is schematised in [Figure 3.1](#). Case One is exemplified by the British Communist Party whose source of legitimation was external and whose organisational development was predominantly characterised by territorial penetration.³ Case Two is represented by the British Labour Party whose organisational development is predominantly due to territorial diffusion along with the presence of an external 'sponsor' institution, resulting in a low degree of institutionalisation. Case Three represents Duverger's model of the 'internally created' party, where a parliamentary group builds the organisation through territorial penetration, thus producing a strong institution. The British Conservative Party provides a classic example of such a process. Case Four covers parties created through a federation of existing groups or an initial development through diffusion. The British Liberal Party provides a relevant example of an organisation which institutionalised in a weak manner due to this process.

Although Panebianco's (1988) conceptualisation represents a significant advance in the search for an integrated theory of party institutionalisation, it could be challenged on four counts. First, Panebianco's analysis is clearly based on the relations between autonomy and systemness. It is therefore rather surprising that the author presents no evidence to prove a sufficiently high correlation between these two variables.

Second, a flaw in Panebianco's argument is that it allows for the existence of an exception to the rule which states that the stronger the institutionalisation, the more cohesive the party élite, and vice versa. This exception takes the form of a charismatic

		External legitimization	Internal legitimization
Penetration	<i>Strong</i>	1	3
		British Communist Party	British Conservative Party
<i>Institutionalisation</i>			
Diffusion	<i>Weak</i>	2	4
		British Labour Party	British Liberal Party

Figure 3.1 Typology of party institutionalisation in the British context

Source: Based on Panebianco's (1988:64) typology

leader, who, according to Panebianco, may produce a cohesive élite despite the absence of institutionalisation. Before the eventual 'routinisation' of charisma, the centralisation of authority (which in non-charismatic parties can only be found under conditions of strong bureaucratisation) assures the leader's control over intra-party and party-environment interactions.

Third, Panebianco's formulation does not allow for a significant change in the unit of analysis, for he conceived the concept of institutionalisation as an ideal type (whether he used it in a taxonomic or a more strictly explanatory manner). Using ideal types to conceptualise party institutionalisation sets a trap into which Panebianco easily falls: that is, by producing strong, historically-based conceptions he implies that the dependent variable remains characteristically/historically intact. 'No institution', Panebianco (1988:7) argues, 'can...escape from its past'. This conception clearly excludes an overall transformation of the organisation physiognomy (i.e. the rules of the game, goals) which, in turn, affects the organisation's degrees of autonomy and systemness. However, the breakup of the Italian Communist Party during the late 1980s undermines his argument.

Fourth, Panebianco 'stretches' the concept of 'institutionalisation' such that the term becomes vague and imprecise. The result is that across the body of literature on this subject, fundamentally different phenomena are being given the same name. This point requires elaboration. Reviewing the various definitions of 'institutionalisation', McDonald concluded that:

What these definitions seem to have in common is their emphasis upon institution as stressing the regularity of

action pattern, its nonpersonal aspect, and the expectation that it creates. To regard party as an institution would be in some measure to single out for stress something that might be called the party way of doing things, something that might be designed by the phrase 'party politicking'.

(McDonald 1955:16-17)

Party institutionalisation here views party as a subject matter, directing attention to its way of doing things. A similar conception was advanced by Huntington (1968:12) who defined 'institutionalisation' as 'the process by which organisations and procedures acquire value and stability'. This is the understanding which has since become established in the discipline of comparative politics. Pane-bianco however, did not follow this conception: rather he 'stretched' it by introducing to it a new dimension, namely, a historic perspective of party development. Institutionalisation here views the party more as an object, directing attention to the causes and strategies of party development. The fundamental weakness of Panebianco's move is that by giving a new meaning to a long-established concept in social sciences, he leaves us with a concept deprived of all heuristic validity.⁴

In the next section, I describe accounts which regard 'institutionalisation' as a property or state. In the process I draw upon many valuable insights generated by these accounts. The following is deliberately not an inclusive coverage, but it aims to provide an information-economising device to see how far we can go with relatively parsimonious theories before needing to change to a more descriptively compelling form of analysis.

Institutionalisation as a property or state

Institutionalisation can be seen not only as a process but also as a property or state (Welfling 1973:13). In this sense, an institutionalised party is defined as 'one that is reified in the public mind so that "the party" exists as a social organisation apart from its momentary leaders, and this organisation demonstrates recurring patterns of behaviour valued by those who identified with it' (Janda 1980:19). With the adoption of such a view, various factors may be used as indicators. Lane and Ersson (1994) and Dix (1992) have used party age or counts of splits and mergers as indicators, whereas Janda (1980) has examined institutionalisation on a scale built from measures of age, electoral stability, legislative stability, and leadership change.

Often, the concept has been tapped with measures of minimum election strength and minimum durability. The study by Rose and Mackie (1988), has suggested that to become institutionalised is 'to merit recognition as an established party'; doing so involves three activities: (i) creating a cross-local organisation to contest elections nationwide; (ii) nominating candidates to fight national elections; and (iii) continuing to nominate candidates at successive elections. Their study, however, used only one indicator: 'An institutionalised party must continue from election to election; operationally a party is judged to have become institutionalised if it fights more than three national elections' (Rose and Mackie 1988:536). Despite its simplicity, this operationalisation seems inadequate for at least two reasons (Harmel and Svåsand 1989):

- 1 it ignores aspects of intra-party politics, which may or may not be assuming 'routine' behaviour after only three elections; and more importantly
- 2 simply 'fighting' three elections does not imply being able to develop a stable base of support or reaching a level of political relevance in the system.

An innovative approach in which concepts like autonomy, organisational complexity, centralisation of power and internal coherence were related to, but not part of institutionalisation was suggested by Kenneth Janda (1980). Janda's definition of the concept (see above) was operationalised with six variables: the year of origin; name changes; organisational discontinuity (i.e. splits and mergers); leadership competition; legislative instability; and electoral instability. However, this operationalisation seems deficient because legislative and electoral instability are factors in the process of institutionalisation, rather than indicators of it. In addition, Janda sees name changes as an indicator of a lack of party institutionalisation, since they may be 'assumed to result in at least momentary confusion about the party's identity within the citizenry at large'. But, as Harmel and Svåsand (1989) have argued, some name changes could, in fact, increase the institutionalisation of the party, indicating its maturity rather than its instability. Likewise, organisational discontinuities in the forms of splits and mergers may, as Janda notes, alter the 'interaction patterns' by narrowing/broadening the party's focus, or even bring about the end of the party. However, precisely the opposite may be true if the party can outlast such discontinuities, since it may in consequence be a stronger party internally which

is also perceived as a more viable institution externally, and which has given a clear indication of its durability.

Recently an attempt to build a theory of party institutionalisation, based on the experience of right-wing protest parties in the post-war era, was undertaken by Harmel and Svåsand (1989). The authors emphasise the need to conceptualise institutionalisation as being multi-dimensional, comprising both internal aspects of party organisation, and external perceptions of the party as an institution. They suggest that the three most important dimensions as applied to political parties are as follows: (i) the 'routinisation' of party behaviour; (ii) the perception by the other actors that the party has 'staying power'; and (iii) an objectively established survival record. The main premise of their framework is that for a thorough treatment of party institutionalisation, all three dimensions must be considered. This premise is, however, based upon the incorrect assumption that evidence of high (or low) level of institutionalisation in one dimension means high (or low) institutionalisation in another. One example which denies such a general correlation is that of the British Communist Party which while having durability and routinisation, had few voters and other parties paid little attention to it (i.e. it lacked external institutionalisation on the dimension of 'relevance'); another disconfirming British example would be the Green Party which has durability but neither routinisation (disputes over the decision-making structure are common) nor external institutionalisation.

Like Janda (1980), Harmel and Svåsand treat concepts of autonomy as related to, but not part of, institutionalisation. This enables them to classify a party as weakly (i.e. low level of institutionalisation) or highly institutionalised, whether or not it is characterised by independence from other groups. In my view, however, it is theoretically inadequate to exclude relations between parties and external organisations from the list of indicators of degree of institutionalisation. Although it is reasonable to argue that 'independence from other groups' alone is not a viable criterion for classification, when considered among others it represents a vital indicator. Some external groups have the capacity to shape and reshape a party's 'identity set'—that is, the ensemble of all individuals who join the party. This, in turn, can delay or facilitate the process of institutionalisation. Let me elaborate. Potential party members are not randomly scattered in society but share a common situation defined outside their control. For example, a party representing the interests of low-paid workers has an identity set comprising all such workers, only

a fraction of whom become a part of the party organisation; members, activists etc. The identity set is thus crucial for the development of the party organisation, as it defines the scope of individuals' orientations required by the party. The capacity to shape this set, however, may be concentrated in the hands of social interests outside the party, for instance, trade unions. In such cases the latter may have a discretionary capacity to shape the identity set—for example, through determination of manifesto commitments and political advertising—thus directly determining organisational attributes such as party size, structure and the derived features of bureaucratisation and professionalisation. It is thus the extent to which external organisations are allowed to shape a party's identity set which should be taken as an indicator of party institutionalisation.

The argument of Rose and Mackie (1988), who treated institutionalisation as a dependent variable, suffices to close this discussion on approaches to 'institutionalisation as a state'. They have identified four factors that increased the chances of a nascent party becoming institutionalised: (i) its origin at the birth of competitive elections; (ii) a proportional representation electoral system; (iii) being based on an organised social group; and (iv) its initial success in winning votes. Parties that do not become institutionalised were found to be those which make no impact upon electoral competition, and those which are ephemeral. It was furthermore revealed that the novelty of competitive elections, a catch-all (i.e. wide) electoral appeal and the national context increase the likelihood of the appearance of ephemeral parties.

The purpose of the next section is to explore the great variations in the organisation-building of the main British parties. I therefore focus on the formative phase, i.e. the early nineteenth century in the cases of the Conservative and Liberal parties and the early twentieth century in the case of the Labour Party. By relying on Panebianco's (1988) framework the section takes a closer look at the various steps of the institutionalisation process.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF BRITISH POLITICAL PARTIES: THE FORMATIVE PHASE

To understand the process of party institutionalisation it is necessary to have an impression of the political system at the time of party development. In Britain, although two party names, the 'Whigs' and the 'Tories', had been around since the latter part of the seventeenth century, it would be an illusion to assume that anything remotely resembling a two-party system existed in the

eighteenth century House of Commons.⁵ In reality, Members of Parliament during that period may be classified under the following broad divisions 'based on type and not on party': (i) the followers of the Court and Administration, the 'placemen' *par excellence*, a group of permanent 'ins'; (ii) the independent country gentlemen who were of their own choice permanent 'outs'; and finally, in between, (iii) the political factions contending for power. Among this last group are to be found the true forerunners of parliamentary government based on the party system (Namier 1952:19). Party organisation at that time was rudimentary, consisting of a loose and sporadic co-operation between the Whips' office and Members of Parliament. The aim was to ensure sufficient co-operation and loyalty to the government of the day to enable it to survive and win elections. It was thus the Whips' office which constituted all there was in the way of formal party organisation.

The enormous complexity of loose groupings of cliques and factions which dominated the House of Commons well into the nineteenth century declined gradually as a direct product of the expansion of the electorate. The milestones in the history of the development of the British party system are therefore linked to the three electoral Reform Acts of 1832, 1867 and 1884. Before the Reform Act of 1832, most Members of Parliament took the view that the main function of the House of Commons was to represent the various communities and economic interests within the nation (Birch 1964). The extent of the franchise was not regarded as important, for all citizens were thought to be 'represented' through this system. After the Reform Act, however, the individual citizen came to be regarded as the unit to be represented, rather than the community or interest: the opinions of the citizen were taken to be of equal importance to, or greater importance than, his economic interests or status. Once this view was widely accepted, the extent of the franchise became the main subject on the public agenda.

The Reform Act of 1832, which increased the number of those entitled to vote by approximately 49 per cent, was a result of the increasing demand from industrialists for political influence commensurate with their perceived economic importance (Seymour 1970). Pressure exerted by groups excluded from political influence contributed to a further suffrage extension with the Second Reform Act in 1867. Nearly one-third of all men obtained the right to vote as a result of this Act. In 1884 the suffrage was extended further to give the county population the same suffrage basis as the urban boroughs.⁶

An additional factor which contributed to the development of British parties was the conflict between religious and non-

religious groups over education. Dissenter movements looked to new parties as their allies against veteran ones, since the movements saw in new parties the best chance of realising the religious and educational reforms they so much desired. Several organisations participated in these conflicts, some of which had an important and direct impact upon party formation which will be discussed in the following analysis.

The enfranchisement of new voters had obvious implications for the formation of parties. With a limited electorate it had been easy to direct elections. An enlarged electorate however required a bureaucratic apparatus. Thus, as the electorate was expanded in successive waves, parliamentarians had to turn increasingly to the task of organising popular support for themselves among the newly enfranchised voters. But as McKenzie (1964:6) has argued, they faced a delicate job: 'Their task was to organise such support without sacrificing their own freedom of action within Parliament'. More than anything else, this assertion reflects the fear of MPs at the emergence of new extra-parliamentary party organisations which might pressurise them into modifying their economic and social stances and force them to sacrifice their judgement to that of their constituents. To analyse this trade-off and its consequences for the development of the British political parties, there now follows an overview of the construction of the British parties.

Organisational construction

The beginnings of the mass party can be traced to the setting up of independent local election committees, namely, registration societies, which later evolved to become party associations. The registration societies which emerged after 1832 were intended solely to ensure that those entitled to vote should see to it that their names were placed on the voters' list. As Ostrogorski (1902:142) put it: '...registration became, so to speak, a gap through which the parties, hitherto confined to Parliament, made their way into the constituencies and gradually covered the whole country with the network of their organisation'. For the Liberal registration societies, the intention was to carry out much of the normal work of a party headquarters—inter-viewing candidates, organising voters who for some reason were inaccessible to local parties, and stirring up dormant constituencies. In contrast, the Conservative Registration Society aimed primarily to act as a fundraiser for local candidates. In neither case was there an attempt to create a bureaucratic party or a chain of command. Political patronage, the

promotion of candidatures, and financial control remained with the party whips.

Heralding the arrival of the first—transitional—stage and an extension of suffrage, the Second Reform Act in 1867 created the need for a new type of organisation. At the outset, the shift from registration societies to party associations took place in three stages. The first, which lasted from 1867 to 1876, was a transitional stage: the old self-perpetuating election committees were gradually supplemented by party clubs and 'working men's associations'. The second phase, which lasted from 1870 to 1879, saw an attempt by the Conservatives' principal party agent, John Gorst, to establish associations all over the country, while the Liberals experienced a resurgence of anti-party feelings. The third stage, which began about 1876 and lasted until 1886, saw the establishment of national party organisations (Hanham 1978:93).

In the Liberal Party, local initiatives resulted in the formation of local associations which differed greatly in structure and leadership. Created to meet specific local needs without much thought for the future, these new local associations borrowed ideas from any association of which they had heard: Newcastle and Manchester looked back to the traditional Lancashire associations, Bradford and Leeds had come under the influence of the Birmingham association, and Sheffield simply borrowed at random. Despite their heterogeneity, these associations shared a clear objective—to distribute power widely within the constituencies while retaining the authority to ensure stable parliamentary representation (Vincent 1966:94). This shared objective did not however prevent the establishment of diverging forms of party machinery for the elections. In Manchester and Leeds, for example, a three-way bargain led to an electoral alliance. This alliance involved the Whigs (the traditional aristocratic core of the party whose programme was limited to defending its vested interests), the Radicals (a diverse group of intellectuals and Nonconformist dissenters whose programme called for educational, religious and electoral reforms) and candidates who represented the local working class (Hanham 1978:94).

Three additional factors played a significant role in moulding Liberalism at that time: (i) the rise of the new working-class voter in the mid-nineteenth century whose emancipation was symbolised by supporting and voting for the party; (ii) the growth of the cheap daily provincial press which was dominated by Liberal supporters; and (iii) the emergence of the Nonconformists who saw the party as the best instrument to realise the educational and

religious reforms they desired (Cook 1989:4). The overall outcome was the emergence of the Liberal Party as an alternative to Conservative rule.

On the Conservative side, the shift in political activity could be seen in the establishment of Conservative Constitutional and Working Men's Associations whose emphasis was on carrying the party principles to the working masses. Due to their strategic importance, the central party organisation—consisting of the whips, the party agents and the federal bodies (e.g. National Union)—retained control of these associations. The essential difference between the registration societies and the new associations, in both the Liberal and the Conservative cases, lay therefore in the object of their activity. Whereas the registration societies handled the technical side of the elections, namely the contesting of claims in the registration courts and similar matters, the new associations were concerned with propaganda and attracting the largest possible numbers in order to get votes and enlist voluntary workers.

However, in terms of the roots of party organisation, the differences between the Liberal Party and the Conservative Party were significant. The differences were related to two factors: (i) the establishment of a central party bureaucracy; and (ii) relations between the party leadership and the national associations. Regarding the establishment of a central bureaucracy, on the Conservative side, the transition of the party from a loosely-knit parliamentary group with local electoral machines to a modern political organisation began immediately after its 1868 electoral defeat. With the election of J.E.Gorst as party agent, there was an impressive organisational shake-up. The Conservative Central Office and the organisation's headquarters were established, and when the National Union was founded in 1867—unifying and co-ordinating the local Conservative associations—Gorst managed to get himself designated as its honorary secretary. In this way, both the Central Office and the National Union were unified under the control of one man. Gorst's efforts to develop the party organisation significantly contributed to the Conservative landslide victory in the 1874 election. Here is how one historian describes the achievement of the Central Office between 1869–74 under Gorst's direction:

The ordinary routine of Gorst's office consisted in collecting information, stimulating activity in sluggish constituencies, seeking out the local leaders, finding candidates, issuing literature over the name of the National Union. Gorst's

principle was to give every help to local effort, but never to interfere. The spending of money from the party fund at elections and for other purposes probably required the ultimate sanction of the Whips, but here, too, Gorst's advice was important. Links with the press were formed, and Gorst himself acted as political representative for *The Standard*, the London Conservative daily. A list of Conservative agents and associations in England and Wales, published by the Central Office in 1874, reveals an impressive organisational set-up throughout the country, in the erection of which the Central Office had no doubt played a notable part.... Party organisation is never in itself enough to ensure victory at a general election, but Gorst's new headquarters, with the stimulus to local effort it provided, was in advance of anything the Liberals had and must have greatly helped the Tories towards their first parliamentary majority in thirty years.

(Feuchtwanger 1959:199)

On the Liberal side, no national union existed before 1877 apart from the Liberal Registration Association, which was a different type of organisation. Prior to 1877, the work at the party 'centre' was divided between the whips and a small body of Liberal MPs. The whips looked after candidatures, party funds and political patronage, while the Liberal Registration Association attempted to supervise and co-ordinate the work of the constituency Liberal associations. These constituencies looked after the task of local registration and organised election campaigns (Cook 1989:12). Not surprisingly, until the coming of the National Liberal Federation in 1877, the Liberal machine suffered from a number of defects which rendered it less efficient than that of the Conservatives.

Regarding the relations between the party leadership and the national associations, an additional contrast between the Conservative and the Liberal parties was evident. The national body of the Conservative Party—the National Union of Conservative Associations—was constructed from the top downwards. The Conservatives' principal agent, who was employed at Central Office, was asked by the party leadership to build an effective party organisation. According to Disraeli's own instructions, the agent had to ensure that there was a candidate ready in every constituency who offered some hope of success (Feuchtwanger 1968:121). Overall, in the period after the Second Reform Act, the Conservatives' Central Office became permanently

established, the National Union of Conservative and Constitutional Associations survived and many associations were founded.

In the Liberal Party a completely different, 'bottom-up', development took place. The National Liberal Federation, which was formed in Birmingham in 1877, 'grew out of the desire of Birmingham's Liberal leaders to supply from their own experience the kind of political organisation which the party lacked, and to provide from a radical starting-point that cohesion and sense of purpose among Liberal associations...' (Cook 1989:13-14). As an organisational machine, the party whips and the managers of the Liberal Central Association in London were bound to see the Federation as a challenge to the power of the centre. In addition, those who could not approve of the Federation as such, objected more because it tended to upset the balance between the party's Whigs and Radicals, than from any abstract dislike of party organisation (Hanham 1978:142). Thus, in contrast to the confidence enjoyed by the Conservatives' principal agent, the secretary of the National Liberal Federation, Francis Schnadhorst, did not enjoy the trust of his Liberal leaders (McGill 1962:19-39). It is characteristic of this relationship that the secretary did not become a member of the Liberal Central Association until 1885, and the very location of the Federation in Birmingham until 1886, when it was moved to London, is an illustration of the distance between the national body and the party leadership. As the Liberal Party failed to win a stable majority in the 1892 election, a period of confusion within the party that lasted until the turn of the nineteenth century saw the power of the National Liberal Federation significantly reduced. By 1898, the Federation agreed that its relationship with the official leadership would be purely advisory and that there would be no more resolutions proposing specific policies for a future Liberal government (Cook 1989:30).

Like the Liberal Party, the Labour Party was created at the beginning of the century through territorial diffusion. The Labour Party (or Labour Representation Committee, as it was called at first) was set up in 1900 as a loose alliance between the trade unions and a number of socialist organisations; the Independent Labour Party, founded in 1893 by Keir Hardie; the Social Democratic Federation, a Marxist group founded by H.M.Hyndman in 1883; and the Fabian Society, an intellectual ginger group advocating gradualist Socialism that had been founded in 1883. The new alliance had no direct membership and no single unifying ideology. Its central aim was to ensure that '... working class opinion (should be) represented in the House of Commons by men sympathetic with the aims and demands of the

Labour movements, and whose candidatures are promoted by one or other of the organised movements' (LRC Annual Conference Report 1900:11). The predecessors of the party were therefore not the registration societies with their very limited political objectives, but the nineteenth-century mass movements for political and economic reform: Chartism, the Anti-Corn Law League, and the early trade union and co-operative movements.

Up to 1893, when the Independent Labour Party was formed, no independent representation of British workers was evident in parliament. The workers simply regarded either the Liberal or the Conservative Party as their natural interpreters in national councils. The idea of workers' representation in parliament was first raised at the second Trade Union Congress in 1869, and about this time a Labour Representation League was set up for returning trade unionist members to the House of Commons. The League's failure to get its candidates recognised by either the Liberal or the Conservative parties triggered the formation of the Democratic Federation which soon split into the Socialist League and the Social Democratic Federation. This tendency to sectionalism emphasised the necessity of a broader movement, a demand which was raised in 1887 by Keir Hardie at the Trade Union Congress. Only twelve years later, a resolution was carried at the 1899 Trade Union Congress in favour of convening a Special Congress in order to secure an increased number of Labour MPs. The 1900 meeting set up a committee representing a number of trade unions and three tiny socialist societies. This committee—whose principal role was to prepare a list of candidates and recommend these candidates for the support of the working class—was comprised of seven representatives of the trade unions, one of the Fabian Society, two of the Independent Labour Party and two of the Social Democratic Federation. Although the trade unions enjoyed an overall majority in the Special Congress (they had 129 delegates against only twelve delegates representing the three socialist societies), their attitude was one of '...casual benevolence'; there was little disposition to haggle with the strong-willed Keir Hardie and his ILP friends (McKenzie 1964:460). Their approach reflected an awareness that an heterogeneous composition would attract a wider variety of workers.⁷ By contrast, the societies' approach reflected their reward as being recognised on the LRC executive.

To sum up, due to the special conditions of the electoral struggle (the two-party system and the absence of universal suffrage), there was little possibility at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries of any parliamentary

representation of the workers or of any influence on the elections other than locally. Consequently, working-class action first developed in the occupational sphere, by means of trade unions or co-operatives which became powerful and organised before the existence of the Labour Party. When political and electoral evolution finally allowed the development of the latter, the trade union organisations already in existence provided it with a ready-made framework as well as with solid support. It can be concluded therefore that the creation of the Labour Party represents a bottom-up mode of organisational construction, namely, territorial diffusion.

The transformation of the Labour Party in the first half-century of its existence was, therefore, different to that of the Conservatives, and, to a lesser extent, to that of the Liberals. While the organisational construction of the Conservative Party was due to territorial penetration, the organisational development of the Liberal Party was due to territorial diffusion. The foundation of the Conservatives National Union and Central Office represented the two major organisational developments of the period leading up to the mid-1870s. They largely owed their existence to, and were taken seriously by, the top party leadership. The contrast with the Liberal Party in this period is considerable: the latter was a parliamentary group finding itself under pressure and propelled in new directions by a variety of extra-parliamentary associations.

Source of legitimation

Looking first at the case of the Liberal Party, the National Liberal Federation failed to capture the loyalties of the party leadership. The key reason for this was the fact that the leadership's source of legitimation lay internally, that is, in the parliamentary group. It was apparent that the party leadership was not financially dependent on the National Liberal Federation. The arrangement between the Liberal Chief Whip and the Federation appears to have been that the latter raised funds (in relatively small contributions) for giving pre-election aid to needy constituencies to help voter registration while the Whip's fund concentrated on aid to candidates for campaign expenses. The Whip's fund relied on business money—which frequently came from donors whose motivation was a desire for a title or a peerage rather than ideological commitments (Pinto-Duschinsky 1981). Such a plutocratic system of finance, with all its drawbacks, enabled the party leadership to lead, rather than be led by, the party

grassroots. The party's organisational loyalties remained direct loyalties, primarily to the parliamentary group and only secondarily to the National Liberal Federation.

A lack of external 'sponsor' organisation was also evident in the case of the Conservative Party. The National Union, which operated from 1867 to the election of 1874, aimed at representing all Conservative associations in the country and served as a channel of communication between the party leadership and the grassroots (Feuchtwanger 1968). The appointment of Gorst as party agent in 1870 led to a major crisis in the National Union. The reason for this was that Gorst, as secretary of the Metropolitan Conservative Alliance,⁸ used that organisation for promoting his contacts in the constituencies, thus duplicating the work of the National Union. This problem was resolved in 1871 by the appointment of Gorst as the secretary of the Union and the integration of the Union's offices with the Central Office. Throughout the 1870s the National Union was therefore an integral part of the Conservative Central Office, and served mainly as an agency for the distribution of political literature.

Nevertheless, the Union's initial goals had not yet been realised. Not all constituencies had properly constituted Conservative associations and some important associations were not affiliated to the National Union. With regard to the Union's influence over party policy during 1867-74, Feuchtwanger (1968:130) noted that, 'never, throughout these first seven years, was there any sign that the National Union had even the remotest influence on party policy'. Without significant funds of its own, the National Union was neither a suitable instrument for fighting a battle within the party nor was it able to produce any fundamental change in the structure of the party. The party leadership, in contrast, was able to collect central funds on an unprecedented scale, at least during the early 1900s (Pinto-Duschinsky 1981). The main method of fund raising was the sale of honours which was combined with donations from wealthy supporters. The National Union, consequently, was not able to affect internal power struggles. The party's organisational loyalties remained primarily to the leadership, and only secondarily to the the National Union.

A completely different picture was evident in the relation between the Labour Party and the trade unions. Understanding those relations requires first and foremost an appreciation of Keir Hardie and his Independent Labour Party's achievement in capturing trade union support as early as 1900. Their strategy was based on the idea of co-operating with the trade unions with the ultimate objective of tapping trade union funds for the

attainment of parliamentary power (Pelling 1965). After the formation of the Labour Representation Committee, it was decided that the operating costs would be met by a very small fee from each affiliated body according to its membership.⁹ Affiliation fees to the Labour Representation Committee were initially of symbolic rather than substantial importance. The main financial commitment of the Committee's members was to pay the election expenses of specified parliamentary candidates.

The financial strength of the unions enabled them to finance many more candidates than the socialist societies. In the three general elections between 1906 and 1910, for example, the trade unions supported a total of 137 out of the 186 candidates (Bealey and Felling 1968). Overall, the emergent Labour Party relied almost entirely on the organised support of trade unions. This led to the establishment of a pattern of political finance completely new to Britain. Previously, political money had always come from individuals. Now funds were collected from trade unions on an institutional basis.

Labour reliance on union political levies had two important organisational consequences. First, the party's dependency on union funding meant that additional sources of funds had not been developed. The obvious alternative to union funds was to raise money from individual Labour Party supporters. Up to 1918, however, the party, which had consisted of affiliated organisations—trade unions, socialist societies, trade councils and local Labour Representation Committees—had not recognised individual membership. The 1918 reform which introduced direct individual membership in addition to the collective membership (i.e. membership based on one's union affiliation) did not make self-financing possible as the party's percentage of direct membership remained marginal. From then on, the unions contributed three-quarters of the party's necessary funds.

Second, the availability of easy union money had hindered the growth of Labour's constituency organisations. With regard to the resulting weakness of the constituency organisations, a committee which was set up in 1900 to recommend what form of organisation should be promoted, concluded that a uniform system of organisation for the whole country was not advisable. (McKenzie 1964:467) Doubtless this assessment was taken in light of trade union unease and wariness at local Labour Party representation. It was obvious then that they would almost certainly refuse to accord the local parties separate representation. However, when calls were raised in the 1918 party conference to organise and maintain a political Labour Party both in parliament

and in the country, the party élites decided to demand representation of the local Labour parties in the National Executive Committee. For the first time, they agreed to place in the hands of the trade unions the power to determine the composition of the entire executive. Henceforth, the Executive consisted of twenty-three members composed as follows: (i) thirteen representatives of the affiliated organisations; (ii) five representatives of the local Labour parties; and (iii) four women and the Treasurer. It was also decided that the lists of nominations would be voted upon by the entire conference which was, of course, dominated by the trade unions. The unions' control over the key parameters of decision-making in the Labour Party reduced leadership resentment towards the local Labour parties, which enabled the rapid growth of those parties for some years after 1918.

Although the local Labour parties became the real focal point of party activity in the constituencies, they did not enjoy the national autonomy of the affiliated societies. This, in turn, led to endless friction regarding their share of control of party affairs. Their demand was finally met in 1937, when the number of the constituency party representatives was increased from five to seven, to be elected by the vote of the constituency delegates alone. In addition, it was agreed that the twelve trade union representatives and the one representative of the socialist societies should also be elected separately by their respective conference delegations. Thus, for the first time since the adoption of the 1918 constitution, the trade unions no longer had at their disposal all the places on the National Executive Committee, although they were still in effective control of eighteen of the twenty-five elected places in the Executive. Despite the increase in their profile, attempts to establish constituency organisations on a scale similar to that of the Conservatives, failed. As late as the 1970 general election, for example, the Conservatives had 357 electoral agents for their 537 local associations whereas Labour had 141 agents for their 618 associations (Rose 1974).

Thus, the Labour Party could be conceived as the 'political arm' of the trade unions because of its dependency upon them. This dependency has had two consequences for the party's development: (i) the party's organisational loyalties have been primarily to the trade unions; and (ii) the trade union leadership became, consequently, the party élites' source of legitimation. The interdependency between the party leadership and the unions could be summarised as follows:

The coalition [e.g. the Labour élite] was based on a delicate mechanism of cross-cutting alliances and reciprocal guarantees: the leader's job was to control the parliamentary group in exchange for a certain amount of independence from the annual conference, and the union leaders had the more or less informal job of guaranteeing such independence, i.e. keeping the party's union delegates under tabs (preventing them from interfering too much in parliamentary activities), in exchange for a share in the management of the party. The left/right divisions in the parliamentary group soon began to appear. But as the party was in its formative phase, i.e. in a stage of structural 'fluidity', these divisions still took on the character of 'tendencies'. This did not, however, last for long: the external sponsoring organisations (the local and national unions) provided the tendencies with organisational reference points which eventually facilitated their transformation into factions.

(Panebianco 1988:91)

In other words, the Labour Party's reliance on the trade unions facilitated the emergence of a number of power centres whose organisational capabilities were dependent on their stable ties to a union, an affiliated association, or occasionally even to individual members. More interesting perhaps has been the longevity of the various groups in the party and their different strategies when the party was in power or in opposition. Before looking at the literature on these topics—a task performed in the next chapters—one must elaborate upon the significance of the points raised so far.

Summary

The brief analysis outlined above has highlighted some of the differences between the main British parties in their formative stages. To account for such variations, Panebianco proposed following the history of a party's organisational development. As noted earlier, he argued that the factors which when combined give an organisation its mark, i.e. its genetic characteristics, are: (i) the strategy of organisational construction; and (ii) the source of legitimation. An analysis of the formation of the British parties along these lines, and with a view to minimising the risk of 'concept stretching', reveals the following conclusions:

The Labour Party

During its formative stages, it was a decentralised, weakly organised party. Organisational construction due to territorial diffusion and a financial reliance on external 'sponsor' organisations created a dependency on the part of the party leadership on the support of trade union leadership for policies presented to the party conference. The pattern of territorial development explains the sub-division of the party élites into factions, i.e. into a number of power centres. Those factions are organised in a rather 'fluid' way because of the external control exercised by the unions.

The Conservative Party

During its formative stages, it was a centralised, highly organised party. Organisational construction due to territorial penetration and a lack of any external 'sponsor' organisation helped to ensure the autonomy and relatively high degree of systemness of the party. Centralisation of power left the National Union influential only on rare occasions. Excluding such occasions, the Conservatives' extra-parliamentary organisation fulfilled its appointed role, that is to offer advice, which may or may not be acted upon, to the party's parliamentary leaders. The second factor—the creation of a self-financing system—led to the construction of a solid central, intermediate and peripheral bureaucracy.

The Liberal Party

During its formative stages, it was a decentralised, weakly organised party. Organisational development due to territorial diffusion gave rise to a decentralised and semi-autonomous structure, and consequently, to a party leadership divided by constant struggle for party control. Relying on business money—which often came from donors whose desire was for a title or a peerage—ensured that the party's organisational loyalties were primarily to the party and only secondarily to the National Liberal Federation. The growth of the National Liberal Federation's influence during 1886–92, which was manifested by the formulation of the 'Newcastle Programme', represents only the brief heyday of the extra-parliamentary organisation.

CONCLUSIONS

Because political science is an inherently multi-theoretical discipline (Dunleavy and O'Leary 1987; Alford and Friedland

1985), it is not surprising to find fundamentally different interpretations of party institutionalisation. More interesting perhaps, is the extent to which neither academic approach to the concept of party institutionalisation (i.e. as a process or as a property/state) is specific about the extent of institutionalisation. In looking at each account, it is hard to escape the feeling that each model has captured only part of the phenomena.

The central problem of accounts of 'institutionalisation as a process' remains their failure to explain the diversity of party development in Western Europe. The reliance on historical analysis—enshrined in Panebianco's study—results in the development of ideal types. These heuristic constructs often do not assist empirical analysis because of the difficulties in the operationalisation of their indicators. Oddly enough, the 'institutionalisation as property/state' falls prey to a similar difficulty. Here the central problem is the empirical drive—culminating in the anxiety to identify large numbers of indicators of institutionalisation—which results in either a confusion between factors and indicators, or a neglect of some critical aspects (e.g. intra-party politics, independence of other groups, etc.).

One way to remedy these problems is by isolating the structural features of the ideal types from genetic issues (i.e. those which show why it is that a given subject of study has certain characteristics, by describing how the subject has evolved from some earlier one), and re-conceptualising them as readily-measurable variables which will then be subject to correlational analysis. Structural features which are readily quantified for use in empirical research include, for example, number of members and basic party units, numbers of paid staff, composition and membership of party organs and income of party head office—distinguishing income from membership subscriptions, state subventions and levies on the salaries of party members holding public office (party tax). Obviously, ideal types can neither be formulated nor verified in this manner. They are nominal concepts whose validity rests on their utility in historical comparison. But the above procedure may allow political scientists to check the empirical plausibility of the ideal type.

An alternative strategy is to operationalise Huntington's definition of institutionalisation in terms of the process by which a party's way of doing things acquires value and stability. This operationalisation directs attention to: (i) the way a party manages its internal and external affairs, that is, the party's mode of internal policy discourse, political recruitment, articulation and

aggregation of interests, political communication, and mobilising mass political participation; and (ii) the party's mode of governance, that is, the way it ensures binding decisions and allocations of appropriate resources (e.g. the policy process). In this way, institutionalisation is understood within the context of political institution, and the variation of party institutionalisation is accounted for by examining the interaction between the working of institutions and the related room for manoeuvre of political parties.

So far I have considered some of the organisational problems faced by political parties during their formative stages. I now turn to the impact on party organisation resulting from a commitment by a significant proportion of the leadership to allocate resources to electoral competition. Most models of political party organisation proceed from some concept of representation. Broadly, there are two conflicting theories of representation: (i) elected public office holders, individually or collectively, decide policy—they may or may not respond to voters or members; and (ii) the office holders are considered the party agents—elected representatives reach agreement as a result of decisions by the organised party membership. These two forms of representation provide a crucial key to understanding models of party organisational strategy.

4

Models of party organisation

This chapter introduces the reader to the face of political parties as membership organisations by building upon the concepts of 'organisational structure' and 'membership'. Political scientists have long been fascinated by the behaviour of political parties in democratic political systems. Yet, even after years of effort and a plethora of studies, few models exist which adequately explain a key determinant of party behaviour: the trade-off between the freedom of action enjoyed by the party leadership and the constraints which derive from maintaining a strong and active party organisation. To explain the relationship between party organisation and behaviour, this chapter presents five basic party models. These models were selected because scholars of political parties usually operate from one or another of them (often implicitly rather than explicitly). Furthermore, each involves potent value premises concerning what political parties should be like, which significantly affect the research and analysis which then follows.

The chapter enumerates the sharply differing attributes of two broad types of party organisation model: the exchange model and the development model. Exchange models are essentially related to the trade-off between the 'rewards' activists get from the party leadership and the constraints they impose upon it in return. Exchange models are based on the theory of power as an exchange relationship, viewing power as relational, asymmetrical, and reciprocal. Power, in this sense, manifests itself in an 'unbalanced negotiation' as an unequal exchange, in which one actor receives more than the other. Intra-party power relations are therefore conceived as an unequal exchange in which the leader gets more than the followers, but must none the less give something in return. 'Exchange' models have their origin in Anthony Downs's (1957) economic analysis of the vote-seeking behaviour of parties, though Downs himself did not focus on the trade-off between the freedom of action enjoyed by the party

leadership and the constraints which derived from maintaining a strong and active party membership. Among the political scientists who have developed this approach to intra-party interactions are Wright (1971), Schlesinger (1984) and, most importantly, Strom (1990a)—whose approach is the chief concern of the first section of this chapter.

By contrast, development models address the trade-off between the need of the party élite to modify the party's electoral strategy, for example, following societal changes, and their need to accommodate their party organisation to these changes. This trade-off relates, for instance, to the needs of the party leadership to ensure that the party membership is not too unrepresentative of the party's potential voters, either socially or politically. If the members are socially unrepresentative they will be less able to fulfil their role as 'ambassadors to the community' (Scarrow 1994) in such a way as to generate electoral support and, in fact, they may alienate potential voters. If they are politically unrepresentative they will demand policies which may not attract widespread support from the voters.

Another important feature of development models relates to their tendency to explain organisational forms and organisational changes in an historical context. In other words, economic, social and political developments are considered key determinants of organisational modes of activity and their transformation. Such models are often formulated on the basis of a pre-defined conception of democracy—implying what parties should be like—which significantly affects their analysis and conception of the 'party of the future'.

This chapter focuses on four development models, namely, Duverger's (1964) 'Mass Party', Epstein's (1980a) 'Electoral Party', Kirchheimer's (1966a) 'Catch-All Party' and Katz and Mair's (1995) 'Cartel Party'. The former approach predicated on the assumption of 'the mass party' as model. In this view, party organisations are defined primarily according to their relationships with civil society; party organisational strength is measured primarily with reference to the size of the membership and the capacity of the party to close off sectors of the electorate; and party structures are understood and assessed primarily in terms of the modes of internal representation and accountability.¹ This approach, which seems to coincide with 'the golden age' of parties, has led to alternative models—notably Epstein (1980a), Kirchheimer (1966a) and Panebianco (1988)—treating the decline of the mass party as signifying the weakening of the position of parties more generally.

Notwithstanding the insights which have been provided by these studies, it was Katz and Mair's (1995) model of the 'cartel' party which has undermined speculation about the decline of the party with reference to empirical evidence. In contrast to the mass-party centred argument and the exclusive concern with the relationship between parties and civil society, Katz and Mair have devised a model on the basis of the relationships between parties and the state. They did so by disaggregating party organisations into at least three different faces: the party in public office, the party on the ground and the party in central office. This strategy has allowed the authors to test whether any such decline is real or imagined, as well as to pinpoint more precisely where change is taking place, and to find out whether a decline in one of the 'faces' is perhaps countered by growth in another.

To understand the main 'development' models in a comparative fashion, the chapter presents the differences between these models within three arenas of organisational activity; intra-organisation, inter-organisation and organisation-to-voter. For each model it explores its basic assumptions; how it interprets a party's internal organisation; its account of organisational strategies; and its expectations about organisational development and the derived systemic consequences. It thereafter contrasts some developments in the intra-organisation arenas of the pre-war Labour Party with Duverger's (1964) 'mass party' model. The Labour Party—as other socialist working-class parties which have become major political forces— provides a classic example of a 'mass party' during (and after) its formative phases. I hope to show the emergence of the mass party model during the early 1900s, as well as the incompatibility of this model as early as the pre-1945 period.

The chapter then describes the response of the main British parties, in the intra-organisational arena, to the increasing pressures from partisan dealignment, the progress of new parties, the growth in female participation in the workforce, the emergence of alternative forms of participation (e.g. single-issue pressure groups and new social movements), the growth of the leisure industry which provides an attractive alternative to party activity, and the diffuse sense of weakening legitimacy in the wake of the failure of government policies to counteract the widespread perception of Britain's continuing national decline. I hope to show that, despite the continuing tension between leaders and followers over the role of the latter, the response of the parties has been a growing centralisation of the party organisation. This trend was

visible as early as the 1950s (McKenzie 1964) and remains little changed even today.

THE COST AND BENEFITS OF PARTY MEMBERSHIP

To comprehend the trade-off between leaders' freedom of action and the constraints derived from maintaining an active membership organisation, the chapter first focuses on the contribution of party members and its price. Party members play a role at the level of both the system (i.e. country) and the party organisation. In terms of systemic (country) effects, the role of party members is bound up with the question of whether parties matter to democracy. According to democratic schemes which emphasise the participatory elements of the political process, the mass of interests in society cannot be properly aggregated without parties. In a system which lacks parties, what passes for government would consist of a shifting coalition of political entrepreneurs none of whom has the authority to govern in the sense of making enforceable decisions. In this situation democratic politics would rapidly break down. Since political parties cannot operate without a significant group of party members, one can say that in a real sense party members make democratic politics possible.²

In terms of organisational effects, the first contribution of party members is to provide vital voluntary work, without which party politics could not function. A second contribution is mobilising the vote during general election campaigns. Grass roots members are election campaigners responsible for canvassing and leafleting voters, as well as persuading supporters to go out to vote. A third contribution is the provision of essential funds. Duverger expressed this idea most picturesquely when he equated the 'invention' of the mass membership organisation to the invention of the national defence bond (Duverger 1964:63). Such a contribution is especially important when state subvention is not forthcoming. A fourth contribution is in recruiting and socialising future political leaders. Grass roots parties are the training ground for future political leaders. Membership parties, in this respect, act as a net, trawling people into local and national public life. Within the party organisations these individuals acquire bargaining skills, develop policy preferences and learn to organise coalitions of interest which are the motor of the democratic process. A fifth contribution is in political communication. Party members could be seen as 'opinion carriers'; they provide a voice

in the community, often becoming key opinion-formers in the neighbourhood. In this respect, they help to set the political agenda and legitimise certain opinions in comparison to others.³ A sixth contribution is to party policy-making. The existence of various representative institutions within the party (e.g. the party congress) often legitimises the individual member's right to play some role in policy-making. Members are also a source of ideas on future policies; they are important actors in the updating and innovation of the party programme as they are often placed where policies get on to the agenda of political debate.

However, the above contributions of grass roots members do not come without a cost. For most parties, participation of the average member requires representative institutions, such as a party conference, national executive committee, etc. Although the party may impose various restrictions over the individual member's right to play a prominent role in party affairs, such institutions may still afford active members some room for policy influence as well as some influence in the process of candidate and leadership selection. In addition, numerous political scientists argue that the primary incentives for party activism are public purposive (policy), symbolic, and solidaristic. Thus, both making and adhering to formal statements of party policy and identity can impose real constraints on leaders whose position in the party as a whole depends on their position in the extra-parliamentary organisation *per se*.

The trade-off between the freedom enjoyed by the leadership and the constraints derived from maintaining a strong and active membership takes place in an organisational context. For leaders and members, this is a context that is by and large strewn with problems having political as well as organisational solutions. These solutions come about as a result of the actions of many organisational players who move in and out of roles in a variety of organisational settings, such as the local organisation, the party bureaucracy and the parliamentary group. Organisational imperatives dictate some of the goals for leaders and members within each setting of the party, and influence strategic choices for the pursuit of others. They also influence their likelihood of success. One strategy of modelling these organisational complexities—proposed by Strom (1990a)—is our first business.

MODELS OF PARTY ORGANISATION

Exchange model: Strom

Strom's (1990a) model focuses on the mechanism of exchange between party activists, who seek ways of controlling the party so as to ensure that they get what they have been promised by the leadership, and a leadership that wants to make certain that activists do in fact contribute what is required to solicit votes. The model is based on the conception of political parties as office-seekers led by entrepreneurs who become party leaders because they expect to benefit from their role (i.e. in terms of office benefits which can be converted to private goods). To achieve these benefits in a multi-party setting, however, they have to win elections. Here Strom differentiates between capital- and labour-intensive parties. Capital-intensive parties are likely to be able to rely on professional labour (i.e. campaign experts, advertising agencies, pollsters, etc.). In particular, governing parties which control resources are likely to be able to pay in advance or to enter a contract regarding campaign services to be performed. By contrast, labour-intensive parties cannot afford to hire professional labour and, therefore, must establish an exchange relationship with potential activists by offering them policy promises. Since party members and activists are assumed to be highly policymotivated and are similar to the typical voter in that support can be exchanged for 'promises of future public policy', party leaders prefer to offer activists purposive incentives and get a relatively cheap labour force in return.

This type of exchange raises a problem as purposive benefits can only be delivered if and when the party wins office. Even then, activists have no guarantee that leaders will fulfil their promises and enact the agreed policies. Moreover, for parties that seem to be a long way from entering government, the discounting of the policy benefits, because of the likely time lapse before they would accrue, further increases the probability of defection from the performance of party tasks. Thus, 'leaders and activists have a mutual interest in mechanisms that allow party leaders to make credible compensation commitments to their activists' (Strom 1990a:576). Leaders can compensate activists by integrating them into the decision-making process. They could offer them three types of control over policy or office decisions within the party: (i) enabling members to play an active role in the policy-making process; (ii) restricting recruitment to party offices in favour of existing members; and (iii) personal accountability of leaders to

activists and members. Each control type imposes behavioural constraints on leaders of labour-intensive parties.

Enabling members to play an active role in the policy-making process refers to enhancing intra-party democracy by transferring decision-making authority from the party élite or the parliamentary/ party executive bodies to the annual Congress/ Conference or other extra-parliamentary organs. As noted earlier, although the party may impose various restrictions over the individual member's right to play a prominent role in party affairs, such extra-parliamentary institutions may still enable active members to have some degree of policy influence. Adoption of this strategy, according to Strom (1990a), enhances the degree of policy pursuit at the expense of votes- and office-seeking. The reason being the emphasis on policy issues which results from the decentralisation of decision-making. Policy decisions taken by extra-parliamentary organisations—most probably with little regard to the electorate's views—makes it difficult for the party to compete in both electoral and parliamentary competitions, and to trade policy for votes or office.

Restricting recruitment to party offices in favour of existing members implies giving such members a monopoly on promotion within the party. Given the policy-orientation of party activists, enhancement of their prospects for upward mobility may lead, in the long term, to an increase in the policy-orientation of party leaders. One important reason for this is that pure office-seekers will be less inclined to enter a party whose existing (policy-seeking) activists enjoy a monopoly on promotion to higher ranks of the organisation. Adoption of this strategy, according to Strom (1990a), makes the party more likely to pursue policy goals.

Personal accountability: a similar effect is recorded when this third type of control available for party leaders is implemented. This strategy may advance short-term considerations over long-term ones due to the perceived vulnerability of the leaders, as well as a greater emphasis on policy orientation at the expense of office benefits, since leaders must show greater concern for their members' policy preferences. Under these circumstances, members are able to reject policy initiatives by the party leadership which are in line with the majority of voters. Enhancing leadership accountability in order to attract followers, according to Strom (1990a), implies therefore a lessened concern for votes and a greater concern for policy. To sum up, Strom's analysis suggests that leaders of labour-intensive parties are likely to trade office benefits for policy.

Strom's (1990a) innovative conception could be challenged foremost on two grounds. First, its assumption that leaders and followers are internally homogeneous groups, and second, its exclusion of the role of 'gifts' (of labour), the role of solidarity incentives and the role of habit. The presumptions underlying the dichotomy between leaders and members are largely untested, and the available evidence to support them is mixed at best. Leaders and members are not internally homogeneous groups but comprise individuals with highly diverse motivations and aspirations rendering it questionable whether any single dominant incentive or preference can be attributed to each group (Kitschelt 1989). The second line of criticism introduces dimensions which have been ignored in Strom's analysis. According to Alan Ware (1992), if a party receives an adequate supply of gifts of labour (i.e. voluntary transference without compensation) from donors, there is little need to establish an exchange relationship with activists. To the extent that any labour obtained by the leaders is in the form primarily of gifts, there is no need to engage in future policy promises because there is no tension between leaders and activists. An additional factor which minimises this tension is solidaristic rewards—that is, the fun of participation in campaign activities and the companionship thereby gained. In those circumstances, where a party sets out to offer social and recreational activities as an enticement to membership, the running costs of keeping them in the party branch, and creating unpaid positions of status within it, are relatively low (of course, there must be a tacit understanding that 'club' membership requires, for example, canvassing at elections). Finally, party leaders may appeal to activists' loyalty to get party tasks performed. Once one acts out of loyalty, choices based on rational calculations become negligible.

Development models: scheme of organisation

It is now apparent that modelling party organisational strategy is a risky exercise due to the diversity of party types, possessing various social bases, disparate objectives and sharply contrasting modes of operation. Attention now turns to the other main attempt to explain the form of party organisation and its transformation: that embodied by the four development models. Of importance for the following theoretical investigation into the utility of these models, are three arenas of party organisation activity; inter-organisation, intra-organisation and organisation-to-voter. In the inter-organisation arena, the party leader and

member act as representatives of, and/or agents for, a party as they meet, talk, argue, deal and compete with similar agents from other parties. The relevant imperatives in this dimension are the basis and nature of inter-organisation competition. In the second, intra-organisation arena, the language is often that of the organisation chart, the process of decision-making and the relationships between party institutions. In this arena, individuals and groups may have differing resources based, *inter alia*, on differing positions in the party's organisational structure. They are competing for influence and control of party policy and strategy. In the third arena, organisation-to-voter, the party leaders and members—again acting as agents—confront, direct, cajole, and interact with voters. What is particularly important in this arena is the nature of choice (e.g. policy, leader, etc.) available to voters. Overall, used as analytical tools, these arenas are imprecise since the lines between any two are always blurred. Their purpose is solely to call attention to the differences between models of party organisation, in terms of division of labour and authority, in these arenas.

A synthesis of development models suggests a four-stage process of evolution as follows: (i) Cadre/Elite Party (prior to c. 1920); (ii) Mass/Branch Party, Non-Electoral Party, Party Democracy (Party) (c.1920 to c.1960); (iii) Catch-All Party, 'Electoral' Party, Rational-Efficient (Party) (since c.1960); and (iv) Cartel Party (since c.1970). [Table 4.1](#) shows the main differences between these models and the democratic conception underlying each. The democratic conception is of particular importance since, in contemporary times, the large size of the polity necessitates representative, rather than direct, democracy. In other words, since government 'of the day' cannot feasibly be government 'by the people', how do we make possible government 'for the people'? Two conceptions of democracy try to devise a way to connect between representatives and their constituents. The majoritarian conception suggests that government for the people should be comprised of an élite rising from the people. The organisation implications of this view is the formation of a mass membership party where members play an important role in determining party policy and strategy. By contrast, the pluralist conception contends that political parties are a part of a variety of competing political actors, such as interest groups. This view implies that democracy for the people involves an élite capable of responding to diverse electoral considerations and constituents' needs. To sum up, each organisational model analysed relies on different democratic conceptions. For each model I explore its basic assumptions; its

interpretation of a party's internal organisation; its account of organisational strategies; and its expectations about organisational development and the derived consequences for the party system.

Table 4.1 Comparative models of party organisation

<i>Comparative party models</i>		<i>Arenas of party organisation</i>			<i>Associated model of democracy</i>
<i>Transition predicted</i>		<i>Inter-organisational</i>	<i>Intra-organisational</i>	<i>Organisation-to-voter</i>	
Duverger (1964)					
Élite party (19th century)	→ Mass party	Parties offer a core of group/class-based electoral promises on the basis of their representative (i.e. of the group/class) capacity	Direct involvement of party members in the formulation of the party programme; large homogeneous membership, actively recruited and encapsulated	Elections revolve around voters' mobilisation for the support of a policy	Majoritarian—primacy of the party
Kirchheimer (1966a)					
Party of mass integration (1880–1960)	→ Catch-all party (1945–)	Parties offer cross-group/class promises on the basis of their policy	Marginalised party membership; membership maintained but not cultivated	Elections revolve around voters' choice of leaders	Pluralistic—party only one type of political actor

<i>Comparative party models</i>		<i>Arenas of party organisation</i>			<i>Associated model of democracy</i>
<i>Transition predicted</i>		<i>Inter-organisational</i>	<i>Intra-organisational</i>	<i>Organisation-to-voter</i>	
		effectiveness			
Epstein (1980a)					
Non-electoral party Wright (1971)	→ Electoral party	Competing teams of leaders offer promises which represent popular desires and aspirations	All organisational imperatives depend on situation (i.e. electoral) requirements; cadre party wherein (informal) membership is geared towards electoral performance	Elections revolve around voters' choice of a policies/leaders mix which is believed to be a 'winner'	Pluralistic
Party democracy (Party) Katz and Mair (1995)	→ Rational efficient party				
Catch-all party (1945-)	→ Cartel party (1970-)	Contained inter-party competition, on the basis of managerial	1. Membership maintained but not cultivated	Elections revolve around the ability of voters to choose from a	Democracy as a service provided by the state for civil society

<i>Comparative party models</i>	<i>Arenas of party organisation</i>			<i>Associated model of democracy</i>
	<i>Inter-organisational</i>	<i>Intra-organisational</i>	<i>Organisation-to-voter</i>	
<i>Transition predicted</i>	al skills and efficiency	2. Members' role is of little relevance except when used as a resource	fixed menu of political parties	

Note: Arenas of party organisation refer to those of the predicted type

The mass party model

Maurice Duverger (1964) distinguishes between two types of control-representation system which may be displayed by a political party organisation; top-down and bottom-up. The former—illustrated by the elite/caucus model—refers to a loose association of notables able to call upon localised personal followings. It is a weak organisation whose membership is achieved only by tacit co-option or by formal nomination. The caucus functions in a rather large geographical area, usually corresponding to the chief electoral divisions. Its activity is seasonal: it reaches its peak at election times and is considerably reduced during the intervening periods. Any British constituency party provides a classic example of a caucus. Each constituency elects a single MP and its constituency association. Each of those elected can thus be considered a ‘notable’ because of his/her special status as a delegate representing the local members.

By contrast, Duverger describes the mass (branch) party as being characterised by a one-way, bottom-up control/representation system, i.e. party leaders rise from the people and are controlled by the people. The key objectives of the mass party are large-scale recruitment and socialisation of individual members. A substantial reason for this lies in the societal conditions within which such a party operates. The mass-party model emerges in a highly polarised society wherein the units of social life are pillars defined by either socio-economic conditions

(e.g. working class), religious affiliation (e.g. practising Catholics) or professional characteristics (e.g. small farmers). This fragmentation produces groups with sharply bounded individual identities. Political parties are the agencies through which these groups, and thus their members, participate in politics either by making demands on the state or by attempting to place their own representatives in key offices. An elaboration of the three arenas of mass party organisation is of importance as it is the preliminary focus of the empirical section.

In the intra-organisation arena of a mass (branch) party, an extensive membership organisation of branches or cells, and the supremacy of the extra-parliamentary party, particularly as embodied by the party congress, provide avenues for mass input into the party's policy-making process, and ensures popular control over policy formation and leadership selection.⁴ The key requirement of successful mass parties is thus to strengthen their membership base, both in raw numbers and in terms of the level of members' commitment. An additional need is to 'keep...lines of communication [between leaders and followers] open and clear' (Neumann 1956:397). The discretion of party leaders in policy-making is thus limited by pressures to sustain members' involvement in the formulation of the party programme.

The inter-organisation arena is constrained by the encapsulation of the mass of the electorate into one of the subculture groups. Thus, there is no constant flux of groups but an aggregation of key political and socio-economic interests into stable interest blocs represented by parties. In the main, one can regard these interest blocs as 'ideological families' (von Beyme 1985)—examples of which are Conservative, Liberal, Christian Democrats, Socialist and Communist which stabilised in competition during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in Western Europe. In this arena parties offer a core of group/class based electoral promises on the basis of their representative capacity.

In the organisation-to-voter arena, a mass party is geared towards mobilising the mass of the electorate. In the inter-election period, the key objectives of the party organisation are large-scale recruitment and socialisation of individual members. Since all members belong to a particular group, they all have experience of their group's concerns which, in turn, enables them to develop similar policy views. Such views are then translated into policy decisions which, during elections, are communicated to the particular societal segment through a labour-intensive campaign. Organisational success depends therefore on the level of pre-

election recruitment and socialisation, as well as on the level of mass mobilisation during an election, rather than on policy or leadership imperatives.

As the model of the mass membership party—originally a working class phenomenon—was highly successful in the electoral competition, Duverger predicted a ‘contagion from the left’ whereby parties representing other interests/segments in society would either be obliged to adopt the basic features and strategy of a mass party or would perish. From this perspective, the mass party, rather than the *élite*/caucus one, is considered the party of the future. This view is rooted in a majoritarian conception of democracy. For democracy, in Duverger’s view, could not be ‘government of the people by the people’, but only ‘government of the people by an *élite* rising from the people’. A regime without parties, or with weakly articulated, virtually memberless ‘cadre’ parties, assures the continued domination of *élites* produced by non-political factors of birth, wealth and professional competence. Only a regime of centralised, ideological mass parties facilitates its democratisation.

Duverger’s model can be challenged on the basis of its internal logic and empirical fitness. Regarding the model’s internal logic, Robert Michels (1962) posits two questions; whether or not parties are democratic and whether or not democratic parties can follow a democratic policy. The starting point of Michels’ classic study is the assumption that if democracy is to be achieved, it must be through the development of a ‘democratic party’. However, he contends that numerous oligarchic tendencies which are derived from the party organisational’s needs serve to undermine the development of a democratic party. This term covers the following aspects of political behaviour: the emergence of a political and administrative leadership and its stabilisation; the formation of a bureaucracy; the centralisation of authority; the emergence of instrumental goals such as the survival of the organisation; increased ideological rigidity in the sense of intolerance towards attempts at ideological reform; divergence between the interests and/or points of view of the leaders and the followers; the precedence of the leaders’ interests over the followers; the decrease in the members’ opportunities to participate in policy decisions; the co-optation of emergent opposition leaders by the existing leadership, and the shift from appeals to membership to appeals to the electorate (Linz 1968:269).

For Michels, these factors undermine the notions of democracy mentioned above, that is, the influence of rank-and-file over leadership’s decisions and the institutional control over their

activities. Specifically, the growth and complexity of the organisation and its operation in a turbulent environment lead to the emergence of stable élites whose professionalisation, combined with a consciousness of their own worth, leads to oligarchy. In addition, there is a tendency of socialist parties to shift their appeals from the membership to the general electorate thereby undermining the responsiveness of the leaders to their members.⁵ One can reasonably argue thus, that the constraints imposed by the organisation (i.e. its size and the need for specialisation and parliamentary representation) combined with the pressure exerted by party competition (for example, a 'winner takes all' principle) determine the emergence and maintenance of oligarchic tendencies, which in turn, undermine the development of a democratic party.

Duverger's (1964) prediction—that the mass party was the direction of future party development—could be challenged also on an empirical basis as it failed to account for the absence of such parties in certain polities. Notably, American parties, as well as European Conservative and Liberal parties were excluded from Duverger's analysis. Moreover, the prediction that mass membership political organisations originating on the left of the political spectrum (notably socialist working-class parties) would then be imitated by parties of the right out of political necessity, proved relevant only with regard to France and other continental European nations just after the Second World War. Duverger's arguments are therefore only valid when applied to the circumstances of a number of western nations, and even in these instances may now be less useful.

The electoral party model

Epstein's (1980a) analysis of party organisations in America and Western Europe produced an alternative view, based upon the differentiation between electoral and non-electoral parties. Such a differentiation derives from approaching parties in terms of their activity: 'structuring the vote is characteristic of a group qualifying as a political party' (Epstein 1980a:362). Understanding the meaning of 'vote structuring' requires an appreciation of a crucial defining element: a recognisable label which may or may not be on the ballot. With this additional element, 'structuring the vote' refers to:

an order or pattern enabling voters to choose candidates according to their labels.... The structure may be little more

than that provided by the label itself and the voters' acquaintance with it, or it may involve a vast educational and campaigning apparatus mobilising voters for a party cause. In one way or another, parties provide a basis—although not the only one—for electoral choice.

(Epstein 1980a:77)

On this basis, two 'ideal type' models outlining the historical development of present-day party organisations emerge: (i) non-electoral parties: those which began as working-class 'movements' in nineteenth-century Europe which did not at first seek votes so much as advocate a cause by propaganda or economic pressure, while simultaneously organising trade unions; and (ii) those whose electoral function dominates, namely, electoral parties. The former—exemplified by the west European socialist parties—were electoral machines only secondarily. Some subsequently became electoral in response to a delayed popular franchise. Once transformed to electoral machines, gaining members became secondary or ancillary to gaining votes. The focus now turns to electoral parties.

Once 'vote structuring' dominates party activities it affects all organisational arenas. In the intra-organisation arena, institutional imperatives depend on electoral requirements. This implies the need for a loose, flexible organisation which is able to maximise activities in 'peak' (i.e. election) periods, and for the supremacy of the parliamentary party. In this respect, party members' discretion in policy-making is limited, chiefly by pressures to avoid inconsistency with the party leadership's attempts to accommodate themselves to voters' preferences. Party leaders are thus capable of responding to movements of public opinion without being undermined by party members. Most of the time, party leaders are insulated from detailed control by their members, and need not respond in a fine-grained way to smallscale variations in rank-and-file views. Thus, the key requirement of a successful electoral party is to weaken its membership base, both in numbers and in level of commitment.

In the inter-organisation arena, two key dimensions are affected by a party's 'vote structuring' activities. Ideologically, electoral parties tend to adopt a non-programmatic character, enabling the leadership to respond to diverse electoral considerations. Strategically, parties use extensive polling research to formulate many presentational strategies aimed at convincing people that their policy platform accords most closely with the views of voters. One way of doing so is to find out what most voters want, and

then 'present a case' which delivers on these preferences. Further, whenever it appears that there is only a narrow majority on one side of an issue party leaders can adopt more ambiguous stances or make their pledges vague enough to avoid alienating other potential voters. Similarly, on minority-appeal issues, party leaders can still formulate policy packages in accordance with minority's preferences without antagonising groups.

In the organisation-to-voter arena, the general logic of competitive political pressures will result in a tendency of the electoral party to opt for the choice of policies/leaders mix which is believed to be favoured by voters (that is, it is considered to be a 'winner'), just as competitive pressures in economic markets produce multi-faceted efforts by firms to promote and continuously to improve their products. Beyond this background situation there are two groups of influences which determine how flexible such a policies/leaders mix can be: that is how often and to what extent it may be altered. First, the structure of party competition (e.g. party system polarisation, fragmentation, electoral volatility etc.) will determine how easily party leaders can modify their policies/leaders mix, and hence to what degree such changes are attractive. Second, different constitutional arrangements (i.e. the 'rules of the game') determine the scope of change (such as the limit on ideological extremism and on a leader's term in office) for partisan advantage.

With regard to the democratic assumptions underlying the above models, while Duverger adopts a majoritarian conception of democracy, Epstein's model is consistent with a pluralist democratic view. According to this latter view, the party is 'downgraded' to being only one of a variety of competing political actors, along with interest groups and the like. The pluralist party norm also involves a generally non-programmatic character, a leadership capable of responding to diverse electoral considerations and a transactional view of political activity. Thus the electoral party may still be associated with specific policies and interests while continuing to maintain a loose and accommodating character. Unlike a majoritarian party, the electoral party does not need to legitimise its programmes and policies through mass-membership participation. For electoral purposes, as Epstein argues (1980a:357), a cadre organisation suffices.

The analysis so far indicates that parties need to be approached with a detailed knowledge of the circumstances within which they operate and over a significant period in order to establish generalisations and trends. Structural changes in the economy

and in the mobility of labour during the 1940s, for example, facilitated a stark transformation of socialist parties by placing a higher priority on electoral success than ideological consistency and responsibility to their membership. This process was evident in the 1960s as they gradually came to resemble American political parties. Obviously, this does not appear to be the case with respect to certain aspects of party development—namely, the less class-consciousness, the absence of strong opposition to the existing social structure (Dahl 1966a:342–4), and the more purely electoral organisation of American parties. However, these aspects, fostered partly by technological change in mass communication, now increasingly characterise European parties. American parties are therefore accepted as the response to their circumstances, constitutional as well as social, just as European parties are accepted as responses to theirs.

The catch-all party model

By now it should be clear that approaches of political party organisation can ultimately be useful to those scholars committed to systematic theorising only when the discussion is grounded in some theory of political party development. Such a theoretical account must be composed of sound analytic elements which permit one to say why it may be the case that party leaders begin to modify their party organisation over time. A major approach of this kind is proposed by Otto Kirchheimer (1964, 1966a, 1966b). Kirchheimer argues that the socio-economic changes experienced in Western Europe in the era after 1945 radically altered the class structure of society. The emergence of new industries along with the shift towards tertiary-sector employment has made the 'old' working class into a residual force in the labour market. The creation of new occupations together with rising standards of living and higher levels of education has resulted in the blurring of the previously sharp lines of class division. The result, argued Kirchheimer, was the emergence of a 'new middle class'—with similar aspirations, common consumption patterns and a homogenised mass culture—which did not fit with the old model of class conflict. The prolonged economic growth also facilitated the elaboration of welfare state programmes which were no longer divisive or partisan, but claimed to serve the interests of almost all the electorate, rather than a particular sub-group of society. Added to this was the effect of the development of the mass media, through which party leaders began to enjoy a capacity to appeal to the electorate at large, just as firms appeal to

consumers. These developments, according to Kirchheimer, gave rise to the emergence of a new party model—the catch-all party.⁶

The 'catch-all' process affects all arenas of party organisation.⁷ In the intra-organisation arena, the creation of the catch-all party involved two processes: (i) strengthening top leadership groups; and (ii) downgrading the role of the individual party member in the policy-making process. The former process refers to a development towards indirect (co-opted) selection of leaders, a negligible role of members in the selection of candidates, a shift in the balance of power towards the top and an emphasis on the technical and managerial qualifications of candidates. Regarding the role of party members, the marginalisation of party membership implies a stagnation in its size, a declining financial importance of membership and a concurrent increase in the importance of state subvention for the party, an increasingly capital-intensive style of campaigning and an increasing number of professionals in the organisation.⁸

In the inter-organisation arena, 'catch-all' parties adapted to volatility in electoral behaviour by starting to accommodate voter preferences (i.e. centripetal competition). The characteristic trend of this competition pattern is the strengthening of the centre, that is, a persistent move of voters from one or both of the extreme ends of the political spectrum towards the centre. Party adaptation, in this respect, necessitated a radical revision of ideological positions. In fact, what was demanded of the parties was a move away from responsibility to particular social segments as well as from any sense of 'sociological' representation *per se*, towards a form of 'non-ideological' politics to suit conditions of less polarised and less segmented societies. The drastic reduction of the party's ideological baggage shifted the basis of inter-organisation competition towards party effectiveness in public policy-making. With the shift in the basis of inter-organisation competition, parties were seen as competing teams of leaders, and, as teams of leaders, the formal organisations of which they were part were seen to have become increasingly marginalised.

Extrapolating the consequences of the rise of the catch-all party, Kirchheimer further argued that the new party model represented a 'competitive phenomenon'. This is to say that once a party had proved its ability to tap cross-sectional support then other parties would be forced to follow suit, since otherwise their electoral base would gradually be eroded and they would face the prospect of being relegated to permanent opposition. The derived consequence of this centripetal pressure is the survival of only a

few very broadly based parties—perhaps just two—with any realistic chance of winning majority support.

In the organisation-to-voter arena, the 'catch-all' party set the scene for a new type of relations. The need to appeal to wide cross-sections of the community meant that parties had to dilute their ideological appeal. As voters moved away from the extremes towards the centre of the political spectrum, parties were forced to accommodate their appeal to centre-oriented voters. With the parties competing in similar terms and with a considerable overlap in their potential support, elections began to revolve around choices between teams of leaders rather than being contests among closed social groupings or fixed ideologies. During electoral campaigns catch-all parties emphasised the competence of their leaderships and their past performance. This, in turn, created a barrier to entry into office especially for those parties which lacked governmental experience.

Characterising the catch-all party as moving towards the centre of the political map—tapping into new sections of the electorate—is however to oversimplify the process. Account should also be taken of another important factor: existing parties that were subject to changes in electoral behaviour continued to draw heavily on pre-existing party and social traditions (Smith 1989b). In other words, the catch-all parties were still overwhelmingly reliant on traditional sources of support. As traditional support came from loyal voters—mostly from those who identify themselves with the parties—it continued to be forthcoming despite changing party orientations. Thus, there was no high penalty to be paid in also turning to the wider electorate.

Underlying the formulation of a new 'catch-all' model of party was a pluralistic conception of democracy. The decreasing importance of membership required the catch-all parties to look for ways of securing more permanent support. This was done by gaining access to a variety of interest groups—indicated by the nomination of interest group representatives for public office and the incorporation of their interests into the party programme—and the participation in coalition with other parties. In this respect, democracy lies primarily in the bargaining and accommodation of independently organised interests. Parties build constantly shifting coalitions among these interests, emphasising the need to reach consensus and compromise.

The cartel party model

While the case for centripetal party competition is largely undeniable, other factors became apparent in the 1970s and 1980s which led Katz and Mair (1995) to identify a new party type which they called the 'cartel' party. A variety of social, cultural and political developments have facilitated the emergence of this model, most notably the anchoring of parties within the state. The indicating factors for this process can be summarised under three headings: (i) the provision and regulation of state subventions to political parties; (ii) the rules regarding access to the electronic media; and (iii) an opening out of the governing process. In those countries in which state aid and support for parties is most pronounced, in which the opportunities for patronage are most enhanced and in which political culture is marked by a tradition of inter-party co-operation, parties have begun using their ability to shape the 'rules of the game' to favour their own interests.⁹ In their role as governors, who are ultimately responsible for the rules regarding state subventions, parties have provided state subvention to themselves, and have often increased the amounts of money and resources that are available. In a similar vein, parties have gradually brought the electronic media under state control and regulation, and hence under party influence. As most substantial parties have already been in government in the post Second World War period, access to the spoils of state has been shared by a limited number of parties.¹⁰ For these parties, state power became a free good which can be used for securing partisan advantage. The growing trend of anchoring of parties within the state has come to represent one of the most significant changes to the environment within which parties operate. This trend has affected all organisational arenas.

In the intra-organisation arena, the centrality of party membership has become largely irrelevant as the style of electoral campaigning began to shift towards a more capital-intensive approach. The growing reliance of parties on state subventions and the privileged access to the state-regulated—and hence party-regulated—mass media, further contributed to the indifference of party élites to the size of membership. Yet membership has maintained a central position when used as a resource in intra-party politics, or as a means to maintain a certain party image. With different leaders having different and conflicting goals with regard to policy and strategy as well as conflicting personal ambitions, members have become a 'resource base' during internal power struggles. This base may be mobilised during leadership

elections or internal policy/strategy crises, indicating (to the media and/or to party leaders) the emergence of a new internal 'order', a sustainment of an old one, or a legitimisation of myths regarding the party.

In the inter-organisation arena, cartel party competition effectively became managed and contained, involving a fixed number of parties and, in rare cases, new parties which were often splinters from existing parties. Wherever such parties were not certain of sustaining their electoral strength or winning enough support to be re-elected, the party leaders have tended to exploit state power in order to achieve these goals. Being unable to hamper the operation of other parties in society by restricting, for example, freedom of speech, leaders have jointly employed strategies which shape voters' preferences, namely, joint agenda setting and joint institutional manipulation (Dunleavy 1991:122–8). Classic examples—during the 1980s and the early 1990s—are the avoidance of electoral competition in most west European party systems over issues which may destabilise the institutional environment within which parties operate (such as 'electoral reform' in the United Kingdom), as well as issues which may destabilise the electoral environment within which parties operate and their internal cohesion (such as the issue of 'European integration' in Britain during the 1980s and early 1990s). Even when such issues were raised on the agenda, parties have adopted similar views, neutralising the ability of voters to choose among different alternatives.

In the organisation-to-voter arena, elections revolve around the ability of voters to choose from a fixed menu of political parties (Katz and Mair 1995). Having a 'fixed' political menu implies that cartel parties resemble each other, especially in terms of their programmes and electoral strategies. That is to say, cartel parties may avoid inter-party competition over certain issues (i.e. those which may destabilise their institutional, electoral and internal environments) and, at the same time, encourage competition over others. They may progressively solidify a 'joint' appeal and manipulate the electoral system to prevent new parties entering competition—hence creating a strong dependency effect among voters. As cartel parties adopt almost identical positions, individuals grow less inclined to turn out and vote since whichever party wins will implement almost the same policies—citizens get identical results whether they vote or not.

A new conception of democracy underlay Katz and Mair's 'cartel' party model. The opening of the governing process and the fact that none of the major parties is definitely 'out', imply that the

degree to which electoral competition can determine government actions or punish parties shrinks. The toning down of competition implies that 'democracy ceases to be seen as limitations or controls imposed on the state by civil society, and becomes instead a service provided by the state for civil society' (Katz and Mair 1995). Thus, the state provides democratically contested elections, understood as a contest among political parties which are also provided by the state. With the parties controlling the state (i.e. providing the service), it is their own survival that they are guaranteeing.

*Generational and periodical effects on the
sustainability of development models*

So far the section dealing with party 'development' models has presented a four-stage process in which élitist, electorally-oriented party organisations tended to give way to mass, purposive (i.e. policy-oriented) parties, which then tended to be replaced by new professional, electorally-oriented, catch-all parties, which were in turn replaced by cartel parties. However, while a certain period effect may well be evident from the distinction between different types of parties, there may also exist certain 'generational' effects. For some parties, the way their organisation solidifies conditions the life of the organisation even decades afterwards (Panebianco 1988). This, in turn, may encourage the maintenance of particular types of party organisations across different periods. Generation effects imply, therefore, the maintenance of a much greater organisational diversity, with the patterns among the different parties largely determined by their genetic origin. Viewed thus, particular types of party may out-live the circumstances which facilitated their initial emergence. One type of party organisation does not simply displace another type; rather, all co-exist notwithstanding the emergence of new organisation models. As Katz and Mair concluded:

contemporary parties are not necessarily wholly cartel parties any more than parties of previous generations were wholly élite parties, or wholly mass parties, or wholly catch-all parties. Rather, all of these models represent heuristically convenient polar types, to which individual parties may approximate more or less closely at any given time.

(Katz and Mair 1995:19)

With this co-existence in mind, attention now turns to the development of the main British parties as membership organisations. The focus is restricted to the intra-organisation arena: the inter-organisation arenas are discussed in Chapters 6 and 7; the organisation-to-voter arenas are discussed in Chapter 7.

THE BRITISH POLITICAL PARTIES AS MEMBERSHIP ORGANISATIONS

In Britain, the emergence of mass organisations can be dated from the Chamberlain reorganisation of the Liberal Party's 'Birmingham Caucus'. Even the Conservatives, after long reprobation of Chamberlain's system, developed some of the features of a nearly 'mass popular party'. As for the Labour Party, many would argue that it gave new meaning to the idea of the mass organisation: a combination of various factors, ranging from the need to recruit leaders from the lower classes, to the need to raise levels of political consciousness among the working class, led the organisational network to encourage and cultivate membership from its formative phase. By analysing British parties as membership organisations I hope to demonstrate that specific organisational features which dominate parties during one period then decline, their place being taken by new features. I also hope to demonstrate that no British party has ever taken seriously membership recruitment as well as membership participation in decision-making processes. I start by examining what seems to be a classic example of mass organisation—namely, the Labour Party organisation during the pre-1945 period—and contrast it with the characteristics of Duverger's (1964) mass party model.

The pre-1945 Labour Party as membership organisation: the myth of mass party

The modern British Labour Party has its origins in the 1918 party constitution which remained almost untouched until the late 1970s. The constitution declared that the work of the party would be 'under the direction and control of the Party Conference' (Labour Party Constitution: Clause V[i]) while the National Executive Committee would be 'the Administrative authority of the party' (Clause VI[a]). No mention was made in the constitution of the power or responsibilities of the Parliamentary Labour Party (PLP). Direct membership was allowed for the first time, and local Labour parties were represented on the party executive. Although

the majority of executive posts remained in the hands of the affiliated organisations, executive committee members were to be chosen directly by the whole conference instead of on a reserved basis. The constitution also provided the party with a new socialist purpose, establishing as its political objective common ownership of the means of production. The individual member's right in policy-making was legitimised and it was clearly mentioned that members would be able to exert their influence via the local branch and constituency party, the National Executive Committee and the annual party conference. These passages, it is argued, imply a bottom-up control-representation system, that is, that Labour MPs and hence, by implication, the PLP and even a Labour government, were subject to the direction of the annual conference. On the basis of this constitution, the Labour Party has continually made the pretence of running a democratic organisation.

The 1918 constitution gave the Labour Party the unmistakable image of a mass party, which the party has sought to sustain ever since. Three caveats—related to the nature of membership, the position of the PLP, and the nature of party appeal in the pre-1945 period—should immediately be emphasised. As for the nature of membership, the Labour Party has never really had a mass individual membership, though for many years this was formally concealed behind the facade of a mass affiliated membership. Affiliated membership comprises trade unionists whose unions are affiliated to the TUC, and members of co-operative and socialist societies deemed by the NEC to be eligible for affiliation to the party. While it was impossible until 1918 for the party to offer people direct membership, in the period between 1914 and 1918 affiliated membership rose from about 1.6 million to 3 million (Party Annual Reports). When it became possible to recruit individual members, however, the party did not give much priority in the early 1920s to this end (McKibbin 1974:141). The party's only initiative was directed towards attracting newly enfranchised women as it was assumed that males would belong to a trade union and would therefore become members indirectly. When the first Labour government lost office in 1924 the party launched a national drive to recruit members which included targeting trade-unionists already paying the political levy. This was the first occasion since the creation of an individual membership in 1918 that the party went out to recruit men (Cole 1948:174).

Given that efforts were made after 1924 to build up the individual membership, it could be anticipated that this predominance of union membership would be reversed. In fact,

some rectification of this huge imbalance in membership did take place in the 1930s as individual membership rose while union affiliated membership declined. In 1938, about 428,000 individual members were recorded, alongside about 2.6 million affiliated members. War-time social conditions then led to a major decline in individual membership while trade union membership and trade union affiliation to the TUC again rose sharply. After the war, trade union affiliation rose from about 2.6 million in 1946 to 4.3 million in 1947, while individual membership rose from a war-time low point of 218,000 in 1942 to a new high of 645,000 in 1946 (Minkin 1991). Overall, in contrast to the characteristics expected of a mass party, even at its peak, individual membership in the Labour Party amounted to only 13 per cent of total party membership. This explains Alan Ware's (1987:146) justifiable assertion that of all the mass membership parties, the British Labour Party is perhaps the one where (individual) membership recruitment has been taken least seriously.

In characterising the Labour Party as a mass party, the second caveat that should be mentioned concerns the position of the PLP. Here one should distinguish between the role of the PLP in the process of policy formation and implementation. Regarding its role in policy-formation, it was a fundamental prerequisite of unity in the British Labour Movement—between the PLP and the trade unions—that there be a degree of general ideological agreement on the aims and values manifested in the formation of the party programme. The minimal agreed aim before 1918 was that there must be an independent representation of labour to protect and advance its interests in Parliament. In the 1918 constitution, the party changed its formal aims from the pursuit of 'trade union principles and ideals' (LRC Report 1900:11–12) to the goal of Socialism, defined as 'the common ownership of the means of production' and the 'social economic and political emancipation of the people'.¹¹ The modified goal definitions could clearly be interpreted in terms which were fully compatible with trade union aims and aspirations. This overlap of purpose was further reflected in the aims of the party under the new constitution. That is, that the party was to seek 'the full fruits' of the labour of the producers, it was to seek the most equitable distribution of the products of that labour, and it was to seek a system of 'popular administration and control over each industry and service' (Minkin 1991). Given a relatively high degree of ideological agreement, social affinity and interest compatibility between the PLP and the trade unions, as well as the fact that membership was chiefly associated with the affiliated trade unions, it is hardly surprising

that trade union policies were a foundation of the party's long-term programme up to 1945.

The situation regarding policy-implementation, on the other hand, was marked by the growing acceptance of the PLP's autonomy. This increased autonomy of the party leadership was visible both in its relations with the trade unions and in the strategies it implemented. Early in the relationship, the trade unions had accepted that the party had distinctive functions and required a certain degree of autonomy in order to exercise these properly. Thus, the PLP gradually became an autonomous body and through various formulae and mechanisms it was conceded significant discretion in the implementation of Conference's decisions. In 1904, for example, the TUC had effectively agreed that all questions relating to electoral organisation should be left in the hands of the new Labour Representation Committee (TUC Congress Report 1904). At the 1908 party conference, a large majority of the TUC voted to prohibit members of the TUC Parliamentary Committee (later the General Council) from sitting on the Party Executive—a prohibition preserved to this date.

While union policies were the foundation of the Labour Party's long-term programme up to 1945, the PLP was at that time eager to gain respect as a party 'fit to govern'. When the PLP formed a government—as they did in 1924 and 1929—they were in a position to implement policies, some of which were disliked and some even heavily opposed by the unions. The crisis in the summer of 1931 and the subsequent fall of the second Labour government had emphasised the autonomy of the leadership by refusing to implement the proposals of the Labour Party's 1929 General Election manifesto, *Labour and the Nation*. Furthermore, at the 1932 Labour Party conference, the Left pressed for a commitment to nationalise the joint stock banks. The NEC promised that such action would take place, but, when the 1935 General Election manifesto was written by the leadership, no such commitment was made. These cases illustrate the preeminence of the PLP—especially over policy-making—in marked contrast to Duverger's bottom-up control-representation system.

The third caveat which must be stated when attempting to characterise the pre-war Labour Party as a mass party concerns the party's appeal. Although the party had its special class appeal, after 1918 this appeal was loosened and broadened, enabling the party to develop a non-sectional identity which turned into a very general defence of the national interest when Labour was in office. This was done by incorporating elements of ambiguity into the party appeal as well as using a wide

terminology. In the post-1918 period, the Labour Party defined its target audience as 'the workers by hand or brain', implying a wider constituency than the manual working class (including, for example, clerical workers, professionals and small traders). As a matter of fact, such a formulation could include all 'the People', 'the Community' and 'the Nation'.¹² The class appeal was further diluted by an ideological approach to the Labour Movement which saw it as 'a movement of opinion', not of a class (Minkin 1991). The premise that class does not guarantee opinion, implied that the party had to make its appeal wider, and on the basis of principles rather than interests—in order to tap cross-sectional support. Thus, in contrast to Duverger's mass party model, the pre-1945 Labour Party had an unmistakably ambiguous electoral identity and a wide electoral appeal.

The three above-mentioned provisos imply that the notion of a 'mass party' was for the pre-1945 period an official party myth that Labour sought to sustain. As Webb notes:

the British Labour Party never really attempted to mobilise the indigenous working class by encapsulating it within an extensive network of interlinked social, economic and political organisations, and this has clearly affected the role of the membership both inside and outside the party... Rather, the British Labour Party has been content to allow the affiliated trade unions effectively to become its organisation. This has also meant that, unlike other parties of mass integration, it has not really needed to become an authentic mass membership party. In reality, coalitions of parliamentary and union élites have dominated the party, and even when delegates of the individual membership have succeeded in getting conference to adopt policies disapproved of by the leadership, the latter has been inclined to overlook such policies when drafting election manifestos...

(Webb 1994:110)

Looking back at Duverger's formulation of mass party as 'the party of the future', one is confronted rather with catch-all features which were already evident in the pre-1945 Labour Party organisation.

The post-1945 British parties as membership organisations: trends in party membership and activism

An accurate assessment of the post-1945 British parties as membership organisations can be obtained by tracking trends in party membership and party activism. The former task was undertaken by Katz and Mair's team of experts who produce the most accurate and up-to-date handbook—*Party Organisations* (1992a)—containing information on trends in party membership throughout the advanced industrial democracies. The same team also produced a study—entitled *How Parties Organize* (1994)—which covers change and adaptation in party organisations in advanced industrial democracies. The second task—the most accurate trends on party activism—is to be found in Seyd and Whiteley's (1992) study *Labour's Grass Roots*, and Whiteley, Seyd and Richardson's (1994) research *True Blues* on the politics of Conservative party membership.

In his classic study of political parties, Maurice Duverger (1964: 61) asks: 'How do we define a party member?' and answers that membership 'varies according to the party: each holds to a concept of membership which is peculiar to it'. Certainly membership of each of the main British parties is distinctive. Before 1918 individuals could only join the Labour Party indirectly through membership of an affiliated trade union or socialist organisation. The 1918 constitution stipulated that to become an individual member in the Labour Party a person has to 'subscribe to the conditions of membership' and not be a member of a political party or organisation 'declared by the Annual Conference of the Labour Party...or by the National Executive Committee...to be ineligible for affiliation to the Party'. In addition, the individual has to 'Accept and conform to the Constitution, Programme, Principles and Policy of the Party', and 'if eligible, be a member of a Trade Union affiliated to the Trade Union Congress'.¹³

By contrast, the Conservative Party lacks a clear definition of a Conservative party member. The party's Model Rules defines party membership in terms of support for the objectives of the local constituency association. These are listed as securing the election of Conservatives to the House of Commons, to the European Parliament, and to local government; the raising of funds locally; the maintenance of an up-to-date electoral register; and finally, to spreading 'the knowledge of Conservative principles and policy, and generally to promote the interests of the Party in the constituency'.¹⁴ Such a definition is rather vague as it requires

individuals to give generalised support to the policy objectives and candidates of the party. 'Thus it is hard to distinguish precisely between party members and party supporters' (Whiteley, Seyd and Richardson 1994:72).

Table 4.2. shows that individual membership in the Labour Party has fallen by two-thirds with respect to the 1960 levels, and affiliated and total membership by 16 per cent and 22 per cent respectively. Since its peak in 1979, the decline has been more dramatic: affiliated membership fell 29.3 per cent between 1979 and 1992, and total membership by 32 per cent, reflecting the impact of employment in manufacturing of the economic recession of the 1980s. Individual membership in the Conservative Party has fallen 82 per cent with respect to the 1960 levels, whereas the Liberal membership figure has broadly halved since 1974. The SDP, following the merger of the Alliance parties, lost 81 per cent of its members between 1987 and 1989 (Webb 1992b, 1994).

These figures would therefore suggest that there has been wholesale 'collapse' of party membership in Britain in recent years. Indeed, data on changes in the total number of party members indicates a 56.2 per cent fall during 1964–87 (Katz, Mair *et al.* 1992b). A model formulated by Whiteley, Seyd and Richardson (1994:222) further indicates that during this period the average number of people leaving the Conservative Party annually was well above 64,000 a year. These figures, which are based on measurements in raw numbers, are further emphasised if one examines current membership levels as a percentage share of the electorate, and compare these to the same percentage share in the earliest years. Such an approach reveals that party membership levels in Britain have generally failed to keep pace with the pronounced growth in the size of the national electorate: whereas in the early 1960s Britain had a party membership rate of around 9 per cent of the electorate, by the late 1980s it had fallen to below 4 per cent (Katz, Mair *et al.* 1992b).

The above figures refer to the national membership total which

Table 4.2 The membership of the main British parties, 1960–92

Year	Labour			Conservative	Liberal	SDP
	Individual	Affiliated	Total	Individual (=total)	Individual (=total)	Individual (=total)
1960	790,192	5,538,138	6,328,330	2,800,000 ^a	243,600 [MM1] ^b	—

Year	Labour			Conservative	Liberal	SDP
	Individual	Affiliated	Total	Individual (=total)	Individual (=total)	Individual (=total)
1965	816,765	5,623,128	6,439,893	—	—	—
1970	680,191	5,542,389	6,222,580	—	—	—
1974	691,889	5,826,568	6,518,457	1,500,000	190,000	—
1983	295,344	6,160,393	6,455,737	1,200,000 ^c	N/A	45,258
1987	288,829	5,619,320	5,908,149	1,000,000	79,500	58,000
1992	279,530	4,644,000	4,923,530	500,000 ^d	100,000	—

a 1953 figure, the nearest available indicator of membership in 1960

b 1961 figure

c 1982 figure

d 1988 figure

Sources: Webb (1992b), Webb (1994)

effectively treats party membership as a systemic property. While this allows us to determine whether there has been an overall decline in party membership, it is still possible that losses in party X may have been partially counter-balanced by gains in party Y. Looking at membership levels in the main British parties reveals the remote possibility that major losses in one party may have been at least partially balanced by a growth in the membership of another party/ other parties. Given the 64 per cent loss of Labour's initial (individual) membership, as well as the record decline of the Conservative and the Liberal membership, it is reasonable to argue that none of the British parties proved immune to the decline in political participation.¹⁵ It should also be emphasised that the new membership recruited by the SDP has failed to make much of an impression on overall rates of membership.

Before we discuss trends in party activism over time, we need to clarify what is meant by it. Seyd and Whiteley (1992) have suggested that party activism is not a single homogeneous concept which can be accurately measured, for example, by the number of meetings which an individual attends. Rather, it involves a continuum of political activities; at one end of the continuum, members who are relatively inactive will pay their

membership fees, vote for the party, and possibly identify strongly with it. At the other end of the continuum, there are the 'full time' activists who occupy positions within the party organisation, elect representatives on local government bodies, attend all important meetings and are prominent participants in local campaigns or elections. Between these two extremes are members who may get involved in a particular aspect of party work, such as campaigning at election times, but are generally inactive otherwise. Seyd and Whiteley (1992) also argue that there are at least three distinct, though related dimensions to party activism. First, there is the dimension of contact with the party which measures the extent to which the individual party member has contact with other party members, often in party meetings. Second, there is a campaigning dimension which measures the extent to which individuals are involved in campaign activities, both within the party and outside in related political organisations. Third, there is a representation dimension which measures the extent to which individuals represent the party by holding offices both within the party and in external bodies.

Seyd and Whiteley (1992) found that more than 40 per cent of Labour's grass roots members who responded to their questionnaire felt they were less active than five years before, and these out-numbered the respondents who felt they were more active by more than two to one. Similar hints for decline in party activism were also found in the Conservative Party. Whiteley, Seyd and Richardson (1994) reported a decline in the average levels of activism of party members which started from 1977. The explanation of this decline advanced by the scholars is that the timing of these trends points to a change occurring in the recruitment of new members; there has been a significant increase in the number of weakly-attached individuals who have joined the party since the mid-1970s.¹⁶

The discussion so far has focused on changes in the size of party membership and trends in party activism. Yet, when addressing the question of membership of catch-all and cartel parties, the changes which had been wrought concerned the role of the membership rather than its size.¹⁷ The decline in party membership and party activism during 1960–92 is in stark contrast to the growth of autonomy of the parliamentary groups. Individual members seem to be playing a subordinate role in policy-making, and their only significant power has been to select parliamentary candidates. This trend—to the elaboration of which we now turn—largely mirrors the patterns evident in the Labour, Conservative and the modern Liberal Democrat parties.

The centralisation of post-1945 British parties

British parties have always tended to be dominated by the parliamentary élites, as the classic study of McKenzie (1964) emphasised. McKenzie applauds the lack of grass roots importance, because he believes that the norms of parliamentary democracy require that the leaders of parliamentary parties be accountable directly to the voters and not to the party members. Despite the decline in party membership and party activism during 1960–90, British parties still tend to be dominated by the party parliamentary élites. Centralisation trends are exemplified by the subordination of extra-parliamentary wings to the parliamentary parties. The overall objectives of these organisations is to serve the party parliamentary élites in their search for electoral success. The centralisation of British parties during 1960–90 could be described according to the following aspects: party leadership selection, candidate selection, control of party rules and pre-eminence in the policy-making process.

Party leadership selection

The most accurate and up-to-date information on leadership selection in British parties is to be found in Punnett (1992, 1993). In the case of the British Labour Party, he argues, until 1981 the Parliamentary Labour Party (PLP) retained exclusive responsibility for choosing the party leader. At the beginning of each session of Parliament when Labour was in opposition, nominations for the post of leader were called for. If two or more nominations were forthcoming, a process of 'eliminating votes' was held until one candidate secured an absolute majority. The franchise was confined to MPs and the rules applied only when Labour was in opposition, although on the one occasion when the leader retired when Labour was still in office (Harold Wilson in 1976), the PLP decided to follow the same broad procedure as when in opposition.

These rules were abandoned, however, in the early 1980s following attempts by the left to extend the franchise to the extra-parliamentary party as a means of combating the influence of the right (Mitchell 1983; Punnet 1993). The 1980 party conference and a subsequent special conference in 1981, accepted the principle that the leader was to be chosen by an electoral college of which trade unions were to have 40 per cent of the votes and the PLP and the constituencies 30 per cent each. The votes cast in each of the three sections of the electoral college were then to be

distributed among the candidates as percentages of that section's share of the total electoral college votes. To win, a candidate had to secure an overall majority of the total electoral college votes. Reforms endorsed in 1993 have further meant that leaders (and deputy leaders) are now elected by a new college in which the votes of unions and constituency delegates have been replaced by those of corporate and individual members. Labour MEPs obtained the right to vote as part of the PLP section of the college. The party conference also endorsed changes in 1993 that allow union delegations to split their votes internally, and which reapportion electoral college voting equally between constituency section, affiliated organisations members and MPs/MEPs. Thus, in the 1994 leadership contests, every MP and Euro-MP had a vote in the parliamentary section; every rank-and-file member of the party had a vote in the constituency section; and every Labour trade unionist who contributed to his union's political fund had a vote in the trade union section. These reforms have therefore enhanced the voting power of both individual and affiliated members in leadership elections, and reduced that of the union élites.

For the Conservative Party, no leader was ever elected by the party until 1965; prior to that date Conservative leaders 'emerged' from a series of secret negotiations among senior party figures. The great advantage to this exclusive, secretive and *ad hoc* selection procedure was that it provided continuity without any overt struggle for the succession. With the press and public being kept at arms length, opinions could be gathered quietly in face-to-face discussions or gatherings in small groups. The absence of fixed rules further allowed the selection to be adapted to particular circumstances. The limitations of the process, however, were highlighted when no natural successor and no compromise candidate acceptable to senior figures in the party could easily be found, as was the case, for example, after the resignation of Harold Macmillan in 1963. The subsequent consultations took place in such secrecy that they aroused suspicion, while at the same time, candidates for the leadership used the party conference as a launching pad for what amounted to a public 'selection campaign'.

Subsequently, the party decided to modify the selection procedures: rules for the election of the leader by Conservative MPs were drawn-up in 1965 (and subsequently revised in 1975, 1989 and 1991). What finally emerged was an election by MPs in which an overall majority plus 15 per cent of all eligible voters was required for victory on the first ballot. Candidates could join the

second ballot, but if no overall majority was secured the three top contenders would proceed to a third ballot using the alternative vote method. Additionally, a contest could be held at the beginning of each new session of Parliament, provided that 10 per cent of MPs indicate that a contest is desirable. If required, a contest must be held within three months of the opening of a new Parliament, and within fourteen days of the opening of the session in other years: the precise timetable is determined by the incumbent leader in consultation with the chairman of the backbench 1922 Committee.

In the Liberal Party, leadership selection from the 1920s—after the relegation of the Liberals into a ‘third party’ position—to the 1970s was executed by Liberal MPs. Only in 1976 did the Liberals adopt a procedure for leadership selection by the party members through a modified version of the one-member one-vote ballot. The 1976 leadership contest—in which David Steel won with two-thirds of the votes—was the first time that a leader of a British party had been put in place through a process that directly involved all the party members (Punnett 1993:271).¹⁸ The SDP—which merged with the Liberal Party in 1988—was formed early in 1981 as a result of a schism within the Labour Party. Here, leadership selection was undertaken by a one-member one-vote postal ballot with MPs retaining control over the initiation of leadership contests and nomination. The rules made no provision for the automatic review of the leaders’ position and a contest could only be initiated at the request of a majority of the members of the Parliamentary Committee (that is, MPs plus Peers’ representatives). In 1988, the Liberal Democrats (SDP-Liberals merger) enabled the full membership of the party to participate directly, and on equal terms, in the leadership selection by adopting a one-member one-vote postal ballot as the means of selection. Added to this was the requirement of a contest to be held at least once per Parliament within two years of the beginning of the Parliament.

Unlike American parties who have widened ‘selectorates’ embracing all of their voters, British parties have maintained a restricted version of popular decision-making in party leadership selection. Only the Liberal Democrats involve all their members directly in the ballot. However, the nomination process in this party is dominated by the parliamentary party, and candidates can only be drawn from among MPs. The Conservative and Labour MPs have also retained their selection power despite the changes which occurred during the 1970s and 1980. The élitist nature of the leadership selection process was well summarised by Punnett

(1992:160) who noted that 'The procedures have become more participatory but the limits of the change are clear'.

Candidate selection

The most accurate and up-to-date information on candidate selection in British parties is to be found in Morris and Lovenduski's (1995) *Political Recruitment*. In Britain, they argue, the selection of party candidates to contest national elections is a process which is private and internal to the political parties themselves. Parliamentary candidates from whichever party are selected by relatively small groups of party members in each parliamentary constituency. Each constituency elects a single MP by the simple plurality method. The processes of selection in the British parties share many characteristics. Selection rules are centrally determined but the process itself is decentralised (Denver 1988) with differing functions for party members as well as constituency, regional and national organisations. Perhaps most important is the form of intervention from central office which is evident in these parties. Labour's National Executive Council has formal powers to veto candidates at the end of the selection process. Similarly, the Conservative's Central Office and the Liberal Democrats' State Candidate Committee for either England, Scotland and Wales have a complete control over the Approved List which defines the pool of eligibles who may apply to local vacancies. As for the process itself, in all parties it involves a series of distinct stages. In the Labour and Conservative parties the stages are application, nomination, shortlist, selection, and endorsement—with contestants gradually eliminated until a final winner emerges. In the Liberal Democrats the selection process involves five stages: initial application, acceptance on the Regional Approved List; application to a constituency; shortlist and final selection meeting where grass roots members choose their candidate.

The distribution of powers in the Labour Party selection process can be seen from the responsibilities allocated to the institutional actors involved in the process. The constituency organisation informs the NEC of their desire to initiate the selection process; seeks nomination from affiliated organisations (e.g. unions, constituencies, Cooperative party and women's sections), draws up a shortlist and sends it to the NEC for validation; selects a candidate and submits the selected candidate to the NEC for endorsement. The timetable for selecting candidates is established by the NEC in consultation with constituencies, and the local

arrangements are overseen by NEC representatives and also by regional organisers to make sure the process follows party rules. The national organisation maintains advisory lists of potential candidates which the constituency parties may use; validates local shortlists and endorses or vetoes selected candidates. Perhaps the most important points from this description are that the federal structure of the party gives some powers to trade unions, the national leadership exercise no control over the pool of eligible people, and the fact that the leadership can veto the elected candidate at the end of process.

The major changes to Labour's selection procedure during the period 1960–94 were the introduction in 1980 of a mandatory requirement that all constituencies undertake a reselection procedure between general elections;¹⁹ the 1989 changes to the rules regulating shortlisting and the introduction of Electoral College; and the move in 1993 towards one-member-one vote and all-women shortlists. The introduction of mandatory reselection of sitting MPs implies that each MP has to be put through the reselection process within three years of the previous election, though all have the automatic right to be short-listed. The introduction of selection by the Electoral College meant that at least 60 per cent of the votes are allocated to local party members and a maximum of 40 per cent to affiliated organisations, mainly unions, within each constituency. In 1993 this process was again changed to one-member-one vote; candidates are now selected by individual members and fee-paying trade unionists in the local constituency according to this formula. These changes have clearly reduced the power of middle level activists in the selection process. Finally, the 1993 conference approved a radical proposal that there should be all-women shortlists in half of Labour high-prospect challenger seats, that is, seats where Labour is a viable challenger to the incumbent party.

In the Conservative Party, the first step for any applicant involves getting onto the Approved List maintained by Conservative Central Office. The list defines those eligible to apply for vacancies in the various constituencies. The main hurdles at this stage are the Central Office interview which is supplemented by weekend selection boards during which applicants are subjected to a series of exercises to evaluate their intellectual, personal and political skills. The applicants are also exposed to the sort of pressures an MP might experience in order to test their performance, character, and leadership capabilities. This interviewing system has been designed to produce a thorough and meritocratic selection process. Once candidates get on to the

Approved List they may apply for vacancies in the various constituencies. In the constituency organisation the selection process involves four basic steps: application, shortlisting by Selection Committee, further elimination by the Executive Committee, before final approval by the Special General Meeting. The general meeting of the constituency association is open to all grass roots members but the Executive Committee may provide grass roots members with no choice by choosing only one finalist.

The process of recruitment in the Conservative Party has experienced two main procedural reforms since the 1960s. The first was the revision of Model Rules (following the 1972 Chelmer Report) to allow grass roots members a slightly greater role in the choice of candidates at the general meeting. The second was the introduction of weekend selection boards in 1980 which legitimises the authority of Central Office in controlling the pool of eligible applicants. Overall, these changes transformed the selection system from an informal 'patronage' process during the pre-1945 period towards a more formal and highly meritocratic process. The involvement of outside representatives of business and commerce as well as full-time party agents in the weekend selection boards, combined with the introduction of a vetting system in line with personnel management practices common in the private sector, also contributed to a shift of power over selection decisions upwards and downwards within the party, away from the middle-level activists. However, according to Norris and Lovenduski (1995:49), 'this change should not be exaggerated, since the Selection Committee and Executive Council in local associations continue to take the major decisions about the shortlisting of individual applicants'.

For the Liberal Democrats, candidate selection is a compromise between the Liberal and the SDP systems. Individual members vote to select parliamentary candidates at special hustings meetings—the Liberal system—or by using a postal ballot method—the SDP system. Each state party (i.e. English, Scottish and Welsh) establishes a Candidate Committee which is responsible for maintaining lists of approved candidates, coordinates and regulates the procedure for the selection and adoption of candidates and publishes criteria for candidate assessment. A Joint Candidate Committee coordinates the maintenance of standards and the performance of the Candidate Committee's functions. The local party arranges one or more hustings meetings, and selects a prospective parliamentary candidate using the above-mentioned procedures. In common with other parties, power has been shifted to the grass roots level as choice is indeed

made by members. However, all potential candidates have to be approved prior to selection by a central body—the Joint States Candidates Committee.

To sum up, candidate selection in the Labour, Conservative and Liberal Democrats share three common features. First, a formalised and codified recruitment system which ensures a relatively meritocratic and open process. Second, a localised and democratic process as members have some influence especially at the last selection stage. Third, central office intervention is evident in these parties (Norris and Lovenduski 1995). Perhaps most important is that although the main British parties have shifted power over selection decision downwards within the party—away from the middle-level activists—they simultaneously shifted power upwards to maintain their control over the outcome of the selection process. Thus, the growth in members' power over selection decision should not be over-emphasised.

Control of party rules

Individual members of the Labour Party, the Conservative Party and the Liberal Democrats do not have a role in the process of changing their party rules.²⁰ In the Labour Party, the NEC, constituency Labour parties, affiliated unions and socialist societies can propose changes in party rules which are then decided by the annual conference using a simple majority vote. Within the Conservative Party, both the National Executive and the local parties can propose changes to party rules. However, National Union rules can only be changed by a two-third majority of voting members of the Central Council of the National Union, which is a body similar in constitution and function to the annual conference. Similarly, the Liberal Democrats' constitution can only be altered by a two-thirds majority of representatives present and voting at the Federal Conference. Constitutional amendments may be submitted by the Federal Conference, the Federal Policy Committee, members of the Federal Conference, state parties, regional parties, local parties and specified associated organisations.

Pre-eminence in the policy-making process

The 1918 Labour Party's constitution legitimises the individual member's right to play a prominent part in the party's affairs through the local branch and constituency power, the National Executive Committee, and the annual party conference. However,

for much of the Labour Party's history, the decision-making process has been significantly influenced by the parliamentary leadership, sustained by the 'bloc vote' of a small number of trade unions (Seyd and Whiteley 1992).²¹ What is meant by the voting procedure known as the bloc vote? Up to 1890, voting at the TUC was by a show of hands—one person, one vote—by delegates from both 'Trade Societies' and Trade Councils. However, attempts by the large unions to encourage a system wherein they should be automatically entitled to an increased voting power, commensurate with their larger membership, were successful. The 1918 Constitution simply referred to 'voting cards on the basis of one vote for each 1,000 members or part thereof. As a result of this procedure, the bloc vote came to refer to two features of union voting at the Labour Party conference: (i) a process by which unions were accorded votes in accordance with affiliated membership—thus giving the largest unions preponderance over other organisations; and (ii) a process by which the unions cast their votes as units which did not register minority opinion in the unions (Minkin 1978).

Nevertheless, it remained true that over time no group exercised complete control in the Labour Party policy-making process. A loose coalition between the party leadership and the trade union leadership—especially when the party was in Opposition—enabled the party to maintain its unity despite deep internal conflicts over issues such as nuclear disarmament, European integration and the party's rules for candidate and leadership selection. To increase the Labour Party's chances to win office and its governability, a few concessions were made by the unions. After the Second World War, for example, the PLP was given significant discretion in the field of policy-implementation. This was done by various formulae and mechanisms, such as the provision in the party constitution which allowed the PLP to decide 'the timing and application' of a policy in Parliament, and only where a conference resolution was carried by a two-thirds majority did it automatically become party policy. This provision obviously represented a formidable hurdle for any minority group within the party attempting to convert the conference to support a particular proposal for inclusion in the party programme.

The way the Labour Party dealt with the issue of unilateral nuclear disarmament exemplifies the complex process of policy formation inside the party. In 1959 Hugh Gaitskell lost the vote at the party conference but then he stated that he would continue to defend his position and try to mobilise the majority of the conference for his case. One may argue, therefore, that even the

party leadership requires conference approval for a smooth running of the party. However, even after a specific proposal had been adopted by the conference there was no assurance that it would be included in the party's manifesto. A classic example was the non-application of conference resolutions regarding unilateral nuclear disarmament by the party leadership after the fall of the Labour government in 1979.

The fact remains that although the party constitution avers the sovereignty of the conference, a loose coalition between party leadership and trade union leadership still dominated the policy process. Even when such coalitions have broken down temporarily, as they did in 1979, the parliamentary élite has shown its willingness to ignore parts of the conference-made programme when drafting the party manifesto. One is left, therefore, with a rhetoric which perpetuates the belief in members' influence over policy while in practice, the views of other intra-party actors often prevail.²²

Power in the policy-making process within the Conservative Party resides with the parliamentary party and, in particular, with the person elected as its leader. Individual members have played a sub-ordinate role in policy-making, and their only significant power has been to select parliamentary candidates.²³ They have been involved in policy-making only on occasions when parliamentarians, involved in intra-party conflicts, have attempted to mobilise support at the grass roots level as a means of advancing their case. A classic example occurred during the debate over Britain joining a single currency. The Conservative MPs opposed to a single currency on the terms outlined in the Maastricht Treaty have been actively mobilising support within the extra-parliamentary party.

The role of party members in the policy-making process was investigated by McKenzie (1964:258) who argues that members 'are of little importance'. At the local, grass roots level, in his view, the party members' primary purpose is 'to conduct propaganda and raise funds' (1964:244). His overall conclusion about the relationships between the different parts of the party are as follows:

The party in parliament has to preserve its autonomy; the Central Office has continued to function in effect as the personal machine of the Leader and has fulfilled most of the Executive responsibilities of the National Union; and the latter organisation has, with varying degrees of docility, fulfilled its function as an electoral machine and a channel of

communication between the parliamentary leaders and their followers in the country.

(McKenzie 1964:180)

The decisive influence of the Conservative leadership is thus derived from the autonomy of the parliamentary group and the ultimate authority of the party leader. Since the party developed out of a cadre-type organisation based initially around parliamentary élites (i.e. a highly centralised party), all authority and policy emanates from the leader, and the task of the extra-parliamentary party is limited in its jurisdiction to recruitment and support of the party and its leader. Conservative Central Office is entirely the creature of the leader, whereas the National Union of Conservative and Unionist Associations federates the local constituency associations to which individual members belong. The limited role of the extra-parliamentary party is reflected in the organisation and procedure of the party's annual conference. Unlike the Labour Party conference, the Conservative conference does not formally make policy, but acts more as a party rally, and also a sounding board for party opinion. Furthermore, whereas the Labour Party conference is the major outlet for the political views of Party activists, the Conservative conference is tightly controlled by senior figures in the National Union, Conservative Central Office and the parliamentary party who seem to be more concerned with achieving party accord than with reflecting genuine divisions of opinions within the party (Seyd 1975).

The Liberal Democrats (formally launched in March 1988 as the Social and Liberal Democrats) stem from a merger between the vast majority of Liberal Party members and the majority of the SDP. Its structure is, therefore, a blend of two very different organisational traditions. The party has a federal structure comprising three 'state' parties for Scotland, Wales and England plus a federal central organisation. The Federal Policy Committee (FPC) is in charge of policy formulation and comprises the leader, the president, four MPs, one peer, three local government councillors, two Scottish and two Welsh representatives plus thirteen members elected by the twice-yearly conference. Ballots can also be called by the FPC 'on any fundamental question where, in its judgment, the values and objectives of the Party are in issue or it is otherwise in the essential interests of the Party...'.²⁴ Policy proposals may be submitted by state parties, regional parties in England, associated organisations and individual members of the party. Overall, the Liberal Democrats'

organisation can be regarded as officially more democratic than the other parties since members now have a potentially more influential role to play. Not only can they elect their leader, but they can now send representatives to a conference which is sovereign in defining party policy. This is perhaps the inevitable consequence of a relatively small and financially-dependent party, whose members are its lifeblood.

Summary

The organisational changes discussed so far should be now viewed in their proper context. From the 1960s to the 1990s, the major parties in Britain have found themselves under increasing pressure exemplified by the process of partisan dealignment, the progress of new parties, the growth in female participation in the work-force, the emergence of alternative forms of participation (e.g. single-issue pressure groups and new social movements), the growth of the leisure industry which provides an attractive alternative to party activity, and the diffuse sense of weakening legitimacy in the wake of the failure of government policies to counteract the widespread perception of Britain's continuing national decline (see [Chapter 2](#)). The response of the main parties to these phenomena was evident, among others, at the level of party organisation. The Labour Party and the Conservative Party have responded largely by increasing the centralisation of decision-making, and enhancing the autonomy of their parliamentary party and their capacity for strategic flexibility. During 1960–90 the main British parties did not take seriously the tasks of membership recruitment and participation in decision-making processes. With the down-grading of the relevance of party members, the extra-parliamentary organisation of both parties became marginalised. Even the long standing campaign for the democratisation of the Labour Party which has resulted in a number of constitutional changes since 1980 failed to counteract the domination of the parliamentary leadership. By the 1990s it has become clear that the Labour Party and the Conservative Party are struggling to adapt to the changing societal and institutional changes by centralisation and standardisation of their organisations, while party élites are continuously seeking to enhance their autonomy with the party (Webb 1994).

Some may argue that this process at the intra-organisational level indicates that both parties demonstrate features which to some extent may be associated with cartel parties; membership maintained but not cultivated and membership's role largely

irrelevant. However, this argument may be challenged as, in recent years, the two largest parties in Britain have reaffirmed their interest in membership (Scarrow 1994). Both have changed membership application and dues-collection procedures to make it easier for individuals to become party members. The Labour Party went even further and lowered its dues levels and introduced special introductory rates for new members. In the late 1980s it began offering members the party's own Visa credit card, while the Conservative Party introduced schemes which enabled local associations to reward higher-paying members with discount shopping cards and special terms for insurance (Tether 1991:25). Thus, students of British politics should carefully study these developments before reaching any conclusions regarding party organisational change.

CONCLUSIONS

I began the inquiry by noting the distinction between party leaders and activists, and the trade-off—faced by the former—between the freedom of action enjoyed by the party leaders and the constraints which derive from maintaining a strong and active party membership. I then introduced various 'solutions' (i.e. in organisational terms) to this trade-off which cast light on the micro-politics by implicitly or explicitly assuming that there is a misfit of political incentives and preferences between voters, party activists and party leaders. This is to say that voters in general are moderate, tend to support the *status quo* and only marginally endorse economic and social reforms. Party leaders, keen on capturing votes and political offices, will cater to these views. Activists and members, however, insist on far more radical ideological programmes and strategies than most voters would support. Hence, parties pursue electoralist strategies only as long as leaders can control rank-and-file activists. Electoralist strategies break down when party activists internally democratise parties and remove the leadership's freedom to appeal to marginal voters.

However, the simple leader-activist dichotomy is analytically ill-conceived and provides little help for linking intra-party politics to the choice of strategy in a competitive environment (Kitschelt 1989). This dichotomy is built on the premise that activists and members are driven by policy/ideology concerns, whereas leaders are obsessed with a thirst for control of public office. This assumption is largely untested, and the available evidence to support it is mixed at best. Policy incentives play a significant role

in leaders' behaviour (Eldersveld 1964; Francis and Benedict 1986; Moreland, *et al.* 1986). Moreover, a number of studies have documented no noticeably greater radicalism among party activists (Rose 1974:213–16; Hauss and Maisel 1986) or even shown leaders to be more radical than followers (Pierre 1986). Leaders and activists are thus not internally homogeneous groups but comprise individuals and sub-groups with highly diverse motivations and aspirations, rendering it questionable whether any dominant motivation can be attributed to each group.

If there is a permanent antagonism between leaders and followers, why would it be that Conservative and Labour party leaders have been intensively engaged in large scale recruitment during the early 1990s? We have already noted that the Labour Party, for example, has lowered its dues levels and introduced special 'introductory rates' for new members. Similarly, the Conservative Party enables local associations to reward higher-paying members with various material incentives. Given that modern members are intellectually sophisticated, it is implausible to assume that leaders' manipulative skills can keep them in control.

The belief in the diversity of leaders' motivations and followers' aspirations—rather than the homogeneity of each group—provides a starting point for the next chapter. My aim is to explore the main analytical approaches of organisational coherence, focusing on two aspects of party behaviour: cohesion and factionalisation. I then examine the organisational coherence of the British parties during the 1980s when MPs showed an increased willingness to vote against their own side and to do so with serious effect. In the process I draw on the many insights about the inner workings of political parties contained in general approaches of organisation theory.

5

Cohesion and dissent

Relations between a party's incumbent leaders, its active members and its electorate are characteristically marked by dissent and conflict. Publicised clashes between parliamentarians and party members coincide with, and sometimes conceal, a wider divergence of views between members and electors. Indeed, it has long been recognised that party cleavage lines, old or new, may be imperfect guides to a society's real political divisions. In the case of West European parties, the great variability over time of intra-organisational relations and dynamic change in party strategy make it all the more necessary to understand sub-party levels of policy aggregation and political organisation. The attitudes and behaviour of intra-party actors conceal an ever-wider range of influences, and this chapter is, in a sense, a plea for greater attention in the literature to the inner workings of political parties.

The umbrella concept for the following discussion on the inner workings of parties is organisational coherence, defined as 'the degree of congruence in the attitudes and behaviour of party members' (Janda 1980:118). There are two aspects to the concept of organisational coherence: cohesion and factionalism. Cohesion refers to the extent to which parties vote together in legislative bodies. Factionalism is defined as 'any intra-party combination, clique, or grouping whose members share a sense of the common identity and common purpose and are organised to act collectively—as a distinct bloc within the party—to achieve their goal' (Zariski 1960:33). The theoretical section presents various attempts to conceptualise these aspects and the relationships between them: the cohesion sub-sections address the causes of dissent, the manifestation of dissent and the degree of dissent (i.e. the degree of attitudinal congruence on substantive issues within various arenas of the organisation). The party factionalism sub-section focuses on the structure of factions, the functions of factions and the causes of factions. The theoretical section is then followed by

an empirical analysis of patterns of factionalism and dissent in the Labour Party and the Conservative Party. It describes the basic ideological splits in these parties, explores the locations of sub-groupings in the intra-party ideological space, and examines patterns of dissension in the House of Commons between 1945–95.

PARTY COHESION

Discussions of party cohesion cover several angles of intra-party consensus. First, the object of consensus with respect to the following: (i) general values, that is, societal or communal values not peculiar to the organisation under study; (ii) the means available to the organisation for achieving goals; (iii) the organisation's goals; (iv) participation in the organisation; (v) performance obligation, that is, who is to carry out what duties; and (vi) cognitive perspective, that is, frames of reference and agreed-upon canons for empirical testing (Etzioni 1964). A second aspect of consensus is the level of agreement in a particular consensus setting. What proportion of an organisation is in mutual agreement? A third aspect is the distribution of consensus among the various arenas of the organisation. This subsection presents various attempts to conceptualise these aspects and the relationships between them.

The causes of party cohesion

My concern in this sub-section is neither with the functional impact of party cohesion nor with the more normative question of the desirability of responsible party government. Instead, I shall discuss various explanations of the causes of party cohesion—specifically the voting behaviour of parliamentary groups—as well as the question of what leads to a lack of party cohesion. It has been claimed, for example, that parties in which parliamentary representatives are subject to the authority of a membership organisation are more cohesive than parties dominated by parliamentarians (Ostrogorski 1902). Studying the emergence of the 'caucus' party in England, Ostrogorski notices that with an enlarged electorate candidates were able to rely on the help of the party organisation. Party organisations can assume, therefore, an almost unchallengeable authority over the parliamentary group and the rank and file members, and this, in turn, leads to a conformity within parliamentary parties. This relationship between parliamentary party cohesion and the strength of the

party's extra-parliamentary wing is supported by a substantial body of empirical evidence.¹ Parties with large mass-membership organisations tend to have cohesive parliamentary groups, whereas organisational weakness usually coincides with low party cohesion in the legislature. For instance, American parties and French parties of right and centre illustrate the latter association.²

Ostrogorski's theory was further developed by Duverger (1964), who argued that 'domination over the parliamentary representatives by the party is the result of the general structure of the party and its general orientation much more than of particular technical devices'. His argument can be formulated into three hypotheses: the more centralised the party, the higher its cohesion; the greater its leftist tendency, the higher the cohesion; and the more ideologically extreme, the higher the cohesion. The relationship between leftism and administering discipline (i.e. the various techniques ensuring conformity of party policy) is empirically supported by data from a world-wide sample of eighty-two parties (Janda and King 1985). However, it has been convincingly argued that in the case of Britain, Duverger's explanation is not corroborated by the facts. The British Labour and Conservative parties, despite wide divergences in their ideologies, formal structures and historical traditions, were found to be very similar in terms of their internal patterns of power (McKenzie 1964). Scholars of politics have witnessed a near-perfect cohesion in both parties during 1900–1945,³ undermining any association between party cohesion in the parliamentary arena and ideological orientation.

Both Ostrogorski and Duverger treat party organisation as a reflection of the social mobilisation and political ideology prevalent in a party's constituency. As a consequence, they project a highly static image of party behaviour and contribute little to the explanation of cross-sectional and inter-temporal variations in party organisation. An alternative approach links the systemic (i.e. referring to political institutions and patterns of party competition) and the organisational levels of analysis. Epstein (1980a:315–50) for example, attributes the lower levels of party cohesion in American legislatures to a system of government based on the separation of powers. Where the legislators and the executive are separately elected, as in a presidential system, the government is not dependent upon party unity in the legislature. In parliamentary systems, on the other hand, the executive is often comprised of parliamentarians, and depends on continued support from the parliamentary majority. This puts a premium on party unity. This rationale is clearest in the case of two-party

parliamentary systems. Here, each party has its own incentive for being cohesive; the majority party to maintain the government of the day and the minority party to show itself capable of maintaining a government should it become the majority party. Epstein (1980a:321) argues that the same incentive applies for a majority coalition but that cohesion among parties in a minority coalition is more problematic because no single opposition party is regarded as an alternative government.

Epstein's argument—that separation of powers is the key variable in explaining the low cohesion of American parties compared with those elsewhere—is supported by a comprehensive study concerning the effect of environmental factors on party cohesion (Harmel and Janda 1982). This study revealed that 32 per cent of the variance in legislative cohesion could be explained by the legislative-executive structure, and the effectiveness of the legislature in the political system. It suggests that the presence of a presidential form of government and the impact of legislative effectiveness decrease party cohesion. The least cohesive parties were found in presidential systems with effective legislatures, exemplified by Uruguay and the United States. Presidential systems with ineffective legislatures, exemplified by Guatemala and Peru, have parties that are somewhat more cohesive. The combination of parliamentary government and an effective legislature, exemplified by the United Kingdom and Canada, produces parties that are substantially more cohesive. Finally, the most cohesive parties are found in the Lebanon and Malaya, both of which have parliamentary systems with ineffective legislatures.

A similar (systemic) focus to the problem of parliamentary group cohesion has been suggested by several other scholars.⁴ According to Ozbudun (1970), parliamentary government is a sufficiently strong factor to produce cohesive legislative parties, provided that it operates in a two-party or moderate two-party system (i.e. where there is a large area of basic consensus). In other words, since the executive in parliamentary systems is comprised of parliamentarians and depends on the continued support of the parliamentary majority, party unity becomes a preliminary necessity. Such an argument is logically consistent since in a presidential form of government, where the executive and the legislators are separately elected, the government leadership does not depend on party unity in the legislature.⁵

Another factor that has been blamed for the low cohesion of American parties is the federal structure of the government (Rossiter 1963; Key 1964). One important reason for this is the devolution of party power to state organs—promoted by federalism

—which in turn provide legislators with sources of support and foci for allegiance that may compete with the national party. Further, it has been suggested by both Turner and Schnier (1970) and Loewenberg and Patterson (1979:224) that the level of a party's cohesion is related to the number of parties within the political system. The reason for this is that multi-party politics produces smaller and more homogeneous parties, with greater intra-party cohesion the derived consequence.

Students of politics often cite the election of US congressmen and congress women from single-member districts as a major factor in their independence from party leadership (Feno 1978:31–2). Some have posited a correlation between party cohesion and the effectiveness of the legislature. Mezey (1979), for example, distinguishes between legislatures with 'strong' policy-making powers and those with 'modest' or no policy-making powers. He notes that those with strong powers tend to show less party discipline. Mezey's observations conform to Polsby's (1975:291–2) assertion that legislatures that 'transform' the executive proposals to their own liking before enacting them into law are apt to feature fluid voting alliances.

The above studies explore one facet of organisational coherence, namely, the voting behaviour of parliamentary groups. However, it would be naive to assume that parliamentarians are restricted in the expression of their dissatisfaction to the legislative arena, and that party members do not publicly express their views. Often, members' preferences will not be the same as the party élite's, and this, in turn, may result in 'claims' on the leadership to move programmes closer to members' preferences. Indeed, this expression is fundamental to the dynamics of democracy. But how can one isolate the analytical dynamics of such claims? Here the work of Albert Hirschman (1970) on the manifestation of dissent—*Exit, Voice and Loyalty*—is particularly instructive.

The manifestation of dissent

Hirschman's analysis rests firmly within the sphere of the 'economic approach' to the study of society. This approach attempts to explain political phenomena, presumably understood as those relating to parties, pressure groups and the state, by using economic concepts, conventionally understood as related to goods and services. It is this 'economic' viewpoint that underlies Hirschman's analysis of 'voice', affecting the quality of goods and services offered by firms and market situations, and the analysis of 'voice' and 'exit' in organisations which compete in market

situations but do not supply goods and services. A classic example of the latter are political parties and voluntary organisations wherein both exit and voice options play important roles.

In discussing these concepts we must understand that Hirschman's (1970) thesis proceeds from a fundamental pessimism in which organisations are viewed as permanently subject to decline and decay, that is, to an absolute or comparative deterioration in the quality of the product or service provided by an organisation, no matter how well the institutional framework within which they function is designed. The customers react to the deterioration in organisational performance either by 'exit'—taking their custom elsewhere—or by 'voice'—direct attempts to modify the policies of the firms. The voice option can take several forms. Customers may send letters criticising the management and demanding improvements. They can also sign petitions and demonstrate. The exit option can also take various forms. People may defect to a rival product, for example, leaving Coca Cola for Pepsi. If no viable competitor exists, people may transfer concerns to a related product, for example by giving up Coca Cola for mineral water. Thus, in contrast to the exit option, the voice option is an attempt to change, rather than escape from, the deteriorated performance of an organisation.

Voice and exit are said to stand in inverse relation to one another, so that the more likely customers are to choose the exit option, the less likely they are to voice complaints. As Hirschman (1970:37) argues: 'The decision whether to exit will often be taken *in light of the prospects of effective use of voice*. If customers (i.e. members, activists) are sufficiently convinced that voice will be effective, then they will postpone exit'. The decision to remain with the organisation, which is perceived as deteriorating, is based on two calculations: '(i) an evaluation of the chances of getting the organisation "back on the track" through one's own action or through that of others; or (ii) a recognition that it is worthwhile, for a variety of reasons, to trade the certainty of joining another organisation which is available here and now against these chances' (Hirschman 1970:38). The evaluation of these chances must be accompanied by an assessment of the costs involved. Thus, voice will occur when the expected value of the quality resulting from exerting the optimal amount of voice, minus the cost of exerting it, is higher than the value of the best that can be obtained without using voice. Where the best that can be obtained without using voice is the present product, the question is reduced to the simple one of whether the expected value of any improvement is greater or smaller than the cost of exerting the

corresponding amount of voice. To sum up, the dissatisfied party member will leave when the cost of exerting voice in order to improve the product exceeds his estimate of the expected benefits.

The third concept, loyalty, is brought in to explain why customers who have an alternative nevertheless prefer to stay with the same organisation for a while in the hope of improving it. The greater the loyalty of the customers, therefore, the more likely it is that they will protest to the management when things deteriorate. Loyalty, in this respect, serves the organisation as it prevents deterioration from becoming cumulative (as it often does when there are no barriers to exit) and helps it retain its most quality-conscious members (by raising the costs of exit). Hirschman's basic model can now be summarised as follows: There are two alternative responses to decline in firms, organisations and states, namely exit and voice. Loyalty affects the individual calculus by making voice, as against exit, more probable than it would otherwise have been, all else remaining the same. Thus, once a decline in quality is perceived by customers or members, loyal ones will tend to 'claim' from within while disloyal ones will exit in silence.

Criticism of Hirschman's formulation would, if accepted, modify the model. Brian Barry (1974), for example, criticises the concept of loyalty on the grounds that it does not mean a mere reluctance to leave the organisation, but rather a 'positive commitment to further its welfare by working for it, fighting for it and—where one thinks it has gone astray—seeking to change it'. Thus, voice is already built into the concept of loyalty. Furthermore, loyalty cannot be recognised in itself but is merely invoked as an assumed explanation of why some people who could be expected to exit do not in fact do so. Barry's second criticism is that a deterioration in the quality of a product or a firm's performance is not a necessary condition for believing that the organisation might do better. Rather, it is only one among several reasons why customers or members might form this belief. The first factor in the causal sequence is not a decline in quality but belief in the possibility of improvement. Finally, Barry argues that each of Hirschman's alternatives is theoretically divided into two separate choices. There is a choice between exit and non-exit and another choice between voice and no-voice (silence). We can now sum up the above criticism by elaborating Barry's model of dissent and cohesion as follows: once customers or members perceive a belief in the possibility of improvement in the quality of organisational performance, they can either stay in the organisation and express

voice or silence, or exit the organisation and express voice or silence.

Further elaboration of Hirschman's model is proposed by Birch (1975) who challenges the meaning of loyalty, and raises the importance of retaliation. For the former, Birch notes that loyalty means a disposition to accept the leadership's strategy and a commitment to support the organisation rather than a disposition to criticise. If this is so, loyalty may be considered one reason why consumers or members who stay in an organisation, despite a decline in its performance, may also refrain from executing the voice option. Similarly, it can also explain why people who exit the organisation refrain from exercising the voice option after they have gone.

As for those who stay in the organisation despite a decline in its performance, a common reason for not exercising the voice option is the likelihood of retaliation. Take, for example, a decline in the performance of a primary school teacher. Parents may decline to complain as they fear retaliation against their children. Transferring the children to another school, if possible, can trigger complaints and protest by parents. A lack of alternative (if no other school exists nearby), however, implies that none of the parents would risk protesting. In this case, exit is a necessary precondition of voice, and—assuming the protest is effective and the teacher is fired—the possibility of exit can benefit other children and parents. This implies that in many political and social situations voice is feasible only if it precedes or is quickly followed by exit. Such a conclusion contradicts Hirschman who argues that voice and exit are alternative responses, one of which normally excludes the other.

The degree of dissent

The primary concern of political scientists who deal with internal party dissent is the intra-party contrasts in substantive opinions, i.e. the contrasting opinions about the content of immediate policy and strategic alternatives rather than about basic values or extant conditions. There are two approaches—hierarchical and non-hierarchical—to the topic of internal party dissent, both of which revolve around the nature of such intra-party contrasts. In order to pave the way for generalising about 'opinion structure', May (1973) relies on the former strategy. Two assumptions are apparent in May's analysis: first is the assumption that political parties, like other organisations, are stratified. At the top are party leaders: members of the government, legislators, candidates for

elected office, convention delegates and members of the national executive committee. In the intermediate stratum are sub-leaders: regional and local party office-holders, constituency activists, passive grass roots members and voting supporters. In the lower stratum are non-leaders, consisting of occasional and lukewarm party supporters.

May's second assumption is that these strata face differential incentives to become involved in, and to continue to participate, in party politics. Public office provides a variety of rewards to elected politicians: material incentives (e.g. financial rewards and other perks of office); solidarity benefits (e.g. power and social status); and purposive incentives (satisfaction from being able to implement one's policies). In competitive multi-party systems these benefits are contingent upon re-election. By contrast, sub-leaders who are largely volunteer self-recruits are assumed to be largely rewarded by purposive incentives, such as some influence over the direction of party policy and the selection of leaders. These incentives are not contingent on re-election.

Based on these assumptions, May (1973) formulated the law of curvilinear disparity. The law states that there is a curvilinear disparity of political incentives and preferences between voters, party activists and party leaders. Voters in general are moderate and tend to support the *status quo*. They tend to occupy the median positions on substantive issues and endorse only marginal social reforms. Party leaders, keen on capturing votes and political office, will accommodate these views. Rank-and-file activists, however, have far more radical positions on substantive issues. They insist on considerably more radical ideological programmes and strategies than most voters would support. Hence, party leaders pursue electoralist strategies only as long as leaders can control rank-and-file activists. Electoralist strategies break down when party activists internally democratise parties and remove the leadership's freedom to appeal to marginal voters.

This law permits us to envisage a variety of models of partisan opinion structures—one of which is illustrated in [Figure 5.1](#). The Figure presents three possible scenarios of attitudinal disparities between organisational levels. Situation A records a left-to-right deviation from bottom to top echelons indicating that leaders are rightist deviants from the median opinions of their respective sets of sub-leaders (intermediate status) and non-leaders (low status). Situation B records a right-to-left deviation from bottom to top echelons indicating that leaders are leftist deviants from the median opinions of their respective sets of sub-leaders and non-leaders. Situation C exemplifies sub-leaders who are centre-

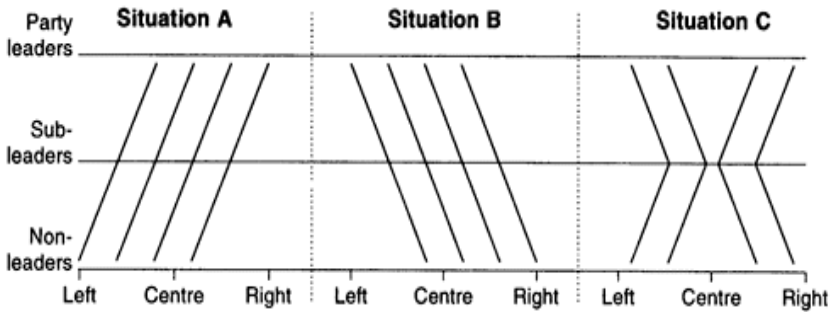


Figure 5.1 Attitudinal disparities related to organisational rank

leaning deviants, with non-leaders being extremists as well as top leaders.

Criticism of May's (1973) law revolves around both its external validity and its theoretical premises. For the former, most of the empirical studies on the law used American and British data on party activists.⁶ The reliance on data from two-party systems significantly undermines the ability to generalise the law as these systems discourage the evolution of radical parties by forcing radical ideologues into the mainstream parties. In addition, these systems fuel conflicts between pragmatists and radicals due to the high level of competitiveness. Thus, the law is empirically valid only under distinctive conditions, which are not specified in its general formulation (Kitschelt 1989). Regarding the theoretical aspects, the simple leader-follower dichotomy is, according to Kitschelt (1989:403), 'analytically ill conceived' for six reasons. First, it portrays an untested picture of party leaders as office-seekers and activists as policy (ideology)-seekers. Second, it fails to explain why militants whose ideological demands are bound to be frustrated do not exit from the party. Third, it assumes a party structural context closely modelled on Weber's ideal-type of bureaucratic organisation, despite the fact that numerous West European parties are characterised by a loose organisation. Fourth, it fails to explain the changing patterns of power relations within parties over time due to the constant, radical position of the activists. Fifth, it fails to identify empirically the precise characterisation of different groups of activists in the party organisation together with the derived difference in sub-groups' extremism. Sixth, it fails to explore the multi-faceted nature of radicalism and the strategic choices (i.e. party behaviour) which are connected to this concept. May's law is severely limited by these constraints. Not enquiring into factional locations in the

intra-party ideological space makes it impossible to examine the dynamics of intra-party politics. In addition, attributing curvilinear disparities to an hierarchical party structure ignores the evidence that there are various party structures, as well as party arenas, about which generalisations can be made.

In contrast, rather than starting from a leader-activist dichotomy, Kitschelt's (1989) model of the degree of curvilinear disparity is based on the two-fold premises of ideological variety within the party and interaction between the party organisation and its political environment. Both influence the demand for radical policies among party militants. Whether this demand translates into an internal organisational stratification which yields a curvilinear disparity over substantive issues, however, depends on a party's organisational design. In loose organisational systems—with open access to middle-level positions, limited authority of national party conferences and insulated party executives—curvilinear disparity is most likely to occur.

Specifically, Kitschelt's model starts with a premise regarding the nature of parties; this is that parties appeal to voters with a wide variety of beliefs organised along a continuum. Pragmatists who subscribe to behavioural and organisational moderation represent one end of this continuum while the ideologues who accommodate the party's core constituency, and thus subscribe to behavioural and organisational radicalism, represent the other. Numerous combinations of policy and strategic views operate between these two ideal types, emphasising the diversity of ideologies and aspirations within the party. To predict whether leaders will be more radical than pragmatist, one needs to specify the kind of activities each group would get involved in and the offices they seek. According to Kitschelt, pragmatists are more drawn to political activity at the local level, as they are interested in the party organisation primarily as an electoral machine for gaining votes and public office. Ideologues, on the other hand, are more drawn to national politics and thus are more likely to seek those intra-party 'executive' (middle-level) jobs. Both groups, however, compete for seats in parliament as these provide greater opportunities to shape party strategy and policy.

The question which one faces now is what determines the relative strength and recruitment of ideologues and pragmatists into political parties and the rules governing their advancement. The model proposes that radical party activists are more likely to be recruited into political parties under four conditions. First, if the party operates in a highly politicised social cleavage, where a large

number of radicals seek partisan channels for their activities. Second, if the party operates within the context of an unresponsive regime (that is, one which represses challenging parties). In such a case, radicals are the only ones willing to bear the costs of entry into a party subject to repressive measures. Third, the party's chances of winning office are either very high or very low. The former attracts radicals because of the practical gains of office, whereas the latter attracts radicals who cater for the party's constituency because wider electoral appeals have very low marginal yields. Fourth, the party is led by pragmatists but fails to gain policy influence and office, strengthening the radical case while alienating the moderate one.

The focus of the model with regard to the advancement of radicals is on the conditions that facilitate the recruitment of pragmatists to local positions in the party, and radicals to middle-level, executive positions, which taken together, lead to a curvilinear distribution of political opinions. The model proposes that loose organisations—that is, those which impose few constraints on activists' participation in the decision-making process and whose authority structure is heterogeneous—facilitates curvilinearity. A crucial reason for this is that with minimum constraints both militants and pragmatists could participate in those activities they are interested in. Thus, radicals are over-represented in the middle-level whereas pragmatists are more visible at the local level. By contrast, articulated, tight organisations, wherein higher offices determine the activities of the lower ones or lower levels democratically select higher ones, tend to block the promotion of militants to middle-level jobs, thus reducing curvilinearity. The extent of curvilinearity depends therefore on how loosely or articulated a party organisation is, i.e. on the party's structural properties.

In many ways, the above discussion suggests the need for a single comparative framework of party organisational coherence. One needs to take three key factors into account before attempting such a task. The first factor, which is often overlooked, is the link between the systemic and the organisational levels of analysis. The second is the focus on party structure as a key determinant of the emergence, continuation and termination of curvilinear disparities and dissent activities. The third is the specification of the conditions under which the explanation of these processes is applicable (e.g. characteristics of party systems and institutional arrangements of different countries). Another requirement is to show how factors internal to the process of intra-party competition can produce or sustain sub-grouping differentiation. One may

hypothesise, for example, that leaders' attempts to accommodate the preferences of major sub-groups increase their policy differentiation, whereas ignoring their claims reduces their differentiation.

PARTY FACTIONALISM

Valuable discussions concerning party factions start with the implicit or explicit assumption: parties are collections of individuals and subgroups sharing common objectives, but disagreements over how to pursue these common objectives bring about conflicts which affect party behaviour. In as much as politics is a process based on relations of conflict and consensus among interdependent individuals and corporate actors (Czada 1993:101) intra-party politics is also marked by consensual and conflictual relationships among interdependent party sub-groups. Hence, parties could be considered as political systems (Katz and Mair 1990; Eldersveld 1964) where internal actors compete among themselves for the control and influence over party strategy, programme and apparatus.⁷ This view of parties underlines the importance of two trade-offs. The first is one which intra-party actors face between the benefits derived from party loyalty (or conversely the cost of disloyalty) and the benefits derived from independent action (or, the costs of factional activity). The second is one which party leaders face between the benefits derived from a specific course of party behaviour and the cost in terms of undermining party cohesion (see [Chapter 6](#)).

There is considerable disagreement on precisely what factions are and what they do. First there is a question of definition. Zariski (1960: 33) proposes an unrestricted definition of 'faction' which he took to mean: 'any intra-party combination, clique, or grouping whose members share a sense of common identity and common purpose and are organised to act collectively—as a distinct bloc within the party—to achieve their goals'. Focusing on the invisible level of politics, Nicholson suggests that 'faction system' is:

a political system (or subsystem) characterised by the informal competition of a plurality of amorphous segments (factions) operating with a cultural context which places a high value on diffuse and unrestrained personal power and led by an élite whose orientations are self-centred and instrumental.

(Nicholson 1972:292)

Nicholson thus draws attention to a power game which has taken place within the party with complex principles of affiliations and usage of party language which sometimes makes it impossible for an outside observer to notice. An additional important contribution was developed by Rose (1964) who differentiates between tendencies and factions in a party according to their levels of organisational solidity. The latter he characterises as possessing 'stable sets of attitudes'—political predispositions in a certain direction over time and over a range of policy issues. A tendency does not therefore necessarily correspond to a given group of individuals inside a party. It is a measure of attitudes, and different coalitions—lacking in cohesion and durability—which may assemble under its banner from time to time and issue to issue. Factions, in contrast, are solidly organised, disciplined, self-aware groups, enjoying a relatively stable and cohesive membership over time.

Rose's idea on this subject have been applied and developed by many writers. Sartori (1976:71–5), for example, formulates a typology of factions based on their interest (power or spoils) and their principles (ideologies or ideas) which is rather restricted to the Italian context. Hine (1982) takes a much broader scope (although one which is restricted to West European politics), and sets out a model of the dimensions of intra-party conflicts based on the issues which divide groups, the way such groups are organised, and the number of different arenas in the party in which conflict occurs. The 'issues' dimension of intra-party conflict may consist either of a 'strategy' axis (coalitional choice) or a 'policy' axis (ideological choice), or a combination of the two. The 'organisation' dimension may consist of factions (i.e. those which try to exercise, or share in the exercise of, overall power within the party), issue-groups (i.e. those which try to influence the way in which power is exercised on given questions), and tendencies (i.e. an in-between grouping in terms of scope, duration and the degree of organisation). The 'coverage' dimension may consist of the proportion of the party at any given level (be it the parliamentary party, the party executive, local-level leaders or rank and file members), which identifies with a particular group, and what proportion consists of non-aligned individuals identifying only with 'the party as a whole'. Regarding the factors determining a party's location on these axes, Hine falls far short of providing a clear set of variables which could account for cyclical patterns of intra-party conflicts. The reader is left, therefore, with a presumption that each case ought to be looked as an individual

case, rather than as an observation which fits into a broad generalisation.

Perhaps the most comprehensive survey of party factionalism can be found in Belloni and Beller's (1978) *Faction Politics* in which they offer a definition of faction as: 'any relatively organised group that exists within the context of some other group and which (as a political faction) competes with rivals for power advantages within the larger group of which it is a part' (Belloni and Beller 1978:419). This definition—together with the definitions mentioned above—brings forward the view of factionalism as a form of conflict organisation which reflects the tendency of party sub-groups to engage in collective action in order to advance the faction's goals. It treats factionalism as a breakdown in co-operation between party actors resulting in a variety of factions which may be characterised along numerous dimensions (such as, content, party arena, affiliation, institutionalisation and goals). Take, for example, the party arena within which factionalism emerges. It may emerge at the government level (when the party is in government), the parliamentary party, the extra-parliamentary party or any combination of these arenas. Factionalism is therefore a composite variable and must be the object of multi-dimensional analysis.

Zariski's (1960) study is one example of the kind of payoff multi-variable analysis can provide. This study delves into the causes of factionalism by considering four possible causes: the electoral system, the party system, party structure, and social setting. Zariski argues that in elections in European democracies, either where local party organisations are autonomous or where proportional representation (PR) is coupled with voters' selecting candidates by means of preference voting, the use of PR electoral systems frequently encourages factionalism. He concludes that two-party systems will tend to encourage intra-party bifactionalism rather than multi-factionalism, whereas a multi-party system is more likely to encourage multi-factionalism in parties. Zariski concurs with Duverger's (1964) view that a loosely-structured party tends to contain more factions than a better-disciplined party: he suggests that factions in loosely-structured parties would tend more to be cliques or factions based on affinity.

Janda's (1980) study is another example of the payoff quantitative analysis can provide. This comprehensive attempt at cross-country research distinguishes between factionalism based on ideology, issues, leadership and strategy. Over 100 parties were

scored on each type of factionalism on a seven-point scale. The ideological basis was found to be more common than the others, but all types of factionalism tended to be interrelated, e.g. if a party had ideological factions, it also tended to have leadership factions.

This example is in stark contrast to most existing studies—a summary of which can be found in Zariski (1978). Students of politics will notice the descriptive, country-based form of analysis—and hence the sometimes contradictory empirical findings—as well as the lack of adequate indicators which lend themselves to quantitative analysis.⁸ Most of the generalisations on factionalism link the concept to environmental factors, such as the nature of the electoral system. Nevertheless, Belloni and Beller (1978:435) conclude that factionalism is also due to the ‘sociological complexity of the party; ideological looseness of the party; the origin of the party in a merger of predecessor parties (i.e. its conditions of origin); [and] the party’s internal looseness or decentralised structure’. This implies that factions should be compared as organisational units of political competition and, thus, their structural and contextual contrasts analysed in terms of that plane of reference. Factional activities and their impact on party cohesion should therefore be integrated into a theoretical framework. Fitting this into the larger picture implies that more attention should be devoted to dealing with factionalism as an independent variable (see [Chapter 6](#)).

Further research ought to build on the premise that factionalism is related to the costs and benefits of group-forming or group-joining within parties. This, in turn, directs attention to the much neglected research agenda which addresses the trade-off party sub-groups face between the benefits derived from party loyalty and the cost of disloyalty—of which a possible line of inquiry consists of costs and benefits associated with party factionalism. Another point to bear in mind is a proposed division of the field into two parts and the development of analytical tools for each. As Graham notes:

The first sub-field would be intra-party conflict at the level of the legislature (the national level in a unitary state, and the central and regional levels in a federal state) and the second, intra-party conflict at levels below the legislature (especially common during election campaigns, the preparation of central conferences of the party, and the allocation of resources by local authorities under the control of the party). Such a division of the field recognises the greater sensitivity

of party groups at the level of the legislature to issues of grand strategy, government policy and political doctrine and, in so doing, would facilitate the study of some of the more difficult empirical questions regarding the relationships between belief and action which have bedevilled work in this area.

(Graham 1993:152)

In each part there is a dual focus. First, one may examine the specific structure, traditions and the context of the party concerned, and the ways these have influenced the form, content and resolution of internal conflicts. Second, one may study the impact intra-party conflicts have on party behaviour. This task is undertaken in the next chapter. Attention now turns to the analysis of cohesion (or lack of it) and factionalism in the British context.

PATTERNS OF PARTY COHESION AND FACTIONALISM IN POST-1945 BRITISH PARTIES

This section describes the basic ideological splits in the British Conservative and Labour parties, the location of party sub-groups in the intra-party ideological space and the manifestation of dissent in the legislative arena. It then examines the degree to which the ideological conflicts within the parties reflect conflicts within the British society. In other words, we ask how far Labour and Conservative politicians are in touch with their core supporters in the electorate, and whether the leaders have brought their followers towards the centre ground. The last subsection focuses on the manifestation of dissent—elaborating patterns of dissension in the House of Commons during 1945–95.

The Conservative Party: basic ideological conflicts and positioning of sub-groups

The basic ideological conflict in the Conservative Party is the left-right split (Dunleavy 1993). The 'left' in the party support some degree of state intervention to ameliorate the social inequalities of a market society. This rationale states that to minimise the potential of social conflicts, governments must protect socially and economically deprived groups by regulating markets. Classic examples of such regulation are a minimum wage, a limit on the length of the working week, recruiting and firing practices, equal

pay, social benefits, health and safety standards, etc. By contrast, the 'right' wing of the Conservative Party is overtly inequalitarian, regarding social and economic inequalities as desirable because they set up incentives for people to work harder. Government intervention in the operation of the market should therefore be minimised.

Cross-cutting the basic left-right split is the state-individual split (Dunleavy 1993). Traditional Conservatives consider the nation-state as the focus of policy. Thus, a set of intangible constructs, such as the British constitution, the British culture, and the British institutions, are taken as the reference points for any policy initiatives and for any analysis of the consequences of policy implementation. An alternative approach is to view the individual as the basic reference point to policy formation and implementation. Government policy is thus assessed primarily in terms of the spectrum of choice available to individuals, in areas such as health and education.

Other conflicts within the Conservative Party lack a coherent ideological view and thus cannot be considered basic ideological conflicts. Consider, for example, the conflict over issues related to European integration, such as, a common currency, membership of the Exchange Rate Mechanism (ERM), and the Maastricht Treaty. During 1992, a small and heterogeneous group of MPs consistently challenged Prime Minister John Major's policy over these issues. They were successful in creating an unprecedented parliamentary crisis on 4 November when twenty-one of them joined Labour in voting against the Maastricht 'paving bill' with six more abstaining. The government had to rely on the support of nineteen Liberal Democrat MPs to get this Bill through the House of Commons.

Another example is John Redwood's challenge to John Major in July 1995. The European issue was at the heart of the Redwood agenda which rejected any plans to abolish the pound, and supported curbing the powers of the European Court of Justice, and a referendum on new powers to Brussels. John Major had responded by building a positive European agenda—based mostly on the 'let's wait and see' principle—which revolves around the nation-state. The leadership battle, which was won by John Major, provided a clear indication that beyond the strategy of widening the EU in order to either delay or block its deepening, the Conservative group is highly divided as to the question of alternative policy scenarios. The lack of a set of coherent ideological views over European integration held by party sub-groups—with the derived lack of an alternative policy agenda—

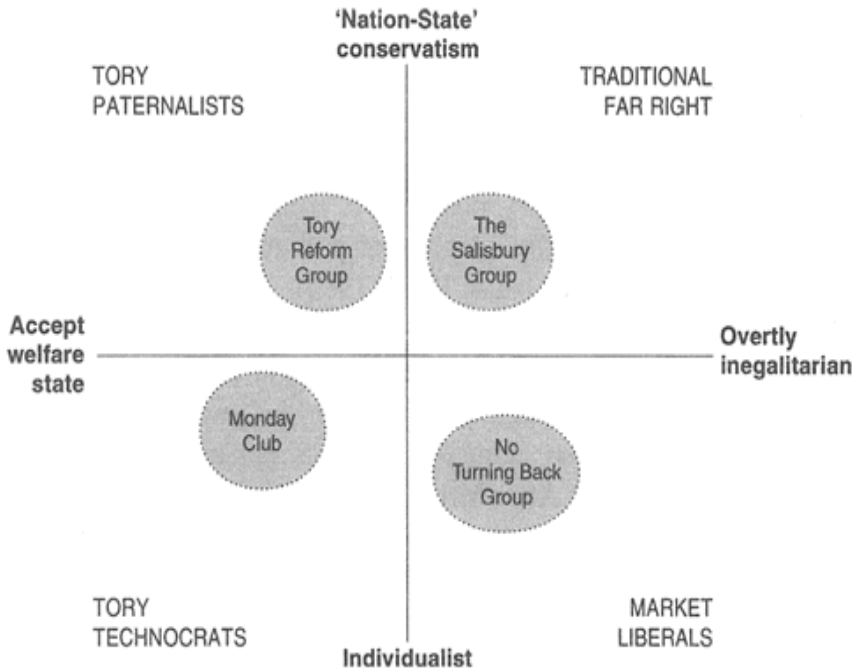


Figure 5.2 Ideological map of the British Conservative Party

Source of dimensions: Dunleavy (1993:127)

makes it impossible to treat this as a basic ideological conflict within the party.

Combining the left-right split (those who accept government intervention to reduce social inequalities versus those who favour greater inequalities) with the nation-individual split yields four ideological spaces inside the Conservative Party. Figure 5.2 shows this division, as well as a rough positioning of the party sub-groups over the two ideological dimensions.

The traditional far right in the party—overtly inequalitarian with a nation-state focus—is best represented by the Salisbury Group. This is a right-wing intellectual ginger group which exerts influence through its journal *The Salisbury Review*. The market liberal wing in the party—overtly inequalitarian with an individualist focus—is best represented by the No Turning Back Group, the Selsdon Group and the Monday Club. The No Turning Back Group is the vehicle for the Thatcherites. It was formed in 1985 at a time when the government seemed to be retreating from radical reforms and was rapidly losing popular support. The core of the group's

proposals was a revolution in the opportunity structure, allowing people to exercise more choice and accept more responsibility for themselves, their families and local communities. They stand for a complete withdrawal of the state from the provision of services better provided by the private sector, especially with regard to state provision of health care, education and social security. Thus, the overall idea, is 'that the State should not provide, but enable; not stifle, but facilitate; not control to the maximum, but regulate to the minimum, extent possible'.⁹ In 1995, the No Turning Back Group included Lady Thatcher and Cabinet members Peter Lilley and Michael Portillo.

The Monday Club was formed in 1961 by a group of young reactionary right-wing Conservatives in protest at the then Conservative government's policy of a speedy move to self-government for British colonies in Africa. After 1964, the Monday Club became a focus for many right-wing dissidents in the party advocating a policy of 'genuine Conservatism'. Although the club has 'free market' opinions on economic and welfare policy, its major concern is the need to preserve Britain's material and moral defences against threats of declining moral standards and bureaucratic expansionism. The group's mass membership drew on parliament, constituency associations and the annual party conference, using such techniques as conference motions and the selection of parliamentary candidates to mobilise support for their cause (Seyd 1980).

In general, the club's influence on the party has been modest because of its anti-Common Market stance and especially its questioning of anti-discrimination legislation in the mid-1960s, its subsequent anti-immigration campaign, and its apparent co-operation with the National Front. After Mrs Thatcher's election as party leader in 1975, the club suffered competition from organisations defending individual and economic liberty such as the National Association for Freedom. However, many of the issues aired by Monday Club spokesmen such as Rhodes Boyson and John Biggs-Davison, bear a striking similarity to those latter seized upon by Mrs Thatcher, for example, making a break with consensus politics and rising government control, reversing the trend of creeping socialism and egalitarianism and deploring the lack of economic choice (Young 1989: 59–60).

Debate within the Conservative Party between interventionists and free-marketers was boosted in the early 1970s when the failure of the Heath government to revive the stagnant economy and reform industrial relations prompted the creation of the Selsdon Group. Named after the hotel where the Conservative

Party's new commitments were discussed in preparation for the 1970 election manifesto, the group was formed in 1973 to protest against the interventionist and collectivist drift of the Heath government and to promote economic freedom (Kavanagh 1990). The group believes economic freedom is indispensable to political freedom, and that the function of government should not be to provide services, but to maintain the framework within which markets operate. It supports privatisation of nationalised industries, as well as private initiatives in health, education and welfare. The group also has firmly monetarist views on economic policy: these state that inflation should be curbed by keeping a tight grip on money supply; public sector expenditure as a percentage of Gross National Product (GNP) reduced, and sectional interest groups such as umbrella organisations of unions and businesses excluded from economic policy-making. Given its small size—reaching seven MPs during the 1980s—the group's influence was limited. Further, many Conservative back-benchers regarded its members as 'ideological splitters' and disliked its academic and intellectual orientation.

The Paternalist wing in the party—accepting the welfare state and holding a nation-state view—is best represented by the Tory Reform Group. The Tory Reform Group was established in 1975 as an amalgamation of the Macleod Group based in the north-east of England and the Social Tory Action Group based in southern England. The group claimed to represent Conservatism in the Disraelian 'one nation' tradition, with its concern for the two nations in Britain (rich/poor, white/black, suburbia/inner city), requiring reform through state intervention. The group has therefore a more favourable attitude to government intervention than that of the free market Conservatives. In contrast to the ethos of confrontation shared by the latter, the Tory Reform Group supports partnership and co-operation between the state and the individual. It supports planning; increases in government expenditure; an incomes policy which includes statutory wage restraint and Price Commission analysis of firm's profits. Finally, 'power to the people', that is, devolution of authority from Westminster and electoral reform are key issues promoted by the group. Prominent group members include Lord Walker and Gerry Wade who were joined by two dozen MPs in 1992.

The Technocrat wing of the party—accepting the welfare state and interpreting policy from an individual perspective—is not distinctly represented by groupings within the party. Its case for an active industrial policy combined with strong support for the

development of the European Union is promoted by Michael Heseltine and Kenneth Clarke.

The Labour Party: basic ideological conflicts and positioning of sub-groups

The Labour Party was originally a federation rather than a unified party, comprising trade unions and intellectual socialist societies each with their own views. Given its ideological breadth, it is not surprising that Labour has been even more prone to internal groupings than the Conservatives.

The fundamental left-right dichotomy in the Labour Party resulted historically from divergent attitudes towards nationalisation, a commitment explicitly manifested in Clause IV of the party's Constitution (Dunleavy 1993). Clause IV (which had been completely transformed in 1995) stated that the party aim is:

to secure for the workers by hand or by brain the full fruits of their industry and the most equitable distribution thereof that may be possible upon the basis of the *common ownership* of the means of production, distribution and exchange.

The ideological split in the party was clear: the left supported common ownership of the means of production whereas the right believed in a mixed economy, that is, state control only over those industries with great strategic importance economically (e.g. water, gas, electricity) or those with strong public interest involvement (e.g. health, housing). These differences have generally disappeared as Labour leaders across the party became disillusioned with state control over the means of production as a publicly 'acceptable' (i.e. following the collapse of Communism in Eastern Europe during the 1990s) and effective tool of state economic intervention. The left now advocates the decentralisation of state corporations and the creation of 'social ownership'. By contrast, the right favours a 'partnership' between state and industry in order to facilitate private sector capital investment mainly for infrastructure projects which otherwise would have been solely financed by the state (see [Chapter 7](#)).

Cross-cutting the left-right divide is the split between the industrial and the welfare state wings of the party (Dunleavy 1993). The former's prime concern is with trade union laws, the mechanisms of employers-government-employees pay negotiations

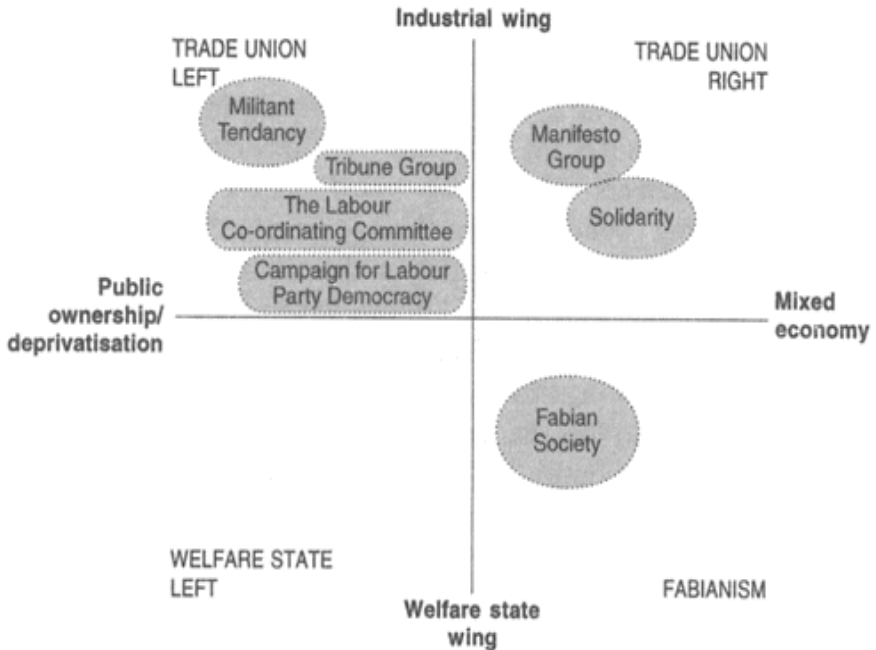


Figure 5.3 Ideological map of the British Labour Party

Source of dimensions: Dunleavy (1993:137)

(i.e. 'collective bargaining'), the viability of incomes policy under a future Labour government, and reversing some of the 1980s union-regulating legislation enacted by Conservative governments. By contrast, the welfare wing of the party is essentially concerned with defending the state benefits system, comprised of the National Health Service (NHS), state education, pensions and welfare benefits, built up by the Attlee government of 1945–51.

Combining the left-right split (those who favour 'social ownership' versus those who support state-industry 'partnership') with the split between the industrial and welfare state wings of the party, yields four basic ideological spaces within the Labour Party, shown in Figure 5.3.

Historically, intra-party divisions over the two ideological dimensions have been characterised by a sharpness of definition. The wing of the party, embracing the combination of a mixed economy and a welfare state, is best represented by the Fabian Society. Established in 1884 and a founder partner of the Labour Representation Committee in 1900, the Fabian Society still boasts a national membership of several thousand and over one-half of

Labour MPs. The Society's views—opposition to nationalisation, a gradual extension of the welfare state and the defence of the mixed economy—are expressed in debates and papers which often result in important policy proposals.

The trade unionist left-wing of the party—supporting 'social ownership' and focusing on industrial relations—has been best represented by the Tribune Group, the Labour Co-ordinating Committee, and the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy. Taking its name from the weekly newspaper—*Tribune*—which dates back to 1937, the Tribune Group was formed in 1966 and remained the sole Labour left group in Parliament until 1981 when Solidarity (a left group formed by Roy Hattersley and Peter Shore in response to the sweeping left-wing constitutional changes) was formed. Membership of the group was restricted to MPs; only in 1975 was the first local Tribune Group formed in Bristol. By 1978, eighteen such groups had been established; each with its own agenda and interests and with no guidance from the faction in the Parliament. In general, the purpose of the parliamentary Tribune Group was to organise opinions in the PLP. This was done by members speaking in the Chamber or in meetings of the PLP, by sponsoring Amendments on the Order Paper, and by sponsoring and signing Early Day Motions. At infrequent intervals the group issued policy statements intended as a guide to the left of the Labour Movement. During the 1970s, the core of the group's agenda was a strong support for nationalisation, a more interventionist economic approach by the government, and a rejection of British membership of the then European Community. Not surprisingly, group members continuously voted against their own party when contrasting policies were being promoted. For example between 1974 and 1979, cross-voting or abstention by a considerable body of Tribune Members resulted in two government defeats on the Industry Bill (July 1975); a defeat on the Expenditure White Paper (March 1976) and the loss of Clause 40 of the Scotland Bill (Norton 1980). In addition to this, the group managed to mobilise sufficient support to claim a majority in the PLP and thereby bring about the election of Ian Mikardo as Chairman of the PLP in 1974.

The Campaign for Labour Party Democracy originated in the acute disappointment felt by many Labour activists at what were seen as the failures of the Labour governments of 1964–70 and 1976–9 to promote Socialism, as well as the minor role given to those activists in the local branches and constituency parties. The Campaign advocated that policy decisions reached by the annual conference should be binding on the PLP and argued that powers should be devolved to those active in the party's local branches and

constituency parties. The Labour Co-ordinating Committee, which was established in 1978, sought a more resolute commitment of the party to a fundamental shift in wealth and power to working people, as well as to a constitutional reform of the party in order to make the leadership more directly accountable to the activists. The group's activities have been two-fold. First, it attempted to stimulate the Labour Party to discuss and develop its programme by drafting a comprehensive set of alternative policies, such as a commitment to withdraw from the European Community. Second, it attempted to develop the Labour Party's role as a campaigning party rather than solely as an electoral organisation. The view was that interaction with local community groups, local unions and tenants' organisations could extend the influence of the Labour left within the grass roots membership, and especially among rank-and-file trade unionists.

In the Labour 'far left', it is worth distinguishing the Militant Tendency, which, during the mid-1980s, claimed 6,000 members and 552 branches.¹⁰ Advocating massive nationalisation and public investment, withdrawal from the EC and nuclear disarmament, this Trotskyist group established a 'hard' left core within party bodies which exacerbated the divisions among the different groupings. An inquiry by the NEC into the activities of the Militant Tendency which was undertaken in 1981 concluded that the group was a 'well-organised caucus centrally controlled'; had a 'hard core of supporters who form an organisation with its own programme and policy for distinctive and separate propaganda; and therefore was in conflict with the Labour Party constitution (Clause II sec. 3) which rejects the operation of groupings with their own programme and distinctive propaganda within the party' (NEC Report 1982). Aware that the activities of the Militants within the party had become an electoral liability, the party decided to expel members of Tendency. Despite the resistance of the Militants, the party expelled members of the editorial board of the group's newspaper in 1983, some party organisers in 1987, thirteen Militants in 1987, a further eighty-eight in 1988 and two MPs in 1992. During the early 1990s, the Militant Tendency intensified its efforts to challenge Labour candidates in elections for council wards in May 1992. Twenty-one members of the Broad-left groupings, for instance, challenged Labour candidates in twenty of Liverpool's thirty-three council wards. Their organisation was relatively effective, and candidates stood under 'ward Labour' banners, confusing many voters. Well-run pockets of militants in inner cities and poorer suburbs have offset Labour Party efforts to combat their activities in such

arenas. Overall, the Militant Tendency has remained active within local government, trade unions and some local constituency parties.

The trade union right—favouring a mixed economy with an industrial relations focus—was best represented by Solidarity and the Manifesto Group. Solidarity was established in 1981 as a response to the constitutional change at that time which increased the influence of trade unionists and the constituency associations in comparison to the role of MPs. One hundred and fifty MPs signed a statement opposing the creation of the electoral college method and later rallied support for Denis Healey against Tony Benn in the contest for the deputy leadership. Its post-1982 activities focused primarily on excluding the Militant Tendency from the Labour Party. Prominent members during the early 1980s were Roy Hattersley and Peter Shore.

The leading group which opposes the influence of the trade union left in the Labour Party is the Manifesto Group. Following the success of the Tribune Group to mobilise support within the party for the election of Ian Mikardo as Chairman of the PLP, an organised counter-move of the Right resulted in Mikardo's failure to secure his re-election (Cledwyn Hughes was elected in November 1974 as PLP Chairman). In December, the Manifesto Group was established, consisting of right and centre MPs. In general, the group strongly supports British involvement in the process of European integration, a prominent role in NATO, as well as the retention of nuclear weapons and multilateral disarmament. In economic policy, the group favours a strong private sector and rejects re-nationalisation of public agencies which were privatised by Conservative governments during the 1980s and the 1990s. The mixed economy is considered to be the core of the group's agenda, which maintains that selective public agencies are vital to the improvement of economic performance. In constitutional policy, the Group advocate direct democracy in candidate selection and re-selection.

The 'Welfare State Left'—supporting 'social ownership' with a welfare state focus—was historically not represented by a particular grouping. In the 1990s, a key current is the urban left which repositions the party as spokesperson for users of public services, state-dependent groups, the inner cities, the unemployed, women and ethnic minorities. Its approach is a 'coalition of minorities' one, taking a 'rainbow' of different groups and bringing them together behind a common purpose, chiefly the welfare state. This current is now represented by Robin Cook.

During the late 1980s and early 1990s the influence of Labour's internal groups declined and many lost their sharpness of definition. As most Labour MPs are now aware that public disunity carries heavy electoral penalties, the groups try to avoid raising divisive issues on the public agenda. In addition, they are less inclined to produce policy statements over a wide range of issues, as well as lists of candidates or 'slates' for the shadow cabinet and other executive bodies. Beyond the search for electoral success one can mention also the move of the Tribune to the right placing itself near 'Solidarity' and the 'Manifesto Group'. This move has affected other groupings in the Labour Party, such as, the Labour Co-ordinating Committee and the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy. To avoid isolation these groups have joined the Tribune move to the right.

Curvilinear disparities in the Conservative and Labour parties

Studies undertaken by Norris (1994;1995) attempt to locate the positions of politicians, party members and voters over some of the central issues which have divided British politics in recent years.¹¹ Over the issue of nationalisation versus privatisation, the study finds that 90 per cent of all Conservative politicians want to push ahead with further privatisation while three quarters of all Labour politicians prefer more nationalisation. Conservative Party members are less enthusiastic than their politicians about privatisation—66 per cent of them favour moving forward on this front. By contrast, Labour members hold more extreme views than their politicians about nationalisation—82 per cent favour pressing ahead. The attitudes of both Conservative and Labour politicians and members seemed strongly out of step with the voters—one half of whom favoured leaving things as they are—which is closest to the policy stance advanced by the Liberal Democrats.

Over the issue of spending and taxes, Norris (1994; 1995) finds that 99 per cent of Labour politicians favoured increasing taxes and spending in marked contrast to the 8 per cent of Conservative politicians who supported this policy option. At the level of party members, 96 per cent of Labour members supported increased taxes compared with 28 per cent of Conservative Party members. The results of voters' opinion over this issue dimension—with 40 per cent of Conservative voters and 77 per cent of Labour voters supporting tax increases—confirms the extent of party

polarisation over the issue. It also confirms that the Labour Party is closer to the position of the voters than the Conservative Party.

Norris's (1994) most striking finding is perhaps the extent to which the Labour and Conservative politicians are in touch with their voters over the issue of Britain's link with Europe. They find that 82 per cent of Labour politicians compared with 23 per cent of Conservative politicians supported the claim that 'UK's interest is better served by closer links with Western Europe'. These figures stand in stark contrast to the 57 per cent of Conservative voters and 66 per cent of Labour voters who supported this claim. Party leaders are therefore far more strongly polarised over the European issue than their voters. A similar conclusion is evident from the results over the issue of Unilateralism versus Multilateralism. Norris and Lovenduski (1995) find that Conservative politicians were the most pro-nuclear group—86 per cent of them supported keeping an independent nuclear deterrent—whereas only 2 per cent of Labour politicians supported this policy option. By contrast, 46 per cent of Conservative voters and 29 per cent of Labour voters favoured keeping an independent nuclear deterrent. Interestingly enough, the majority of Labour politicians continued to favour unilateral disarmament, contrary to official party policy.

In the conventional wisdom party members are usually seen as extremists. This picture is often reinforced by media stereotypes focusing on highly publicised internal conflicts, such as battles of selection and reselection or disagreements during party conferences. However, the disparities of opinions over issues suggests that—contrary to May (1973)—party members are generally less radical than politicians. A notable exception is the distribution of opinions over the issue of Nationalisation versus Privatisation in the Labour Party—party members hold more extreme views than their politicians about nationalisation—82 per cent of members favour pressing ahead compared with 75 per cent of Labour politicians. Over two issues—Britain's link with Europe and Unilateralism versus Multilateralism—party leaders were shown to be far more strongly polarised than voters, and more radical than their members. According to Norris, the most plausible explanation for this phenomenon is that:

politicians willing to face the considerable costs and risks of standing for election have to be strongly committed to party principles. The process of campaigning can only reinforce this tendency. If successful, they are immersed in full-time political careers debating in Westminster, defending party

policies and working with colleagues from their side of the house. As a result, this experience can be expected to reinforce their initial commitment....

(Norris 1995:43)

Patterns of dissent in the House of Commons: 1945-95

Prior to 1970, party cohesion was a well-established norm in British politics. The two most significant and observable generalisations concerning voting behaviour were: (i) MPs rarely, if ever, voted against their own side; and (ii) on those rare occasions when government backbenchers did vote against their own side, they never did so in numbers sufficient to deny the government a majority (Norton 1985). Even the visible factional conflict between revisionists and fundamentalists within the Labour Party does not seem to have caused a decline in Labour's near-perfect cohesion. As Beer has aptly described:

In the House of Commons were two bodies of freedom-loving Britons, chosen in more than six hundred constituencies and subject to influences that ran back to an electorate that was numbered in the millions and divided by the complex interests and aspirations of an advanced modern society. Yet day after day with a Prussian discipline they trooped into the division lobbies at the signals of their whips and in the service of the authoritative decisions of their parliamentary parties.

(Beer 1969:350-1)

Beer's argument has been easily borne out by empirical data. During the period 1945-70, the number of divisions witnessing dissenting votes (expressed as average percentage of all divisions per session) was approximately 1 per cent. In addition, not once during this period was a government defeated because of its own supporters voting with the opposition parties. Throughout the post-war period up to 1970, British governments appeared relatively secure from dissenting behaviour among their parliamentary group members.

The above generalisation ceased to be applicable from the 1970s onwards. Three Parliaments of the 1970s have shown an increased willingness of MPs to vote against their own side in the Commons' division lobbies and to do so with serious effect. The average number of divisions witnessing dissenting votes per

session rose to 7.1 per cent. For the Conservative Party, in the period from 1970 to 1974, 204 divisions in the Commons witnessed dissenting votes by one or more Conservatives. Members proved willing not only to vote against their government on more occasions than before, but also to enter the opposition lobbies in sufficient numbers to deprive the Heath government of its majority. Of the six defeats experienced, three were on three-line whips,¹² the most important taking place on the immigration rules in November 1972. In the Labour government years from 1974 to 1979, there were forty-four divisions in which fifty or more Labour MPs voted against their own side. The incidence of cross-voting in Parliament increased until, in the final session, almost one in two divisions witnessed dissenting votes cast by one or more Labour members (Norton 1980:434).

The derived consequence of this pattern of dissent was a dramatic increase in government defeats in the House of Commons. Heath's government was defeated on six occasions as a result of intra-party dissent by government backbenchers. Labour governments during 1974–79 were defeated on twenty-three occasions due to similar dissension. Added to this were government defeats caused by opposition parties combining against minority governments—seventeen defeats during 1974 and nineteen during 1974–79 (Norton 1985). The latter development was aptly termed the 'Opposition mode' of executive-legislative relations, where a government is often defeated by a composition of opposition parties against it (King 1976). On top of these developments, the government has suffered more than 100 defeats in the standing committees (Norton 1993b).

The combination of backbench dissent on the floor of the House and opposition parties combining against a minority government ensured that a significant proportion of government proposals were modified against the government's wishes. According to Schwarz's (1980) analysis, more than half the government Bills considered in the 1975–6 session were altered as a result of division lobby or standing committee defeats. The decline in party cohesion during the 1970s, with the government being forced to alter its measures against its wishes the natural consequence, was well summarised by Epstein as follows:

It was clear that in the 1970s both Conservative and Labour MPs voted more independently, and more consequently so, than their predecessors of the 1950s. The change need not have been over-whelming in order to be important... We can also appreciate that the decline in parliamentary party

cohesion might, like that of the electoral capacity of the major parties, be reversible. But, at least for the 1970s, we must say that the British party model itself substantially changed. A cohesive party as well as a majority party became less certain.

(Epstein 1980b:19–20)

Indeed, the trend identified by Epstein was also visible during the 1980s. In the 1979–83 parliament, there were at least sixteen occasions when ten or more Conservative MPs either voted against their own side or abstained from voting. On four occasions, the number of dissenters exceeded forty. Another essential aspect of this trend was the significance of the threat of dissent. Despite its majority, the Conservative government had, on occasion, to contend with the possibility of defeat (Norton 1985). In the 1983 parliament, in contrast, the government stood little chance of being defeated in the division lobbies as it enjoyed a majority over all other parties of 144. Similarly, in the 1987 parliament, the government could safely ignore its parliamentary critics as it enjoyed a majority of 100.

The 1992 parliament, on the other hand, saw the government in a vulnerable position with an overall majority of only twenty-one. Perhaps the most spectacular government retreat during recent decades occurred in the first session of that parliament when the Cabinet decided to back down on plans to halve the coal industry. Less than twenty-four hours after the chairman of the 1922 Committee stated publicly that the government policy was unacceptable—a statement accompanied by the willingness of Conservative MPs to vote against their own side—the cabinet announced both a moratorium on the closure of all but ten pits on the original list of thirty-one and a package to help the mining communities.¹³ Furthermore, in November 1994, the Conservative government carried its second reading of the European Communities (Finance) Bill on a vote of confidence.¹⁴ Abstention of nine Conservative backbenchers in the division resulted in a withdrawal of the whip from eight MPs (a ninth resigned the whip in protest). In so doing, the government acquired formally the status of a minority government.

As party leaders can no longer take the conformity of their parliamentary groups for granted, the political role of party whips has become more burdensome. In the first instance, party whips are responsible for ensuring the support of the parliamentary group in legislative votes and act as a channel of communication between the (shadow) cabinet and its parliamentary supporters. In

this capacity, the whips exercise three functions within parliament: (i) they try to keep the party's majority as high as possible; (ii) they try to know in advance what members' views are on the issue in question; and (iii) they try to persuade potential rebels to vote in line with the views of the party. Outside parliament, they take responsibility for matters of electoral management, ensuring that local associations are in good working order in terms of candidate selection and finances.

Given the increase in the willingness of members to vote against their own side, it is hardly surprising that the whips' parliamentary functions have become more extensive and time-consuming. Growing difficulties for the whips have been issue-oriented—with MPs deciding to sit free of the control of the whips (Norton 1993b). The failure of the whips to minimise the threat of dissent, and more generally, anticipation of likely dissent—which in the case of the incumbent party, often forced the government to withdraw Bills—led to a relative increase in the communication function of the whips. In addition, it led to the application of a disciplinary method—*en masse* withdrawing of the whip—which has no precedent in post-1945 British politics.

Withdrawal of the whip by the Prime Minister and the Chief Whip implies that those MPs subject to this disciplinary action can no longer attend meetings of the 1922 Committee or backbench party committees or receive the weekly whip, and will not be drawn on to serve on standing committees. For the governing party, being in minority position affects its position on the standing committees. The reason for this is that the Committee of Selection which nominates the membership of committees must take into account the composition of the House of Commons. According to Norton (1994), the question which arises is whether the composition of the House changes following a withdrawal of the whip. The government will obviously argue that nothing changes while the opposition would probably advance the contradictory argument. On the floor of the House, however, the governing party must negotiate on an *ad hoc* basis with an opposition party in the hope that the latter will be willing to provide external support over the divisive issue.

Regarding changes in the whip's communication function, the Chief Whip's reports in cabinet meetings and his or her contacts with members of the parliamentary party have become significantly important in setting the broad limits within which a government may formulate its policies. A classic example is the formulation of the 1982 Budget. Twenty-six Conservative MPs had earlier written to the Chief Whip demanding a change of policy;

fourteen had abstained on the Chancellor's mini-Budget proposal of December 1981. In order to avoid defeat, the Chancellor was forced into the unusual position of formulating his Budget with an eye to the likelihood of his getting it through the House of Commons. Indeed, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Sir Geoffrey Howe, declared that he 'may be the first Tory chancellor who, in forming his budget, must take into account his chances of getting it through the House of Commons'.¹⁵

To sum up, the pattern of dissent on the floor of the House of Commons as well as in Standing Committees reflects a gradual increase in the degree of independent voting. Members of Parliament have proved significantly more willing to vote against their own party. Further, they have done so in such numbers as to increase the government's willingness to alter its measures against its wishes. This is due to both aspects of protest, namely, the continued expression of dissent in the division lobbies and the threat of dissent. Thus, relative to preceding parliaments (i.e. pre-1970), the political élites are now much less able to take the conformity of their parliamentary groups for granted. Although a large majority in the House provides a barrier for effective threat or actual dissenting behaviour, the presence of potential rebellion has served to make the House of Commons a relevant actor in the process of policy formulation.

CONCLUSIONS

In restricting the discussion to certain groupings within the British Labour and the Conservative parties, two caveats must be kept in mind. First, I agree with those who would argue that there are many additional groupings that go under-represented here. Given the impossibility of including all of the groupings, however, I opted for the alternative of covering only the most ideologically distinctive groups and hence the most meaningful for national and cross-national comparison. In light of this consideration, a discussion of factionalism in the Liberal Democratic Party was not undertaken as none of the groupings can be considered ideologically distinctive.

Second, some may question the decision to analyse aspects of cohesion and factionalism under one roof. As research on factionalism and parties' legislative behaviour have, by and large, been divorced from one another, parties have been predominantly treated as vehicles in the parliamentary competition to convert MPs' votes into control over the executive and legislative outputs. Although contemporary scholars recognise that parties vary in the

degree of agreement on policy or ideological matters, they often treat internal unity as one of the valued traits in a political party. Blondel (1978: 138) even cites 'unity' as one of the four requirements of an ideal party.

Such evaluations should not be taken for granted in many cases; in reality a party's ability to shape public policies depends less on 'cohesion' than on the dynamics of internal groupings, with dissension in parliament occurring when 'winning' in the division is relatively certain. Further, dissension in parliament could be considered functional to party stability, in that it operates, at times, as a channel for the diffusion of dissent. Importantly, studying factionalism and cohesion under one roof pinpoints a viable agenda for future research. The concern of research ought not to be with the specific structure of any party but with the dynamics of party organisation, and the broad structural determinism which shapes it. An additional research direction is the study of party organisational reforms and their impact on the internal dynamics of parties, wringing as much influence as possible out of party-level causes of legislative cohesion. Alternatively, one could focus on the impact of changes in the constitutional context in which parties operate on internal party dynamics. Thus, where possible, efforts should be directed towards examining changes in both the external and internal environments that are so very potent in shaping cohesion and factionalism.

6

Intra-party conflicts and legislative bargaining

The central issue this chapter seeks to address is the impact intraparty conflicts have on coalition bargaining and the government formation process. The focus on intra-party conflicts is mainly based on the premise that parties are not unitary actors but complex organisations comprised of many groupings (e.g. factions, tendencies, etc.), each with its own agenda. Within the party, politics is endlessly played out, with different coalitions of forces and actors striving for dominance. Politics is also part of the interaction among party bodies (e.g. Party Convention, National Executive Committee, etc.), reflecting the tensions which underlie their various inter-relationships, as well as the struggle for relative influence within the organisation. The interaction between individuals, groupings and political bodies within a political party impacts on its relationships with other parties. The choice of legislative partners, the type of inter-party commitments, the content of inter-party agreements and the timing of government formation, to mention just a few, are often divisive issues which may lead to internal conflicts. The derived dissent behaviour by dissatisfied members may threaten and destabilise coalition bargaining and the process of government formation.¹

Thus, the chapter addresses the trade-off faced by party élites between the need to commit the party to co-operative relationships and the need to ensure party cohesion (Sjöblom 1968). To better understand this trade-off it first explores the traditional view according to which the impact intra-party conflicts have on coalition bargaining is found to derive from the structural context within which party élites operate, notably: (i) 'when internal disputes occur, the more centralised the party structure, the easier it is for the party to remain in the coalition' (Groennings 1968:454); and (ii) 'a strongly institutionalised party can defend its stability better than a weakly institutionalised party and that an alliance among parties inevitably destabilises the less institutionalised organisations' (Panebianco 1988:219). It then

posits a logical problem in the traditional argument: Why are centralised parties considered to be effective coalition actors if they lack structural mechanisms for the diffusion of dissent (for instance, factions and factional activities)? This problem leads to a formulation of a theoretical framework which turns the traditional argument upside-down. This framework is then applied to the experience of two decentralised parties—the British Labour and Liberal parties—during the Labour-Liberal (Lib-Lab) Pact which was formed in March 1977 and lasted until July 1978.

THE INTERPLAY BETWEEN INTRA- AND INTER-PARTY POLITICS IN MULTI-PARTY SYSTEMS

Despite the growing interest in explaining coalition bargaining and the process of government formation in parliamentary systems, little attention has been devoted to intra-party determinants. At the outset, there is a considerable general literature on the internal politics of parties. Much of this material, however, has no direct bearing on coalition bargaining. Notable exceptions are Hirschman's (1970) discussion of the impact on inter-party competition of the divergent views that are likely to be held by party workers and party voters, as well as Robertson's (1976) analysis of the impact of the divergent views of campaign contributors and voters. Most significant of all, however, Luebbert (1986) proposes a theory of coalition behaviour that is based fundamentally upon assumptions about intra-party politics, whereas Strom (1990b) incorporates propositions concerning parties' internal organisations into two causal models—permitting strategy to operate as a variable—to explain the mix of strategies pursued by competitive political parties.

Gregory Luebbert was the first to devote exclusive attention to this topic by proposing a theory of coalitional behaviour which was based fundamentally upon the assumption that party leaders are motivated above all by the desire to remain party leaders (Luebbert 1986:46). This assumption means that party leaders will always strive to minimise party disunity by attempting to base the party's attitude towards participation in a coalition on preferences that produce the least disunity. From this perspective:

the leaders' task is to insist on preferences that are sufficiently focused that they generate the widest possible support within the party, but sufficiently vague and opaque that they do not engage in government formation the disagreements that are a constant feature of any party.

(Luebbert 1986:52)

Preferences that embody a party's fundamental principles of policy or programme direction are therefore decisive in government formation. The reason for this lies in their impact of minimising party disunity by being derived from the most widely-shared values within a party, and because they directly engage the party's most basic sense of purpose.

In Luebbert's view it is only when party leaders intend to bargain seriously that intra-party considerations significantly affect the selection of a few major programmatic issues as sticking points in the bargaining process. Negotiations concerning coalition formation are thus mainly about intra-party politics. As Luebbert notes:

What makes the talks so long, difficult, and complex is generally not the lack of goodwill among élites, but the fact that negotiations must appear the way they do in order to satisfy the members whose orientations are still largely attuned to the vocal, symbolic, and ideological aspects characteristic of each respective political subculture. It is wrong to assume that, because inter-party negotiations take a long time, much is being negotiated among the parties. Most negotiation in cases of protracted government formation takes place between leaders and their followers and among rival factions within parties.

(Luebbert 1986:52)

Luebbert's account could be challenged for its sole concentration on policy issues. According to Luebbert (1986:249), one of the theory's central propositions is that decisive policy preferences can be discovered by studying the historical crises and challenges that shaped party profiles. In so doing, Luebbert ignores matters of internal politics which relate to genuine disagreements over party strategy and conflicts which represent a personal struggle for power between different leaders and their respective followers. The latter conflicts, which are actually about power, career, spoils and rewards, rather than policy or ideology, explain how a party can be relatively divided without containing many significant policy differences.

The dynamics of intra-party politics can also be approached from an inter-party perspective. Until the 1990s, political economists tended to approach the problem of legislative coalitions by formulating spatial models based on the assumption

that all possible policy proposals are feasible. Those models allow for a continuum of potential alternatives to the *status quo* on each policy dimension. Their account of government coalition formation is therefore in the form of a game of weighted voting in a legislature in which the entire policy space constitutes the set of feasible policy outcomes (McKelvey and Schofield 1987; Schofield 1986). A refreshing improvement in the study of coalitional behaviour comes in the form of Laver and Shepsle's (1990a; 1990b) approach of modelling government formation. Two innovative ideas were raised by the authors: first, treating government coalitions as being governments as well as coalitions; second, considering the credibility of policy proposals made during coalition bargaining. These two important matters are linked by a common concern with the qualitative allocation of cabinet portfolios among parties, as the latter may be taken to imply a credible commitment to implement the ideal policy of the parties in the relevant policy jurisdiction.

[The] characterisation of the workings of the division-of-labour cabinet system should lead actors to forecast that jurisdiction-specific policy outputs will tend toward those preferred by the party of the relevant minister. This means that a proposal that promises to enact the preferred policy position of the person (party) nominated for each relevant portfolio is *credible* in the sense that it depends only on giving ministers the power to do what they expressly want to do. Any proposal promising that a minister with wide-ranging power over the relevant policy jurisdiction will act against expressed preferences is less credible.

(Laver and Shapsle 1990a:874)

The credible policy promises that are made when governments are formed are therefore limited to those that can be implemented by placing portfolios in the hands of those politicians who are inclined to carry them out; no other policy promises are credible. In this sense, portfolio allocation becomes the mechanism by which prospective coalitions make credible promises.

The central point in Laver and Shepsle's analysis is that dealing with governments rather than merely with legislative coalitions gives them the freedom to consider a range of policy-related issues that are central to the operation of coalition government. However, this view-point overlooks the possibility that the issues at stake during the operation of legislative coalitions may transcend the ordinary range of legislative policy areas, and may involve

questions of pure coalition strategy: the willingness to work with one set of parties rather than another. In multi-party systems in which a party's capacity to implement its programme depends less on the winning of a parliamentary majority than upon its choice of coalition partner, how strong that partner is and what the partner will tolerate, questions of coalition strategy tend to dominate the political agenda to the near exclusion of conventional policy debate. Laver and Shepsle's (1990a; 1990b) accounts falls far short of dealing successfully with this issue.

An additional shortcoming of their approach relates to their implicit assumption that party debate ends after a coalition has been established. Specifically, Laver and Shapsle's approach focuses on the period of government formation, during which party discipline reaches a maximum. After this stage, however, intra-party conflicts may still evolve, undermining the 'credibility' of a proposal by exerting pressures on Cabinet members. As each alliance partner re-commits itself to parliamentary co-operation by voting in favour of the coalition over critical divisions (e.g. no-confidence motions, budget approval, etc.), the 'credibility' of a proposal can be continuously evaluated. Hence, a partner's strategy will be dependent on the extent to which promises are implemented. Theoretically, therefore, only an approach that views coalition maintenance as a continuous process of alliance formation can effectively capture the notion of a 'proposal credibility' and intra-party dynamics.

The above discussion suggests that intra-party conflicts have been dealt with on an *ad hoc* basis and, as such, have been treated as a constraint on coalition bargaining and the process of government formation. In other words, discussions of the topic have concentrated almost exclusively on the negative influences of party disunity and the strategies of party élites to cope with these (for instance, through the allocation of portfolios). They have operated without a clear conception of the precise nature of internal conflicts; and how party élites can take advantage of the structural context in which they operate in order to neutralise internal dissent. An attempt to address these issues has been undertaken by Maor (1992a; 1992b; 1995a). Three questions were investigated both theoretically and empirically as follows: (i) How can 'claims' be made by actors operating within the party on the party élites?; (ii) How can the party élites pacify and neutralise internal dissent?; (iii) What are the implications of successful and unsuccessful resolution of internal conflicts on coalition bargaining and the process of government formation?

Maor's approach of the intra-party determinants of coalition bargaining

Before addressing the above-mentioned questions it is necessary to justify the choice of 'centralised' and 'decentralised' parties as the base-point of Maor's analysis, not least because with each contribution it seems that the parameters of the discussion change, resulting in a confusion and profusion of terms. This is unfortunate because the above differentiation is fundamental to our understanding of the dynamics of party politics; the type of party organisation being a key factor in promoting or inhibiting a change in the nature of coalition bargaining and the process of government formation.

Studying the interplay between intra- and inter-party politics involves actors with widely different relationships to their political environment, as well as parties with widely different relationships to their social and political environment. To encompass this complexity, Maor uses the concept of 'centralisation of power'. As a concept in the analysis of political parties, centralisation of power relates to Anderson's (1968:392-6) dimension of 'control' as a concept in organisational theory. More specifically, Anderson means the distribution of control instead of the volume or sources of control. In this sense, it is identical with Duverger's (1964:52) concepts of 'centralisation and decentralisation' which 'define the way in which power is distributed amongst the different levels of the party's leadership'. Viewing centralisation of power within the party, Maor defines the national party organs as a reference point for 'central' location. Thus, a centralised party is one which features the concentration of effective decision-making authority in the national party organs, with a premium placed on a smaller number of individuals participating in the decision (Janda 1980: 108).

Let us take two parties, A and B. In the first, A, the extra-parliamentary wings have no real prerogatives and the fundamental decisions are taken by the parliamentary party. In the second, B, the extra-parliamentary wings may affect party policy and strategy either through horizontal linking (i.e. party conference in which all tendencies can find expression), or vertical linking (i.e. when authority at the sub-national level is in the hands of a managing committee elected by a conference, itself made up of delegates nominated by the branches). The centralised party A drastically limits its internal actors' margin of manoeuvrability. The organisation imposes itself upon the actors, channelling their strategies into specific and obligatory paths. In

contrast, the decentralised party B is one in which the actors have more autonomy in order to compete with each other; the competing organisational sub-units are assured autonomous control over organisational resources. At the heart of Maor's approach lies the notion that the difference in the way in which power is distributed among the different levels of a party's leadership matters in coalition bargaining.

Maor's (1995a) approach of the interplay between intra- and inter-party politics in multi-party systems is based on the view that party élites will use tactical moves and countermoves in the internal and the parliamentary arenas in an attempt to resolve their bargaining problem, i.e. to commit the party to co-operative relationships in such a way as to ensure party cohesion (Sjöblom 1968). This brings out clearly the variables that ought to be considered, namely, intra-party conflicts (the independent variable) and their consequences in terms of coalition bargaining (the dependent variable).

Intra-party conflict is taken to signify intra-élite as well as élite-follower conflict, following an alliance, which results in organisational decline (i.e. a deterioration of the party's stability and/or cohesion). Operational criteria, both of which are necessary to designate an internal dispute as an intra-party conflict, include: (i) party élites' perception of the intra-party strife as an attempt to change their legislative behaviour; and (ii) patterns of organisational decline, i.e. exit and voice by party members (Hirschman 1970).²

Regarding the distinction between élite-followers and intra-élite conflicts, in a genuinely factionalised party the two types are mixed as members of conflicting élites have their respective followers in the party organisation, party media and auxiliary organisations. The power of factions' leaders will—*inter alia*—be based on the relative resources of the followers of each faction. To minimise ambiguity in these terms, I define 'intra-élite conflicts' as those which occur within the parliamentary party, including those between MPs and the party representatives in government. 'Élite-followers conflicts' are taken to signify any other internal disputes. Regarding the actual evolution of conflicts, it is important to note that the analytical differentiation between intra-élite and élite-follower conflicts does not exclude evolution of both at the same time. It is reasonable to suggest, however, that in the case of any one particular party, either intra-élite or élite-follower will ordinarily be the dominant conflict mode. The subsidiary conflict is then likely to manifest itself to such a limited degree that it will never become destructive for the simple reason that, if the

decrease in the level of party cohesion proceeds, the job of destruction is accomplished singlehandedly by the dominant conflict mode.

Bargaining power, in turn, refers to the power of a party to bind itself (Schelling 1960). Self-binding is closely related to the credibility of threat which depends on how visible to the threatened party is the inability of the threatening party to rationalise its way into, or out of, its commitment. Most studies (Schelling 1960; Bacharach and Lawler 1981; Laver and Schofield 1990:178) associate the ability of a party to commit itself to co-operative relationships with pivotal position, general *Kalitionsfähigkeit* and ideological closeness/distance to presumptive coalition partners. This treatment—commonly viewed as external bargaining power—explores part of the complex concept. The model developed by Maor (1995a), however, focuses on internal bargaining power, associating the ability of the party to commit itself to co-operative relationships with intra-party determinants.

From an intra-party point of view, the credibility of a party's threats and proposals are significantly affected by the ability of its élites to establish and maintain control over the party. In the parliamentary arena, both voice and exit are costly in terms of a party's bargaining power. The cost of devoting even a modicum of élites' time and resources to resolving internal conflict may undermine their bargaining power in the parliamentary arena. As parties can only estimate the resources and commitments of their opponents, perceptions are a crucial mean in such processes.³ Éléites' perception of credibility of threats can therefore provide a relatively accurate picture of intra- and inter-party dynamics. For operational purposes, therefore, bargaining power is defined as the power of a party to commit itself to parliamentary co-operation over its 'decisive preference' (Luebbert 1986) as perceived by the party and its competitor élites.

Figure 6.1 indicates that the fundamental relationships being considered by Maor (1995a) are those pertaining to a party's leadership, linkages between the leadership and the party base, and the effect of these considerations on the coalition bargaining and the process of government formation. A party is considered to be a political system (Katz and Mair 1990, 1994). Members of the parliamentary group and its extra-parliamentary wings thrive on the hope of winning and the desire to influence party policy and strategy. Different coalitions of forces are formed within the party and actors striving for dominance interact with each other in the struggle for relative influence within the organisation. Internal

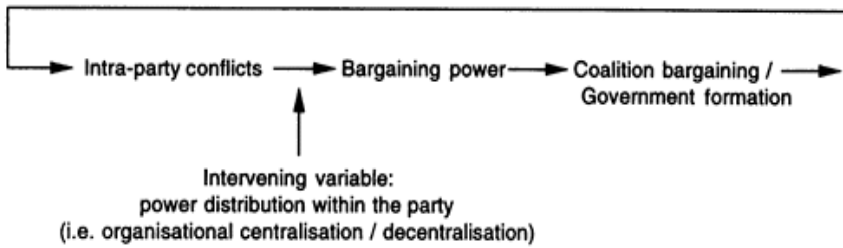


Figure 6.1 Coalition bargaining and the process of government formation

Source: Maor (1995a:69)

relationships, however, are not only a matter of democracy but also a matter of manageability. Party élites attempt to establish conformity, whether a highly generalised decision to conform automatically, a disposition to support the party and its leadership 'in general', or an adherence to the élites' position on a particular piece of legislation (Barber 1960). A failure of party élites to achieve such a conformity seems likely to impact coalition bargaining and the process of government formation. This evaluation is based on the assumption that party élites are motivated, above all, by the desire to remain party leaders (Luebbert 1986). In other words, for party leaders who are in office, it is more important to remain party leaders than to remain in office. If intra-party conflict threatens their position, rather than stay in government they will leave office in order to remain party leaders. Party leaders, in short, will emphasise central features of party policy so as to minimise dissent within various sections of the party and secure their position.

The management of party politics, according to Maor, is undertaken within a specific organisational context, which, in turn, determines the nature of dissent. Decentralised parties, for example, permit the expression of dissent within the party. To do so, members may form factions, debate in faction meetings and in the media, sign petitions with the intention of forcing strategy change, vote against the party line in parliament and demonstrate. By contrast, centralised organisations impose themselves upon the actors and limit the latter's margins of manoeuvrability. Members of such organisations are not allowed to express dissatisfaction inside the party. In such cases, exit and voice (outside the party) are the only ways in which dissatisfied members can react. Their decision whether to exit or express dissatisfaction within or outside the party is dependent, among

other variables, on the way power and the instruments of control are distributed within the party leadership. Thus, centralisation/decentralisation becomes an intervening variable in the relationship between intra-party conflicts and bargaining power.

Few scholars have considered the nature of the structural context in which party élites operate as a variable in coalition bargaining. Sven Groennings, a pioneer in this field, has argued that, when internal disputes occur:

...the more centralised the party structure, the easier it is for the party to remain in the coalition. The a priori hypothesis that a party weakened by factional dispute will find it difficult to formulate a coalition policy leads quickly to the hypothesis that the greater the organised dissensus within a party, the lesser is the tendency to coalesce, even if the dissensus has nothing to do with coalition policy. It should be noted, furthermore, that it is easier for a party with loose central control to coalesce with another party of the same character than one with tight discipline, because a highly centralised party can present a threat to a loosely structured party (my emphasis).

(Groennings 1968:454)

A similar conclusion has been reached by Angelo Panebianco (1988: 219), namely that: (i) a strongly institutionalised party can defend its stability better than a weakly institutionalised party; and (ii) an alliance among parties inevitably destabilises the less institutionalised organisations.

According to Maor (1995a), a logical problem is created here: why are centralised parties considered to be effective coalitional actors if they lack structural mechanisms for the diffusion of dissent (for instance, factions and factional activities). When inter-party negotiations induce internal conflicts, members may be forced to leave the party or air their voices outside the party as their primary mechanisms for expression of dissent. From the élites' point of view, once dissatisfaction is mobilised outside the internal network, it cannot be effectively monitored. The inability of such élites to pacify internal opposition is likely to be translated into an inferior position in the parliamentary bargaining arena. This, in turn, may contribute to the termination of the coalition bargaining and the process of government formation. Moreover, in cases of followers' hostility which is manifested by violent demonstrations, a rigid organisation can lead to party disintegration when such a party enters serious coalition negotiations.

As noted earlier, the mechanisms for the diffusion of dissent allow a decentralised organisation to handle internal opposition in a variety of flexible ways without forcing members to leave the party. Such a party can enter into conflict-inducing coalition negotiations with other parties without risking its hold on its own élite and party members. The traditional view of intra-party determinants of coalition bargaining, therefore, raises a paradox. Everything else being equal, when intra-party conflict occurs, the strength of a party in the parliamentary bargaining arena (i.e. its relative bargaining power) lies in its organisational decentralisation. 'Everything else being equal' refers, for instance, to the degree (amount) of internal conflict, the behaviour of other parties, etc. 'The strength of the party' refers to its bargaining power over the decisive preference underlying the alliance or the preference underlying its actual strategy. If these two differ, the latter is paramount to one's evaluation of a party's bargaining power.

In describing this interplay of 'challenging' intra-party environment and 'adopting' élites, Maor's intent is not to depreciate the nature of the conflict itself. On the contrary, precisely because political parties can be seen actually as divided into competing subgroups, the nature of intra-party conflict retains a fundamental role in the ability of the party leadership (i.e. cabinet members and party leader) to cope with internal conflict. According to Maor, party leaders differ in the extent to which they control parliamentary group members and party members. A substantial reason for this lies in the fact that rank and file members tend to be less divided—thus more susceptible to 'interest articulation'—than their leaders (McClosky *et al.* 1960). To understand why rank and file are less divided, it is important to appreciate that leaders often come from the more articulate segments of society and, on average, are politically more aware than their followers and far better informed about issues; differences in the degree of partisan involvement parallel the differences in knowledge and have similar consequences; the nature (selective versus non-selective) and size of the two types of groups differ remarkably; and, finally, the degree to which each group is exposed to political competition impacts the pressures exerted upon members to distinguish themselves from each other.

From the leaders' point of view, such a division implies that members of the parliamentary group may respond much more constructively (in terms of conformity) to 'selective incentives', i.e. benefits that the organisation distributes only to some of the participants and in varying amounts, than to 'collective

incentives', i.e. benefits or promises of benefits that the organisation must distribute equally among the participants (Olson 1965). Rank-and-file, on the other hand, may respond much more constructively to 'collective incentives'. The fact that MPs are interested primarily in 'selective incentives' emphasises their dependency on the top leadership (Panebianco 1988:27). This, in turn, may enhance the élites' ability to control the behaviour of MPs. Less influence can be exerted on party members as they are primarily interested in 'collective incentives' (Panebianco 1988:26). Thus, Maor (1995a) assumes that the ability of the party leaders to cope with dissenting behaviour of the parliamentary group members is likely to be greater than their ability to cope with hostility of party activists. Given the above-mentioned paradox, one could hypothesise that this tendency will mostly be manifested in a centralised context.

The above-mentioned theoretical paradox is afforded strong support by Maor's (1995a) study of intra-party conflicts and coalition bargaining in the UK, Denmark, Norway, France and Italy. Based on a systematic analysis of 150 interviews with party parliamentary élites combined with careful historical research, the study produces three generalisations:

- 1 Conflicts within a decentralised party are most likely to be manifested by 'voices' within the parliamentary and party arenas, whereas conflicts within a centralised party are most likely to be manifested by 'exit' or 'voices' outside these arenas.
- 2 Élites within a decentralised party are most likely to emphasise 'decisive preferences' during a coalition life-span, and tolerate factional activities and the formation of new factions in an attempt to pacify internal opposition. Élites within a centralised party which faces infra-élite conflicts are most likely to emphasise 'decisive preferences', and impose structural constraints on the day-to-day operation of the government coalition or the party. Élites within a centralised party which faces élite-follower conflicts are most likely to emphasise 'decisive preferences', initiate 'articulation of ends' (i.e. an adaptation of official ends to organisational needs), and impose a transition period before a formal alliance is concluded.
- 3 A decentralised party is more likely to resolve conflicts successfully than a centralised party. When intra-party conflicts occur, a decentralised party is most likely to sustain its bargaining power over its decisive preference and, thus, to continue the coalition bargaining and the process of

government formation. A centralised party which faces internal conflict is most likely to see a decline in its bargaining power over its decisive preference, leading to the break up of the coalition and the process of government formation.

The preceding discussion—during which various approaches of this topic were explored—has been pursued at a rather high level of abstraction. In the remainder of this chapter Maor's argument regarding decentralised parties will be illustrated in the British context. I hope to show that the main decentralised parties in Britain—namely the Labour and Liberal parties—proved relatively immune to the negative influences of internal conflicts (i.e. in terms of the need of party élites to terminate coalition bargaining in order to pacify internal opposition) during the Lib-Lab Pact.

THE LIB-LAB PACT (1977–78): MODES OF CONFLICT MANIFESTATION, RESOLUTION AND LEGISLATIVE BARGAINING

Inter-party co-operation in Britain is extraordinary because the two-party system usually guarantees single-party governments with solid parliamentary majorities. However, even in this context of two-party dominance four minority governments, that is, governments which controlled less than 50% +1 of the Members of Parliament, were formed. Whereas from 1910 to 1915 a minority Liberal government was dependent upon the support of Labour and the Irish Nationalists for its parliamentary majority, two Labour governments were in a minority position in 1924 and 1929.

In Britain, there is no requirement that a government must win a vote of investiture before it assumes power. This form of rules dates back to when the King rather than parliament appointed the government. Thus, in the British parliamentary democracy the ultimate power of the parliament rests in its power to unseat the government, not with formal power to elect it. Until the government either loses a vote of confidence by a relative majority or chooses to resign for some other reason, it remains in power. Since under these rules of the government formation minority governments are most likely to be formed (Bergman 1993), one remains curious as to the relatively low frequency of minority governments in Britain. The answer for that lies in the plurality electoral system which tends to produce one-party majority government, which, in turn, reduces the importance of the formation rules.

However, a question arises as to why, when no party controls an absolute majority (i.e. a 'hung parliament'), minority governments are formed rather than coalitions. A partial explanation lies in the conventions associated with the process of government formation and dissolution of parliament.⁴ Regarding government formation, after a general election in which no party has been able to gain an overall majority, the Sovereign is not required to nominate a Prime Minister who can secure a majority in the Commons, but rather one who can survive as leader of the largest (or in 1924 the second largest) minority party. Regarding the dissolution of Parliament, if defeated on the Address, the prevailing assumption is that the Prime Minister of the minority government can secure a dissolution of Parliament. Both conventions, therefore, make it likely that minority government rather than coalition will be the result of a hung parliament.⁵

By the 1970s, both the Conservative and Labour parties' share of the vote had declined. The decline in dominance by both parties may be evidenced by their falling combined share of the total vote: from 80 per cent in 1951, through 74 per cent in 1959, to 56 per cent in October 1974. Yet, this decline in the two-parties combined vote was hardly reflected in their parliamentary representation—the total seats of Liberals at Westminster during the period from 1951 to 1975 ranged from six, during the three elections in the 1950s, to fourteen in February 1974. It was, however, the total parliamentary representation for all parties other than the major two that rose from the range of zero to six during 1951–70, to twenty-three and twenty-six in the elections of February and October 1974, respectively.

Looking more closely at this development, it becomes apparent that the two-party system existed (if at all) only at the parliamentary level, with the electoral system as the remaining key determinant, and even the parliamentary two-party system had come under great challenge.

To understand the context in which the Lib-Lab Pact was formulated it is necessary to appreciate the parliamentary situation prior to March 1977. In October 1974 Labour succeeded in gaining a small overall majority, but this was gradually eroded through by-election defeats and defections, so by April 1976 the party found itself in a minority again. The immediate consequences were twenty-nine government defeats in the House of Commons during the period June 1974 to March 1977, during which time the Lib-Lab Pact was formulated. Moreover, Parliament witnessed the first 'mass' use of the guillotine which has been described as 'the most drastic method of curtailing

debate known to procedure' and 'the extreme limit to which procedure goes in affirming the rights of the majority at the expense of the minorities of the House' (Erskine May 1976:448). On 20 July 1976, for example, the government carried three guillotine motions on five Bills; one motion for the Aircraft and Shipbuilding Industries Bill, a second for the Rent (Agriculture) Bill and the Education Bill, and a third for the Health Services Bill and the Dock Regulation Bill.⁶ Clearly, from the view point of the government, it achieved the orderly dispatch of their business, but this was not without cost. To be forced to rely on the naked force of the guillotine gave an advantage to the opposition in terms of their prestige.

List of events in the UK, 1974–79

10/10/74	General Election (Lab. 319, Con. 277, Lib. 13).
11/2/75	Margaret Thatcher elected as Conservative leader.
26/6/75	Labour lose Woolwich West by-election.
18/1/76	Formation of the Scottish Labour Party (2 MPs).
16/3/76	Harold Wilson announces resignation.
5/4/76	James Callaghan becomes Prime Minister.
10/5/76	Jeremy Thorpe resigns as Liberal leader.
7/7/76	David Steel elected Liberal Leader.
9/9/76	Unemployment reaches 1,588,000.
28/9/76	James Callaghan speech demanding financial prudence.
21/10/76	Michael Foot elected Deputy leader of the Labour Party.
27/10/76	Pound reaches its lowest level (\$1.56).
4/11/76	Labour lose Workington and Walsall North by-elections.
15/12/76	Denis Healey announces letter of intent for IMF loan and drastic cuts.
21/2/77	David Owen becomes Foreign Secretary.
22/2/77	Government defeated on devolution guillotine.
17/3/77	Aircraft and Shipbuilding Act finally passed.
23/3/77	Lib-Lab Pact saves government in confidence motion.
31/3/77	Labour lose Stechford by-election.
28/4/77	Labour lose Ashfield by-election and hold Grimsby.
5/5/77	Labour lose Greater London Council and other local election contests.

List of events in the UK, 1974–79

15/7/77	Denis Healey outlines Phase III of incomes policy.
08/77	Unemployment peaks at 1,636,000.
13/12/77	PR for European Elections rejected by Commons.
26/1/78	Special Liberal Assembly conditionally endorses Pact.
23/1/78	Government defeat on Green Pound devaluation.
2/3/78	Labour lose Ilford by-election.
25/5/78	Announcement of forthcoming termination of the Pact.
31/5/78	Labour wins Hamilton by-election.
7/9/78	Prime Minister announces 'No election'.
21/9/78	Ford strike against 5 per cent offer begins.
2/10/78	Labour conference rejects 5 per cent wage limit.
26/10/78	Swing to Labour in Berwick and East Lothian by-elections.
13/12/78	Commons vote 285–283 against government sanctions on employers breaking the 5 per cent pay policy.
1/3/79	Devolution referendum in Scotland and Wales.
28/3/79	Government loses confidence vote 311–310.
29/3/79	Election announced for 3 May.

Source: Keesing's Contemporary Archives, 1974–79

Adding to the difficulties of the minority Labour administration was the internal situation within the party. In February 1977, the Labour government achieved the distinction of being the first government to be defeated on a guillotine motion, mainly due to dissent by vote or abstention of government backbenchers. The government struggled with the Scotland and Wales Bill through ten committee days but it finally decided that the question could not be postponed. As the *Guardian* reported:

what Mr Foot and his more timid colleagues in the Cabinet have decided to take a gamble on is that enough of the rebels will back down on the night when they are brought face to face with the disastrous consequences of an effective backbench rebellion.... The Cabinet decision follows weeks of intense activity by the Labour whips as they sought to assess the scale of any possible backbench revolt and to identify the possible weak links among the rebels. They appear to have

confirmed Mr Foot's view that the earlier the motion was tabled the better in terms of the number of rebels. For ministers recognise that the longer the timetable is delayed the more stringent it will have to be, and therefore, the greater the indignation among its opponents.⁷

When the decision was made, the government was defeated by twenty-nine votes; twenty-two Labour MPs voted against the government and fifteen abstained.⁸ Such government defeats due to Labour's rebels occurred over eight divisions between January 1975 and March 1977 and emphasised the weak position of the Labour government.

Added to the minority situation in which the Labour Party found itself in April 1976 and its weak parliamentary position, were the influences of the economic crisis. By 1976, the financial and economic crisis was such that the IMF could dictate terms to the Labour government in return for international support for Britain. The starting point of the analysis, however, is March 1977, when the Lib-Lab Pact was formed. How did it influence the tactical considerations of party élites? What were the new patterns of alliance formation, maintenance and collapse which evolved during 1977 and 1978? These questions will be investigated in light of the rich material which was furnished by the British case.

The Labour Party

Intra-élite conflicts were evident within the Labour Party throughout the so-called Lib-Lab Pact. The Pact, formed in March 1977 and

The Lib-Lab Pact: A joint statement by the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Liberal Party

We agreed today the basis on which the Liberal Party would work with the government in the pursuit of economic recovery.

We will set up a joint consultative committee under the Chairmanship of the Leader of the House, which will meet regularly. The Committee will examine Government policy and other issues prior to their coming before the house, and Liberal policy proposal.

The existence of this committee will not commit the Government to accepting the views of the Liberal Party, or the Liberal Party to supporting the Government on any issue.

We agree to initiate regular meetings between the Chancellor and the Liberal Party economic spokesman, such meetings to

begin at once. In addition, the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Liberal Party will meet as necessary.

We agree that legislation for Direct Elections to the European Assembly in 1978 will be presented to Parliament in this Session. The Liberal Party re-affirm their strong conviction that a proportional system should be used as the method of election. The Government is publishing next week a White Paper on Direct Elections to the European Assembly which sets out the choices among different electoral systems, but which makes no recommendation. There will now be consultation between us on the method to be adopted and the Government's final recommendation will take full account of the Liberal Party's commitment. The recommendation will be subject to a free vote of both Houses.

We agree that progress must be made on legislation for devolution, and to this end consultations will begin on the detailed memorandum submitted by the Liberal Party today. In any future debate on proportional representation for the devolved Assemblies there will be a free vote.

We agree that the Government will provide the extra time necessary to secure the passage of the Housing (Homeless Persons) Bill, and that the Local Authorities (Works) Bill will now be confined to provisions to protect the existing activities of direct labour organisations in the light of local government reorganisation.

We agree that this arrangement between us should last until the end of the present parliamentary session, when both parties would consider whether the experiment has been of sufficient benefit to the country to be continued.

We also agree that this understanding should be made public.

10 Downing Street
23 March 1977

Source: Steel (1989:129–30) lasting until July 1978, provided the basis for the formation of a Labour minority government which was supported externally by the Liberal Party. Following the economic crisis which was such that the IMF could dictate terms to the Labour government in return for international support for Britain, the leaders of the respective parties, James Callaghan and David Steel, considered 'economic recovery' to be the decisive preference: 'We agreed today the basis on which the Liberal Party would work with the government in the pursuit of economic recovery.'⁹

Before the approval of the Pact, a motion by forty-eight left-wing Labour backbenchers suggested that they did not regard themselves as bound to implement it (Callaghan 1987:458).

Moreover, in the Cabinet, four members—Stanley Orme, Albert Booth, Tony Benn and Bruce Millan—argued against the Pact (Bogdanor 1983a:154). It was only after the Prime Minister reaffirmed that neither he nor Michael Foot, the leader of the House of Commons, would have recommended the Pact if it in any way damaged the integrity of the Labour Party that the left-wing Cabinet members, who objected to the idea of the Pact, agreed to remain in office. The Pact was thus presented to Parliament on 23 March 1977, thereby helping Labour overcome a no-confidence motion by 322 votes to 298, the government being supported by the thirteen Liberals and assisted by three Ulster Unionist abstentions.

The orientation of large sectors of the Labour élite was generally expressed by dissenting 'voices' after the Pact was approved in parliament. A significant increase in intra-party dissent was demonstrated by votes in the House of Commons division lobbies during the Pact. Whereas, 14 and 16 per cent of divisions (expressed as a proportion of non-free divisions in each session) witnessed one or more dissenting votes by Labour members during 1974–5 and 1975–6 respectively, dissent by Labour backbenchers during 1976–7, 1977–8 and 1978–9 were 30, 36 and 45 per cent respectively (Norton 1980: 437). Not only did Labour members vote against their own party in more divisions than before, there was also greater willingness to enter the Conservative lobby. Thus, government backbenchers were prepared to vote in the opposition lobby on some occasions in which the government had no overall majority. The result was twenty-two government defeats in the lobbies during the Pact, most of which it tolerated. Of the twenty-two, nine were attributable to opposition parties combining against a minority government (or to confusion in the lobbies or miscalculation by the whips), and thirteen to Labour members combining with Opposition members to defeat their own side.

Perhaps most important of all was the activity of the Tribune Group within the Labour Party. As the division within the Party was both ideological and organisational, cross-voting or abstention by members of the Group resulted in numerous government defeats. Examples include the defeat of the government on the Expenditure White Paper in March 1976, the loss of Clause 40 of the Scotland Bill and the defeat on an amendment to the Nurses, Midwives and Health Visitors Bill in February 1979. Overall, the Labour government in the 1974–9 parliament suffered forty-two defeats on the floor of the House and more than 100 defeats in standing committees.

These factional activities left the party élites with loose ends that needed tying up. Elected as leader while Labour was in power, Callaghan faced two alternatives; to follow the guiding principle of the PLP's organisation, namely, intra-party democracy, or to modify this line of behaviour in response to other principles. Undoubtedly, Callaghan opted for the former alternative which was implemented both at the level of Cabinet and the PLP. Within the Cabinet, Callaghan confronted various opposing viewpoints; most notably from Tony Benn. David Owen, the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, summarised this problem as follows:

Even with Benn, Callaghan clearly had a very difficult relationship. He tried to lean over backwards to give him a hearing in Cabinet, to let him feel he had an opportunity to express his views and to isolate Benn by being seen effectively to have let him display the fact that he was in minority, so, not to shut him up ...but Callaghan was always able to mobilise a majority of the Cabinet to his point of view.¹⁰

Added to these intra-Cabinet difficulties which were successfully pacified by Callaghan, was the factional nature of much of the PLP dissent. Significant difficulties were the large number of divisions witnessing dissenting votes, the size of the dissenting lobbies, and the willingness of MPs to enter a whipped opposition lobby and deprive the government of a majority. A substantial part of Callaghan's and the whips' strategy to deal with these difficulties lay in their perception of the nature of the internal conflicts. According to William Rodgers, the Secretary of State for Transport:

The question [is] what do they do at a crucial time; do they bring down the government? Now, the assumption which Mr Callaghan would have made was that in the end my people are not going to bring down the government.¹¹

As a result of this assumption, Liberal Party support was also taken for granted. At the time of the 1977 Budget it was only six days after the Pact had been finalised and the Liberal Party was required to support the government in return for only a modification over petrol tax. Afterwards, as the government's negotiations with the TUC for the third stage of the policy of income restraint broke down, the Liberals supported Denis Healey's pay

policy while arguing that 'We will stay with it for as long as the Government resolve in the battle against inflation holds, but we remain with it for one purpose only—to bolster that resolve' (Michie and Hoggart 1978:166). Surprisingly, their support remained forthcoming although, later on, the Labour government nominated Harold Lever to investigate the problems of small businesses, without any credit being given to the Liberals who were pressing for special attention to the subject. Healey's refusal to accept the Liberal's principal demand over the Spring 1978 Budget regarding income tax cuts further demonstrated that the Liberal Party was subordinate to the Labour Party over the economic issue and was obviously at the raw end of an unequal exchange.

In addition, as Labour governments tended to implement the major and controversial issues at the beginning of their life-span, it was obvious that the Liberals did not have any of those controversial issues over which they could bring down the government. Indeed, prior to the Pact, substantial elements of the Social Contract—a range of policies formulated jointly by the Labour Party and the TUC in 1972 and 1973—were already implemented. For example, the Industrial Relations Act was repealed, the Employment Protection Act was introduced; improvements in pensions and other assistance were given to the retired and the disabled; child benefits were brought in; control of food prices and rents was established, and steps were taken to nationalise the shipbuilding and aircraft industries. The observation of Coats (1980:153) that the Pact was not the cause of the Labour Party's inability to pursue the more radical elements in its policy but was one important extra factor for Labour ministers to bear in mind, clearly confirms this view regarding the minor Liberal influence. Moreover, it seemed that Callaghan did not want to pursue the more radical aspects of Labour policies and, as previously stressed, the Pact had provided a convenient excuse.

The Liberal Party

From the beginning of the negotiations over the Pact, Liberal MPs insisted on PR for the European Election as a precondition to any formal alliance with the Labour Party. In addition, prior to the loss of the government's majority, the Labour Cabinet had accepted a version of the Finnish regional system of PR, which the Foreign Secretary, David Owen, had suggested for use in elections to the European Parliament. As Owen recalled:

It was a Cabinet decision. It was discussed twice in Cabinet. The first time I raised it as a possibility and then we took it away and came back with a paper on it, so, that it was a formal majority decision... It was a clear majority in the Cabinet, I mean, we didn't vote. Callaghan summed up and said that we agree... When I knew that these discussions [over the Pact] were going on... Jeremy Thorpe was then shadowing the Foreign Affairs, ...I did actually tell him that the Cabinet had decided that there would be PR... The attempt was to stiffen his arm on the issue.¹²

Debate in the Labour Party as to whether PR for the European Election should be introduced was due mainly to the fear that it might be the harbinger of a similar system for the British elections. The observation of Bernard Donoughue, head of the Policy Unit, that 'it was not an issue that the latter ever wished to raise to a high profile because it would have divided the party just as the EEC [issue]',¹³ gave rise to a substantial compromise. During the negotiations with the Liberals, Callaghan agreed to offer a choice of electoral systems, between the regional list system of PR and the 'first-past-the-post' system and promised to take account of the Liberals' views on the subject while giving a private assurance that he himself would vote for PR. By forming the Pact, therefore, the Labour Party was not committed to support a policy that was at variance with its preference.

There is, nevertheless, general agreement that for David Steel, '*obtaining governmental experience*' was a decisive preference. According to his political adviser, Richard Holme:

For Steel, the main price was not the conditions of the arrangement but the arrangement itself. For Steel, the price, the victory...was the arrangement that a marginal party had become part of the process of public policy determination, become more governmental... [For him], it seemed almost the ideal compromise that he could both get involved in government but not commit his party which [would] not have been willing to formal coalition.¹⁴

Consequently, a major part of the Pact dealt with the institutionalisation of Labour-Liberal regular contacts. A joint consultative committee which met regularly under the chairmanship of Michael Foot, the leader of the House of Commons, was set up. There had to be a meeting between the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Liberal Party's economic

spokesman before the Pact was finalised, to confirm that there was agreement upon an economic strategy based on a prices and incomes policy and reductions in personal taxation. Furthermore, regular consultation was supposed to take place between other Labour ministers and the appropriate Liberal spokesmen along with meetings between the Prime Minister and the Liberal leader as necessary. Finally, the terms of the agreement were to be published as a formal exchange of letters (Steel 1989).

Attention now turns to the immediate response of the Liberal Party to the Pact. At the outset, no intra-élite conflicts emerged within the party. The very few Liberals MPs who argued against the Pact (namely, Jo Grimond and David Penhaligon) agreed to act upon the majority decision. An appreciation of Steel's success in signing a Pact which had no commitment by Labour to legislate the issue of PR for the European Election requires a brief elaboration. Underlining Steel's ambitious agenda was the idea of a 'realignment of the left': this was demonstrated on at least three public occasions; at the end of June 1974 as Chief Whip; in May 1975 as a candidate for the party leadership and, finally, in September 1975 as party leader. On the last occasion, televised live, Steel argued:

We must be bold enough to deploy the coalition case positively. We must go all out to attack the other parties for wanting power exclusively to themselves no matter on how small a percentage of public support. If people want a more broadly based government they must vote Liberal to get it. And if they vote Liberal we must be ready to help provide it.
(Steel 1980:25)

Logically, the fact that the leadership election took place under a more representative system than the previous election provided Steel with wider support for his idea.¹⁵ The long process of preparing the Liberal Party for the 'realignment' further served to minimise disunity within the party. The issue of PR for the European elections and the views of the opponents to the 'realignment of the left' were thus totally subordinated to Steel's decisive preference of 'obtaining governmental experience'.

At the level of party organisation, however, élite-follower conflict emerged when party activists called a Special Assembly to discuss the renewal of the Pact. Despite the insistence of Liberal members on the importance of PR for the European Parliament, Steel refused to make it a point on which he was prepared to bring down the government. A party council which met in mid-

November 1977 passed a resolution demanding a special election. The Assembly was supposed to consider the future of the Pact and to discuss questions of electoral strategy. Additionally, in a meeting of the standing committee prior to the gathering of the Assembly, a direct challenge to Steel's alliance strategy was recorded. According to him, it was his worst ever meeting with the party Executive. Steel (1989) wrote in his diary:

An appalling meeting with the Executive which at one point is a shouting match. Several say the party is disintegrated, and I listen to worthy verbal essays about 'participating democracy' etc. Towards the end one member actually mentioned inflation. I leave angry and depressed.

(Steel 1989:139–40)

The dissatisfaction of Liberal Party members was successfully pacified later on. By threatening his own resignation, Steel had managed to persuade the party Executive to hold the Assembly as late as possible after the PR vote in the Commons, so that tempers had cooled. But most important of all was the fact that the Liberal activists were still a minority in the party. Hence, when the Assembly met, the silent majority wanted to reaffirm their loyalty by voting for Steel. In the end, Steel won by 1,727 votes to 520, and the Pact had been renewed.

Attention now turns to the Liberals' bargaining power during the Pact. As noted earlier, the Liberals had no choice other than to support the government in the pursuit of 'economic recovery'. Even when choice was possible, the party teams were not organised and staffed to handle complicated issues. A classic example of the 'weak' position of the Liberals is provided by the negotiations over the devolution issue. The Liberals had opposed using the guillotine on the Scotland and Wales Bill in order to secure two amendments to the Bill, namely, proportional representation and revenue-raising powers.¹⁶ For the former, the Liberals failed to get any concessions from the government; the Pact's negotiations between Steel and Callaghan revealed that there was no commitment from the PLP to support PR for the European elections. In the latter case, the government was adamant in refusing to make any concession on revenue-raising powers to Scotland and Wales. Given Labour's refusal to concede over these aspects, it was rather surprising that the Liberals then supported the guillotine motion for the Second Reading of the Bill.

As for the importance of these amendments for the Liberals, a question should be asked: Did the Liberals have a point at which

they were prepared to bring down the government? According to MP Russell Johnston, the answer was:

No. That made the whole negotiations very weak. I participated in the negotiation over the devolution issue. We had 17 meetings, John Smith and I. In the end, the problem was that although [the issue! was very important, nevertheless, there was nothing so important, ...that we would have been prepared to pull the plug because that would affect the main political reason for entering the Pact... [namely] inflation. And therefore we were in a very weak negotiating position.¹⁷

Furthermore, the Liberals lacked a researched policy paper on the issue, so they used a paper entitled '*Scotland and Wales Bill: Conditions for the Resurrection*' written by the Outer Circle Policy Unit. The author of the paper, Professor James Cornford, who took part in the negotiation over this issue, illustrated the relative weak position of the Liberals:

Russell Johnston and I went into negotiation with Joel Barnett, John Smith and 20 officials... At the end, Joel Barnett said; I cannot get this Bill [i.e. concerning revenue-raising powers] through my backbenchers. And Russell Johnston said; well, if they won't they won't, and he didn't even go outside and say what are we going to do about it. He just gave way.¹⁸

As a result, the Liberals conceded significantly on revenue-raising power.¹⁹ The only issue promoted by the Liberals to be found in the final version of the Bill was the provision for judicial review on matters of the competence of the Assemblies.

However, Steel's decisive preference of 'obtaining governmental experience', combined with the fact that the party was not forced to modify its legislative strategy following the elite-follower conflicts, calls into question any under-estimation of the Liberal Party's bargaining power. To understand the way in which David Steel gained a relatively high level of bargaining power over the decisive preference of 'obtaining governmental experience', it is necessary to appreciate the importance of the extensive consultation with Labour ministers and the successful mobilisation of the followers' dissatisfaction. At the heart of Steel's strategy were the electoral considerations of the 'realignment of the left'. In order to give credence to this idea, he had to obtain

governmental experience. Not surprisingly, the major part of the Pact dealt with the institutionalisation of Labour-Liberal contacts. The formation of a joint consultative committee, combined with the regular consultation between Labour ministers and Liberal MPs created an image of Liberal involvement in the day-to-day operation of the government. The fact that the terms of the agreement were published further contributed to this aim.

Perhaps one of the factors which advanced Steel's aim was that the alliance strategy of the Labour government was continuously challenged by Labour backbenchers through massive dissension in parliament. The government defeats, caused by members of the left-wing faction, gave a basic tactical advantage to the Liberal Party. Because of the frequent rebellions, Callaghan's Cabinet was not able to embrace economic issues fully without offending the left-wing faction. This strengthened the Liberal's image within the alliance:

Steel did not want to be associated with the left-wing of the Labour Party. Politically, the fact that the Labour left-wing voted against the government was an advantage because it positioned Steel as making a Labour government respond to him rather than respond to its own left-wing.²⁰

The Liberal's image and the intra-élite conflicts within the Labour Party were thus mutually reinforcing. The greater the extent of the conflicts associated with the left-wing in the Labour Party, the stronger was Steel's motivation to support the government in order to improve his party's positioning on the political map.

At this stage of the analysis a question concerning the collapse of the Pact should be asked. Given that both party leaders successfully pacified the internal dissatisfaction within their respective parties, why, eventually, did the Pact collapse? To answer this query, it is important to demonstrate how the personal relationships between Callaghan and Steel influenced the subsequent political experience of each party during the termination of the agreement. I refer, first of all, to the fact that both leaders co-ordinated their tactical moves concerning the election to come. Although the final date of the election was determined basically by the Government's defeat in the House of Commons in March 1979, it was in August 1978 that Callaghan decided he should not call a general election in the following autumn. As Bernard Donoughue recalled:

The most important discussion was the one in 1978 when they agreed to break-off the negotiation... In summer 1978, Callaghan advised them to break the Pact because we probably will have a general election in the Autumn and he said again, in fatherly way, to Steel, you must not come in to an election with us, you must have an independent electoral position, therefore you must get out of the Pact in advance of the election.²¹

For Steel, the end of the Pact over the preference of 'economic recovery' was in line with his decisive preference of 'obtaining governmental experience'. The Pact's collapse coincided with the period considered sufficient to establish the visible preference under-lining the formal contract between the partners, namely, 'economic recovery', as well as to obtain the invaluable experience of co-operation with the government. It is therefore reasonable to conclude that the Liberal Party possessed a relatively high level of bargaining power with regard to the preference of 'obtaining government experience', or at least, achieving such an electoral image.

CONCLUSIONS

Recent works concerning the impact of intra-party politics on coalition bargaining (Groennings 1968; Luebbert 1986; Laver and Shepsle 1990a, 1990b) have concentrated almost exclusively on the negative influences of party disunity and the party élites' strategy to cope with it (for example, through the allocation of portfolios). To fill this gap, an attempt has been made by Maor (1995a) to account for the variability in conflict manifestation and resolution as well as the modes of legislative behaviour based upon two explanatory variables, namely, the structural context within which intra-party politics takes place and the nature of the internal conflict.

The very simple model proposed by Maor implies a prediction about the impact of intra-party conflict of legislative and coalition bargaining: Everything else being equal, when intra-party conflict occurs, the strength of a party in the parliamentary bargaining arena (i.e. its relative bargaining power) lies in its organisational decentralisation. This is a relevant argument, for it has, I believe, a reasonable logic. It complements Maor's (1992b) study of intra-party conflicts and coalition bargaining in Denmark and Norway which concludes that centralised parties may avoid intra-party conflicts by forming legislative (i.e. informal, *ad hoc*) coalitions.

The validity of Maor's argument can be questioned, however, when applied to party systems which are significantly dominated by one party. In unipolar systems, especially when the dominant party is located at the median position, single-party minority governments are most likely to be formed (Laver and Schofield 1990). By negotiating each issue separately and on an *ad hoc* basis, such governments can in each case pick the least 'expensive' (i.e. in terms of the potential destabilising impact on the party) coalition partner available, thus, reducing the likelihood of internal conflicts. Even if they occur, there could be no focus to its activities since no (governmental) alternative is likely to be viable due to the format of the party system.

An additional idea which Maor's study raises is that there is a need for scholars of cabinet durability to concern themselves with party attributes (e.g. power distribution within the party, party structure, etc.). Cabinet durability has long been viewed as a critical indicator of coalition stability (Laver and Schofield 1990: 145). Several attributes of regime, the coalition and the bargaining environment, as well as 'critical events', have been held to affect cabinet stability. It was, however, Warwick's (1979) study of cabinet durability which suggested that approximately 50 per cent of the variance in cabinet duration is explained by the conjunction of the independent variables: cabinet majority status, number of governing parties, minimal winning cabinet status, and an index of ideological cleavage among cabinet actors. Thus, a large number of the above-mentioned attributes, which may enhance our understanding of coalition formation and portfolio allocation, fail to improve upon prediction of cabinet durability.

Maor's study suggests that 'party attributes' may shed some light on the durability of coalitions. One important reason for this is that decentralised parties were found to be relatively immunised against the negative influences of internal conflicts (i.e. in terms of the need of party élites to terminate coalition bargaining in order to pacify internal opposition). One could hypothesise therefore, that, everything else being equal, when intra-party conflict occurs, a legislative or executive coalition which involves decentralised parties is likely to last longer than an alliance which involves a centralised party. One could further examine a well-known approach of minority governments which suggests that 'everything else being equal, minority governments would prefer purely *ad hoc* coalitions' (Strom 1990b: 108). In light of Maor's study, one could question the need to avoid a formal accord under conditions of co-operation among decentralised parties.

Multi-party electoral competition

This chapter examines four accounts of multi-party electoral competition—Downs' (1957) rational choice approach, Przeworski and Sprague's (1986) class view, Kirchheimer's (1966a) 'catch-all' perspective, and Dunleavy and Ward's (1981) account of preference-shaping strategies.¹ These approaches cover the interplay between the strategies adopted by political parties trying to win elections, and voters' choices. The first three accounts focus on how factors external to the process of party competition impact on party strategy, and thus, on party differentiation. These approaches implicitly or explicitly assume that voters' preferences are exogenously fixed and cannot be changed by the process of party competition. Dunleavy and Ward's account, however, focuses on how factors internal to the process of party competition can produce and sustain party differentiation. Their approach is based on the premise that parties and candidates can exploit state power in order to shift the aggregate distribution of preferences in the electorate. The empirical section shows that none of the above-mentioned accounts of party competition can adequately explain party strategies in the British context during the post-1945 period, although some could be successfully applied in certain periods.

COMPARATIVE APPROACHES OF INTER-PARTY COMPETITION

Accommodating voters' preferences

This section briefly examines various efforts to conceptualise party competition working from the premise that voters' preferences are exogenously fixed and cannot be changed by the process of party competition. In addition, the section discusses attempts to evade the problems arising from existing explanations. For each

approach it explores its basic assumptions; how it interprets electoral competition; its account of party strategies; and its expectations about the overall party system. The starting point is Down's (1957) *An Economic Theory of Democracy* which proposes a rational-choice model of two-party competition. For those who are not familiar with rational-choice accounts, a brief explanation may be useful.

A rational-choice approach appeals to three distinct elements in a choice situation. The first element is the feasible set, that is, the set of all courses of action which satisfy various logical, physical and economic constraints. The second is a set of beliefs about the causal structure of the situation, which determines what courses of action will lead to what outcomes. The third is a subjective ranking of the feasible alternatives, often derived from a ranking of the outcomes to which they are expected to lead. To act rationally, then, simply means to choose the highest-ranked element in the feasible set.

A common feature exhibited by theories of voting and party competition which share the broad rational-choice rubric is that all recognise two types of actors: (i) *parties*, conceived of as unified teams of leaders concerned solely with the winning of office through elections; and (ii) *electors*, who wish to advance their political and economic ends. In a democracy, voters vote for the party closest to their personal stance on key issues, and leaders alter their positions in the electoral space in order to attract the maximum number of votes. One consequence of leaders and voters following their own interests will be that parties will agree to any policy strongly favoured by the majority of electors. Further, because leaders follow voters' interests, they tend to be responsible and reliable in implementing their electoral promises. They also tend to be consistent in policy and ideology unless forced by defeat to adapt to the preferences of the new majority.

Downs

Downs' (1957) spatial model of electoral competition is essentially Hotelling's (1929) spatial model of duopolistic competition as applied to politics. For this reason the latter is itself worthy of a brief exploration. Imagine a competition between two shops, choosing where to locate along a High Street. Consumers are assumed to be uniformly distributed along the High Street, each buying specific items per time period at a fixed price. In addition to the fixed price, each consumer pays a transportation cost which is dependent on the distance between the consumer's home and

the shop. From the consumers' perspective, this transportation cost, it is presumed, is the only thing that distinguishes between the two shops. No consumer has any preference for either shop except on the grounds of price plus transportation cost (Hotelling 1929:45). Let us further assume that each shop's profit is a function of the number of items it sells. The latter, in turn, depends upon the number of consumers to whom the shop is closest. Under these conditions, Hotelling sought to determine where, in equilibrium, the shops would locate.

Hotelling's most famous proposition is the median consumer convergence. In two-firm competition, the pressure of competition pushes firms to compete centripetally, that is, to locate at the middle point of the High Street. This point is defined as the position with exactly as many consumers living on the right of one as there are consumers living to the left of the other. This happens because centripetal competition is rewarding: converging on the median consumer's preferences maximises the pool of customers which either firm in a competition may hope to capture. Moving away from this point implies ceding control of large segments to the rival firm. Bunching up close to each other implies maintaining a minimal product differential. This tendency emphasises the mode of competition under Hotelling's conditions.

Transferring to the political arena, parties or candidates could be seen as behaving analogously to firms, and voters in much the same way as consumers. Party competition could thus be seen as a political market where leaders compete to sell policies to voters. This analogy enables Downs to formulate a model of electoral competition between two parties. Suppose that the majority of voters have a clearly preferable alternative over a given policy dimension, such as the share of public expenditure in national income. In other words, there is one most preferred alternative while all others are less attractive. Suppose also that voters—following the rationality principle—will vote for the alternative closest to the most preferred one. In this case, majority voting will select the policy alternative that is most preferred by the median voter (i.e. the alternative located at the median point of the frequency distribution of most preferred alternatives. At this point at least 50 per cent of the other voters prefer the same or a smaller expenditure share and at least 50 per cent the same or a higher share). Parties will therefore be pushed towards the middle of the political spectrum, choosing policies in line with the preferences of the median voter. Each political party in a system will, therefore, be ideologically mobile and will move to the position, over time, which maximises votes.

Figure 7.1 demonstrates Downs' idea. The frequency curve constructed, shows, for any point on the dimension, how many voters have that point as their most preferred policy position, and how many are more or less 'left or right' wing. It shows also the party's location on the same policy dimension. It follows from Downs' assumptions that if voters' preferences and party positions can be reduced to a simple spatial model, we can predict that, to maximise one's utility, one votes for the party nearest one's own position. This creates a link, vital to any democratic theory, between a party's promises and its performance. From this follows the most vital conclusion of Downs' theory. A unimodal distribution of voter opinion on the dimension that represents political conflict will produce two parties which converge in their policies towards the centre, where the mass of voters lie, thus maintaining minimal party differentiation.

A bimodal distribution, shown in Figure 7.2, will also produce a two-party system, but the parties in this case are viewed as having little inducement to move away from the mass of their extremist supporters. Their policies will therefore be divergent, allowing for a drastic policy change with a change in party control of government. Depending on the relative size of the two modes, the system will be competitive or will enshrine the dominance of one party. Finally, where the underlying distribution of preferences has many modes—as shown in Figure 7.3—a multi-party system is expected to ensue. In this case, parties will be located at each mode of the distribution and coalition governments will be the dominant mode of parliamentary competition.

Doubts about the logic of Downs' arguments focus on both 'party strategy' and 'voter behaviour'. Regarding the former, Downs implicitly assumed that parties cannot pass each other on a unidimensional policy continuum (no leap-frogging) as they wish to maintain their reliability and responsibility. This is unconvincing since there is no logical or empirical reason why parties should allow a possible large move from the wings to the centre yet prevent a much smaller move at the centre past the other party (Budge and Farlie 1977). Barry (1970) has further shown that if party leap-frogging is prohibited, there can be no convergence of two parties on the centre of a unimodal distribution of electoral preferences. If one party could not pass the other, there would be an incentive for its rival to position itself on the near side of the central mode and thus ensure itself a permanent majority. In cases of multi-party systems (or a bi-modal two-party system for that matter), the location of parties can be equally questioned. Why should parties in such cases stay at their

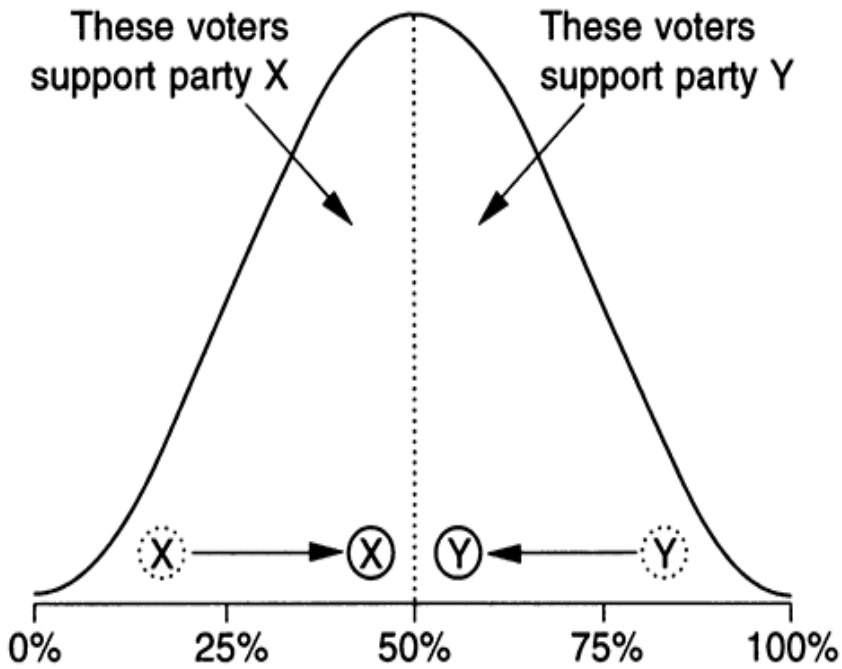


Figure 7.1 Two-party competition over one dimensional issue with single peaked voter preference profile

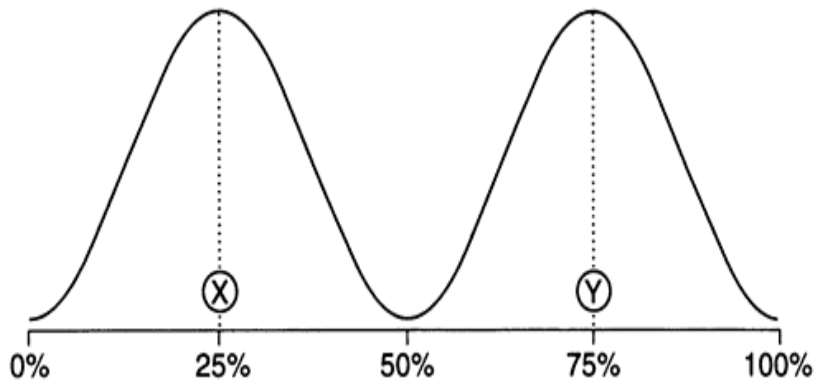


Figure 7.2 Two-party competition over one dimensional issue with double peaked voter preference profile

respective positions, when by moving towards the middle they would at least gain as many votes from the centre as they lost to their flanks, and might pick up more? According to Barry, there seems no reason why they should maintain their current positions except as a response to factors outside Down's assumptions, such as caution, inertia or ideological commitment.

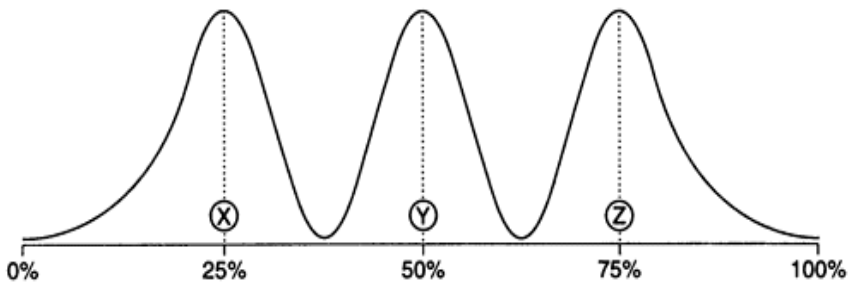


Figure 7.3 Party competition over one dimensional issue with triple peaked voter preference profile

Downs' (1957:133) assumption concerning the location of parties over a unidimensional continuum is problematic when incorporated into a model which explicitly proposes that parties take up positions on a large number of different issue dimensions and maintain some differential on even the least salient of these in order to retain their own supporters. It is very difficult to see how this difference could be reflected when one aggregates the different issue dimensions into the final unidimensional representation which Downs assumes to be possible, if this representation consists of only a few ordinal points (Budge and Farlie 1977).

Three fundamental problems for Downs' account of voting behaviour lie in the weakness of his explanations as to: (i) why anyone bothers to vote; (ii) how voters come to have the views they have; and (iii) how shifts of public opinion take place. In the first case Downs argued that electors might vote out of a concern to maintain the health of their democratic system. However, if parties adopt almost identical positions, citizens as a whole will confront decreasing incentives to turn out and vote since whichever party wins almost the same policies will be implemented, i.e. citizens get identical results whether or not they vote. In addition, a single voter's decision to vote is very unlikely to affect the overall vitality of democracy. However large someone's interest in preserving democracy, it too must be discounted by the miniscule likelihood that their own vote will make any difference (Barry 1970).

Regarding the structure of voter opinion, Downs explicitly argued that individual and voter preferences could be taken as objective data and are not capable of being altered by institutions, actors or by the decision-making process itself:

[A major] problem is rooted in the very concept of a voter's changing his mind about how to vote... Every voter makes his voting decisions by comparing various real and hypothetical streams of utility income. To decide what impact each government act has upon his [utility] income, he appraises it as good or bad in the light of his own view of 'the good society'. This procedure is rational because every citizen in our model views government as a means to the achievement of the good society as he sees it.

Thus a man's evaluation of each party depends ultimately upon (1) the information he has about its policies and (2) the relation between those of its policies he knows about and his own conception of the good society. Once a voter has even provisionally decided how to vote, he can be persuaded to change his mind only if one of these two factors is altered. To simplify the analysis, we assume that every citizen has a fixed conception of the good society and has already related it to his knowledge of party policies in a consistent manner. Therefore only new information can persuade him to change his mind.

In essence, we are assuming that citizens' political tastes are fixed... In fact, fixed political tastes seem far more plausible to us than fixed consumption tastes, which are usually assumed in [micro-economic] demand studies.

(Downs 1957:46-7)

By viewing voter preferences (and the distribution of voters' views) as being fixed outside the choice process being analysed Downs denies any longer-term variation as well as medium-to-short-term fluctuation due to external events, intra-societal changes (i.e. class-structure, social mobility, living standards, better education, changing gender roles, racial attitudes, etc.) and the process of party competition. For Downs, however, starting from this view was not a significant problem as it enabled substantive empirical hypotheses to be deduced from these assumptions and then submitted to an analysis by conventional methods.

Przeworski and Sprague

To account for how people develop their preferences and act upon them, consider the variables which strategic class theorists have identified: (i) the nature of the competitive electoral configuration into which a socialist party is forced; (ii) its organisational structure and linkages to interest groups; and (iii) the ideological

discourse that shapes its political reputation among core constituencies and the electorate at large. Social theorists (e.g. Karl Marx, Max Weber and Ralf Dahrendorf) have tried to throw light on whether the concept of class plays a strategic role in providing a linkage between social structure and politics. Perhaps the most analytically incisive work concerning party strategy and class formation was undertaken by Przeworski and Sprague (1986) who developed a theory of class formation based on the appeals of politicians, and analysed the strategic options open to rational calculating politicians in socialist parties.

Przeworski and Sprague assume class to be a result of a party's class strategy rather than an objective premise of politics. In other words, left parties are actively engaged in a process which provides voters with cues that sustain class identification. The logic behind this conception is the recognition that the causal path that links individual preferences to individual behaviour passes through the totality of social relations. As Gramsci (1971: 193) argues, 'The counting of "votes" is the final ceremony of a long process...'. This is a process of forging collective identity and group loyalty as well as mobilising commitments to future projects which shape the image of society. Such a process determines whether class or cross-class identities (i.e. those which are based on religion, ethnicity or race) count in the electoral process.

Socialist parties face a critical dilemma which stems from the need to counterbalance effective electoral participation with their relationship with the working class. This dilemma assumes an electoral tradeoff: socialist parties cannot in the long run extend their electoral support beyond the working class and simultaneously mobilise workers.² A strategy which seeks the backing of non-workers creates difficulties in recruiting and sustaining the support of workers, and electoral gains among non-workers will be accompanied by losses among the proletariat. The electoral trade-off occurs because a strategy to broaden party appeal undermines the salience of class as a determinant of the voting behaviour of workers.

The severity of the electoral trade-off between class and cross-class strategies varies from country to country. Three conditions exacerbate trade-offs for socialist and social democratic parties. First, it is suggested that wherever such parties compete with a large communist party to which workers could turn when the former embark on a cross-class strategy, the trade-off is extremely steep. A similar trend is suggested wherever some political parties appeal to workers on the basis of particularistic appeals other than class, i.e. of a religious or ethnic nature. Finally, it is

proposed that institutional arrangements that link working-class parties closely to centralised trade unions with a large working-class membership reduce trade-offs. Working-class parties which are linked to weak, divided and independent unions face steep trade-offs.³

The trade-off between maximising the working-class vote (i.e. by facilitating class appeals), and maximising overall electoral support (i.e. by building cross-class alliances) limits the choices available to socialist parties.⁴ The socialist vote, according to Przeworski and Sprague (1986), has stagnated (after an initial burst of growth) because the choices faced by socialist parties have been constrained. This was done either by trade unions and party activists preventing party leaders from accommodating voters' preferences, or by party leaders adopting short-term tactics due to the frequency of elections and the brevity of their tenure. Once parties have chosen an appeal to (particularist) working-class interests over a period of years, they become captives of their own historical strategies; unable to respond to changes in voters' preferences resulting from societal and institutional changes.

Critics of Przeworski and Sprague's (1986) work focus on the assumptions underlying their model, and their treatment of class appeal and preference formation. Regarding the former, two important assumptions are made by the authors: (i) that there is a clear alternative between strategic stances which appeal to workers and those appealing to allies (e.g. white collar workers, civil servants); and (ii) that the class composition of a party's support is an adequate reflection of its strategic stance. According to Kitschelt (1992:11), none of these assumptions is theoretically or empirically justified in the study. The dramatic post-war changes of occupational structures, standards of living, social security, industrial structure and work experience have changed the composition of party support, in a way which convinces leaders of once working- and middle-class parties to blur their programmatic differences. In some instances (for example, the British Labour Party under Neil Kinnock), the decision to widen a party's ideological appeal was taken before a corresponding organisational change—aimed at diluting the extremist element in the party base—had been initiated. This has led to inconsistencies between the Labour leadership's policies and the views of the rank-and-file. In addition, given the context of the dramatic post-war changes it is plausible to challenge Przeworski and Sprague's assumption that factors determining the sharpness of the electoral trade-offs encountered by left-wing or socialist parties (i.e. divisions between communists and socialists, cross-class

appeals by bourgeois parties, and labour corporatism) remain the same over many decades. A related objection is to Przeworski and Sprague's emphasis on the restricted appeal of socialist parties (i.e. 'workerist' strategy) whereas, in practice, these parties appealed to the electorate on the basis of universalistic policies to promote economic security and minimum standards of living for all.⁵

A further problem with Przeworski and Sprague's analysis is the restricted definition of workers as 'manual wage earners in mining, manufacturing, construction, transport and agriculture and their inactive household members' (Przeworski and Sprague 1986:35), excluding manual workers in 'unproductive' sectors and white collar employees. This highly restrictive definition of class raises an inevitable question which undermines their claim, namely, if parties shape classes, why would socialist politicians want to forge classness around the narrow occupational categories covered by the authors' definition of workers? (Kitschelt 1992).

The discussion so far indicates that it is still worth searching for theoretical concepts that deliver what 'class' has failed to provide: a bridge between social structure and political action that allows us to examine the interaction between the spheres. In the next section I will discuss alternatives to the above approach that propose sociological and political reasoning for party adaptation and mechanisms for shaping actors' political predispositions.

Kirchheimer

Amongst the key characteristics which have varied with time have been the ways in which parties appeal to voters and the link between citizens and governments. Otto Kirchheimer (1964, 1966a, 1966b) sought to attribute changes in the above characteristics in the late 1950s and 1960s to the erosion of traditional social boundaries— which implied a weakening of formerly highly distinctive identities —as well as to economic growth and the increased importance of the welfare state. Complementing these trends was the development of the mass media. Party leaders began to enjoy a capability to appeal to the electorate at large, an electorate made up of voters who were learning to behave more like consumers than active participants. These developments led to the transformation of parties from the 'mass integration' type to what Kirchheimer called the 'catch-all' type.

Contrasts between the two party types are related to the different ways they appeal to voters, and the functions they fulfil. Mass

integration parties promote a 'workerist' strategy, and behave as an electoral pressure group of a specific class. By contrast, catch-all parties appeal to a wider audience and aim at immediate electoral success. They formulate programmes which are no longer divisive or partisan, but which can claim to serve the interest of almost all the electorate. Catch-all parties adapt to the change in social structure by de-emphasising ideology in favour of a stress on leaders, relatively innocuous valence issues, and appeals for the support of interest groups. As to the functions the different party types fulfil, mass integration parties perform integrative and expressive functions, while catch-all parties, preoccupied with gaining office and governing, are more involved in recruitment of leaders and the legitimization of authority.

Above all, the catch-all party is a competitive phenomenon: once it is firmly established, its rivals have to follow suit or go to the wall. A key outcome of this process is the prevalence of centripetal over centrifugal forces. The characteristic trend of party systems affected by this process is a persistent shift of votes from one or both of the extreme ends towards the centre. This, in turn, gives weight to one direction of electoral competition, the centripetal one. As a result, students of politics start witnessing a process—similar to the one presented in the Downsian model—in which parties accommodate themselves to the preferences of the electorate at large, rather than to specific sectors of the electorate.

The post-1945 transformation of the West German party system provides a classic illustration of the catch-all process at work. The emergence of Christian Democracy since 1945, in the form of the German Christian Democratic Union (CDU), was an entirely new phenomenon for Germany. Instead of insisting on its ideological purity and seeking a restricted and assured sectional support, the CDU began competing with a diluted Christian Democratic appeal addressing a multiplicity of social claims. It also opened up its organisation in order to attract members of all societal sectors, as it sought to identify with all of German society. Not surprisingly, the CDU dominated the German party system during the 1950s, gaining around 45 and 50 per cent of the vote in the general elections of 1953 and 1957, respectively.

The German Social Democratic Party (SPD) was faced with a novel dilemma; it had either to maintain its traditional outlook—a socialist ideology aimed at, and restricted to, the working class—or adopt a strategy similar to that of the CDU. At first it adopted the ideological alternative. But throughout the 1950s the CDU formula proved highly successful in electoral terms, and the SPD felt itself sentenced to permanent opposition. Quite deliberately

the party then set out to follow the CDU model of the 'people's party' (i.e. large, moderate and flexible parties which are located either on the centre-left or the centre-right of the spectrum). At a special conference in Bad Godesberg in 1959, a new programme was formulated. The programme totally ignored Marx and accepted the principle of private ownership in so far as it did not hinder the creation of a just social order. The effect, in electoral terms, was almost immediate; the SPD's share of the vote rose from around 31 per cent in 1957, to 39 per cent in 1965, and 45 per cent in 1972. Thus, the West German party system became dominated by two major parties. As Smith (1986:90) put it: 'The logic of the victorious catch-all party was a catch-all party system.'

The emergence of catch-all parties in the West European party systems did not imply a disappearance of mass integration parties. It was only existing parties of mass integration that were subject to change, and where catch-all parties emerged—for instance, following regime discontinuity in Germany and Italy—they drew heavily on pre-existing party and social tradition. In other words, the new-type parties were still overwhelmingly reliant on the passive support of traditional social groups. This support was forthcoming despite changing party orientations, and so there was no penalty to be paid in also turning to the wider electoral stage and taking in additional support (Smith 1989b).

The approaches of Kirchheimer (1966a) and Downs (1957) converge in that both accept the law of the 'political market' and the connection between this and party response using preference-accommodating strategies. Thus, a party's choice of policies is based on an evaluation of voters' preferences which are thought to be 'intrinsic', i.e. determined by factors which are assumed to be exogenous to the process of party competition. Parties' electoral strategies are designed in response to changes in electoral tastes brought about by various economic, social, or other environmental factors. Vote maximisation puts pressures on parties to accommodate voters' preferences but also act as electoral agencies adopting 'catch-all' strategies to broaden their ideological appeal. In other words, if voters' preferences are exogenously fixed and cannot be shaped by the process of party competition, then party leaders must widen their ideological appeal.

In the case of a two-party system, parties make their policy stances accord as closely as possible with the preferences of the majority of voters. Extensive polling research enables major parties to isolate the issues relevant to voters, and this knowledge in turn affects the parties' policy stances. For Downs, the success

of parties in two-party systems lies in this mechanism for accommodating voters' preferences. However, for Kirchheimer the secret for the success of the people's party lies in the 'passive' support of traditional social groups combined with modern methods of campaigning and access to the technology of mass communication.⁶

Shaping voters' preferences

A fundamental shortcoming arises in each of the above accounts. All three focus on how factors external to the process of party competition impact on party strategy, and thus, on party differentiation. These approaches implicitly or explicitly assume that voters' preferences are exogenously fixed and cannot be changed by the process of party competition. To understand how factors internal to the process of party competition can produce and sustain party differentiation requires an appreciation of two aspects. First, the need of governments to operate when there is no determined or transitive preference ordering in the electorate as a whole to any specific policy stance. Second, the view of parties as strategic actors, being able to manipulate voters' preferences and political institutions and turn them into a component of competitive party behaviour.

To explain the first aspect, consider the following:

<i>Preference</i>	<i>Voter</i>		
	<i>A</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>C</i>
First	Tax cuts	Education	Health care
Second	Education	Health care	Tax cuts
Third	Health care	Tax cuts	Education

This is a situation of cyclical majorities wherein none of the options receives a clear majority over the alternatives. In other words, any alternative chosen by the government can be defeated in a paired election by other alternatives. If the government decides to implement tax cuts, both voters B and C prefer health care. If the government decides to implement health care, both voters A and B prefer education. If the government picks education, both voters A and C would support an opposition which picks tax cuts. Thus, according to Downs (1957):

As long as the government must commit itself first, the opposition can choose some other alternative, match the

government's program on all other issues so as to narrow the election to this one, and defeat the incumbents—no matter what alternative the incumbents choose!

Since government faces more than two alternative policies in almost every decision, we may assume *a priori* that it encounters this dilemma at least once during every election period. Any other conclusion requires an extreme degree of consensus among voters on every detail of every issue—a condition we believe unlikely... Therefore, once elected, a government has no reason to follow the majority principle on any issue. It knows that if a single instance of [a cyclical majority] is encountered, no matter how trivial, it will lose to the opposition. Since this is overwhelmingly likely, the government will act according to some rule other than the majority principle, such as immediate material gain for its members. [Thus the] hypothesis that government acts so as to maximise votes seems to lead to its own abandonment.

(Downs 1957:61–2)

This bias against incumbency, inherent in the pure preference-accommodating strategy of party competition, may naturally lead parties to pursue an ambiguous strategy and promote uncertainty among the electorate over issues for which no sizeable block of opinion can be identified. However, in such cases the opposition is relatively advantaged: the less voters expect any ideological gap between the parties to translate into policy differences, the more an opposition is favoured (Enelow and Hinich 1982). These considerations challenge the emphasis of spatial models on convergence upon an equilibrium position close to the median voter in two-party systems, and create a less determinate process of competition.

Regarding the view of parties as strategic actors, although Kirchheimer's (1966a) convergence thesis was essentially correct (Smith 1989a:159) it was based on the premise that parties should be considered to be adaptive actors. Once we accept that parties have the ability to adapt in order to cope with changing circumstances, they should be seen as 'self-regarding entities', quite apart from their stated objectives, programme and ideology. This view ignores, however, the strategic aspect of party activity. The special position parties occupy in the political system—being able to manipulate voter preferences and political institutions and turn them to a component of competitive party behaviour (Dunleavy 1991, Shepsle 1989)—enables them to initiate change as well as to alter its direction to their own advantage. In this light, voters'

preferences and institutions are not considered simply inherited constraints, but possible objects of party activity. Given such a view, parties ought to be considered as strategic actors; ones which can shape rather than simply accommodate voters' preferences.

How can governments change the aggregate distribution of voters' preferences? This issue is addressed by Dunleavy and Ward's (1981) study based on an analysis of what it is that a party gains from winning an election. I do not intend to repeat the benefits which accrue to governmental parties, as they have already been presented in Katz and Mair's (1995) discussion on 'cartel' parties (see [Chapter 3](#)). I turn my attention instead to a brief listing of strategies aimed at shaping voters' preferences suggested by Dunleavy and Ward, which are later analysed with respect to the British experience.

According to Dunleavy and Ward, governmental parties can shape voters' preferences by executing the following strategies. First, partisan social engineering: when voting behaviour is closely linked to electors' social position, the incumbent party can use state power to try to produce favourable changes in the social structure by facilitating growth of geographical or functional areas where its support is concentrated. Second, adjusting social relativities: the incumbent party may intervene to enhance the relative social and economic positions of its supporters, letting them feel better off by comparison with groups or individuals who support rival parties. Third, context management: the governmental party may intervene to manipulate the objective situation of the polity as a whole to produce favourable changes in public opinion—mainly through foreign policy decisions. Fourth, institutional manipulation: the party of government may in some situations alter the 'rules of the game' which structure party competition.

How can oppositions shape preferences? Three mechanisms enable major parties with the potential to win office to reshape voters' preferences by using their own resources of legitimacy or influence. First, capitalising on social tensions: the main opposition parties can maintain or aggravate social tensions in their society which may produce a favourable change in public opinion. Second, joint institutional manipulation: main contenders for office may engage in consultation or legislation with other parties over electoral arrangements which discriminate against potential rivals. Third, agenda setting: opposition parties can reshape voters' preferences because of their control over the political agenda.

The format and operations of the party system determine how easily party leaders can implement preference-accommodating strategies, and hence to what degree preference-shaping strategies become attractive. Moreover, the different constitutional context within which party competition takes place determines how feasible it is for party leaders to effectively exploit state power for partisan advantage. The Westminster-model constitutions and party systems of Britain and other Commonwealth countries—that is, one which is characterised by a centralised unitary state with weak sub-national governments, an uncodified constitution, a parliamentary rather than presidential system of government, weak separation of powers and a non-PR electoral system—embody multiple pressures which make preference-shaping strategies attractive for party leaders and relatively easy to implement. One party in power can easily exploit access to the mass media, state subventions and control over the ‘rules of the game’ for partisan advantage.

By contrast, in Germany and the United States multiple factors seem to impel political parties and candidates towards accommodating voters’ preferences. The decentralisation of state power handicaps governments which try to change preferences, for here opposition parties normally control sub-national governments which they can use in countervailing ways. General constitutional constraints—such as judicial review, a bill of rights and restrictions on the politicised use of power—also limit the scope of state-power exploitation. An effective separation of legislative and executive powers implies that the two branches of government can be controlled by different parties. Also electoral systems which assign a high priority to achieving proportionality between votes and seats tend to generate multi-party systems, which reduce the feasibility and attractiveness of shaping strategies.

By focusing upon the main approaches of multi-party competition this discussion risks being contaminated by theoretical abstraction—offering over-simplistic images of electoral competition. To counter-balance such a state of affairs, the next section provides an empirical examination of the above approaches—offering a more realistic and practical view of the topic.

INTER-PARTY COMPETITION IN BRITAIN, 1945–95

This section examines the direction of party competition in the British polity between 1945–95 by applying some of the approaches discussed so far. It describes the premises underlying the centripetal mode of competition prevalent between 1945–79, the centrifugal mode between 1979–91, and the evolution of centripetal tendencies during the 1992–5 period. Throughout this section it refers to the term ‘consensus’ which implies, in its stronger sense, a set of common assumptions and a continuity between the policies pursued by both the main parties when they were in power.

Centripetal competition: 1945–79

Downs’ model applied best from 1945 until the late 1970s—a period which is often described as the ‘post-war consensus’. During this period, the British party system was underpinned by a large measure of agreement; it was largely recognised that what united the two parties was much more important than what divided them (Kavanagh and Morris 1994). Although major differences between the policies espoused by the radical elements within each party existed, when the parties were in power they were dominated by moderates for whom continuity and gradual change were more important than major policy departures. The consensus, which was based upon a certain kind of social and economic stability, is academically described as a social democratic one, and is often referred to as the ‘Butskellite’ consensus. ‘Butskellism’ was coined in the 1950s to illustrate the close similarity between the views of R.A. Butler, the intellectual leader of the Conservatives, and Hugh Gaitskell, Labour leader from 1955 to 1963.

The consensus hypothesis was supported by McKenzie’s (1964) study of the internal structure of the Conservative and Labour parties, and Rose’s (1980) analysis of the parties’ policies. The former argued that the differences between these parties were contained by the demands of government and the need to adhere to the consensual views of the crucial floating voter. Rose suggested that in crucial areas of the economy, major developments were not much influenced by changes in government; whether we examine inputs (matters within the government’s control, such as the level of public expenditure and public sector borrowing) or economic outcomes only partly under

government control (such as inflation, unemployment and economic growth). Instead, it is non-partisan factors (mainly long-term secular trends) which influence the direction of the economy, not party policy. Moreover, the study concluded that party politics were consensual and not adversarial in character for three reasons: the electorate tended to agree on major issues; parties in government moderated their ideological preferences for fear of what their opponents might do when they came to power; and finally, new governments faced old problems with old advice and the same kind of restraint. Adversarialism, Rose concludes, was largely rhetorical and not real.⁷

The genesis of the post-war consensus is found in the war years, 1939–45 and before, as the economic slump and the rise of mass unemployment highlighted the shortcomings of the *laissez-faire* approach to social and economic policy (i.e. one that insisted that government involvement should be minimal or non-existent). The gradual acceptance that the scope of government should grow if British society was to be efficient, cohesive and stable was facilitated by numerous factors: a six-year war against Germany and its allies which united the country and brought about a desire for a new beginning; a coalition government during 1940–5 which had fostered social and intellectual links between Labour and Conservatives; the success of the government's tightly controlled war economy which provided support for the case for a planned economy; the enthusiastic co-operation of the government with the trade unions which proved vital to the success in the war and established strong claims for regular post-war consultation and, finally, the national consensus on the future development of the social services following the *Report on Social Insurance and Allied Services* in 1942.⁸

The alternative to the *laissez-faire* approach to social and economic policy was elaborated in Keynes's seminal study, the *General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money* (1947). Keynes argued that reducing public spending, raising taxation and interest rates and the general level of activity in the economy merely exacerbated economic recession by crippling demand even further. Based on the belief that full employment is an economic as well a moral imperative, Keynes proposed that the proper response to rising unemployment was reflation or expansion—stimulating demand for products by raising government expenditure and increasing opportunities for private individuals to borrow and spend money, the overall effect being to rejuvenate economic activity and growth. The key feature of Keynes's theory was, thus, high public spending. This prescription implied a much

more interventionist role for government economic policy. Government officials would be required to engage in economic planning; manipulating demand through a mixture of policies related to taxation, borrowing and spending. This 'demand management' may overlap into other areas, such as the level of income. Although implicit in Keynes' writings, the health of the economy is related to the rate of increase in wages, and thus, should be regulated by governments. Overall, economic planning, according to Keynes, required government to incorporate and accommodate the major interest groups (such as trade unions and employers' associations) into the decision-making process.

By 1945, all the ingredients for a new widely-supported consensus were present. Indeed, economic policy convergence especially from the early 1950s until the 1970s covered four broad areas of political thought: (i) an expansive role for government in the implementation of macro-economic policies for the securing of full employment; (ii) a consensus about the appropriate 'mix' of private and public ownership of resources; (iii) a guaranteed provision of welfare based upon objective needs; and (iv) a continued acceptance of the traditional features of the constitution, such as, the electoral system, the sovereignty of parliament and collective and individual responsibility of ministers under the Cabinet system.⁹ The Labour and the Conservative parties also recognised the necessity of incorporating sectional interest groups, especially trade unions, into the political process; they were to become heavily involved in 'collective bargaining' with government and the business federation. Overall, the post-1945 consensus provides a copy-book illustration of a 'catch-all' outcome.

Post-war consensus, however, was accompanied by sometimes fierce disagreements and policy shifts regarding the application and implications of the Keynes' theory. To account for these trends, consider Robertson's (1976) analysis of party manoeuvring in the British polity which derived from the modifications imposed on Downsian reasoning. Robertson's study, which comes close to a working rational-choice representation of real election processes, explores the strategies of the Conservative and the Labour parties by coding every commitment in their manifesto documents from 1924 to 1966. He argued that election results should not be interpreted as consequences of a party's stances presented in its manifesto, but should instead be read as evidence of the party's popular support. The reason for this is that once the party élite perceive electoral success at hand they may decide to accommodate their members' preferences rather than

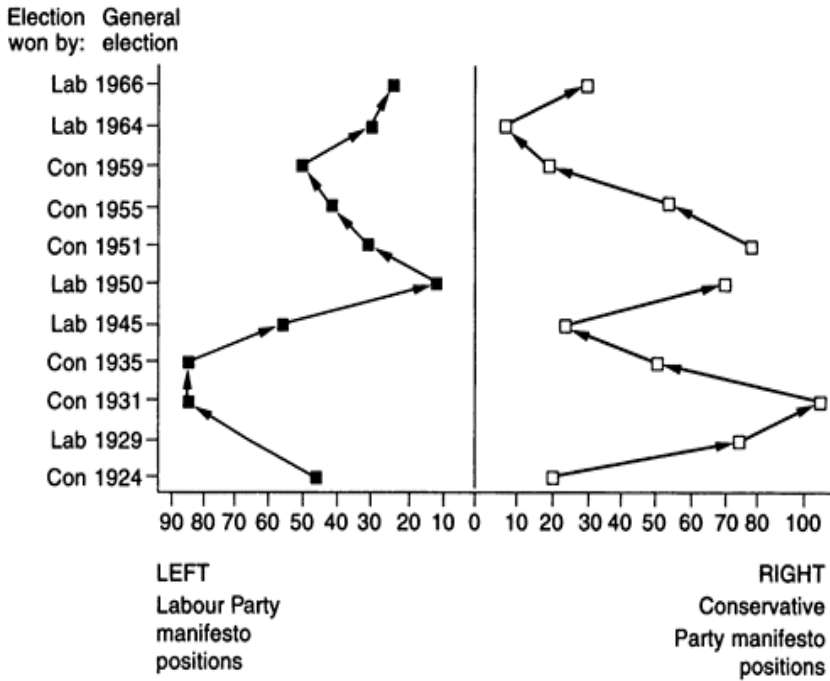


Figure 7.4 Robertson's map of how British parties' policy positions changed, 1924-66

Source: Robertson (1976:98)

their voters, that is, they may adopt non-competitive policies at the national level (i.e. in the manifesto). The analysis thus tries to explore the different strategies pursued by parties which enjoy high as well as low levels of popular support.

As Figure 7.4 indicates, Robertson successfully shows that the Conservative Party put forward more extremist policies at times when they were performing well, while Labour's electoral success corresponded to the party's adoption of moderate manifesto positions. Specifically, the Conservative Party, it could be argued, had had its maximum loyal vote since the beginning of the period, while Labour had far fewer committed voters since it only began campaigning in 1918. Consequently, the latter party had to develop a strategically competitive position in order to be able to compete effectively with an already competitive party.

What this suggests is that electoral success has affected the two parties in opposite ways. Labour could gain a majority position

only by moving towards the median voter position on the electorate's aggregate distribution of preferences. Conservatives, on the other hand, could rely on traditional support, adopting a more extremist stance without offending their supporters. As the party was sure of winning, its leaders were able to accommodate the preferences of the party members and activists rather than accommodate the wishes of the majority of voters.

These findings could be explained by using a modified Downsian account in which the rationality of political actors is maintained, yet, important modifications are introduced. First, party members whose aim is to secure the implementation of party policy are introduced into the model. Second, leaders are considered as a non-homogeneous group, thus, national leaders and constituency candidates are viewed as two different units of analysis. Third, electors do have aims which are related to the basic values rooted in party inertia. If party positions do not change so drastically as to affect their basic aims, they will not be willing to incur the cost of calculating and comparing policy positions of rival parties.

From these modifications one derives an overall view of party leaders competing even if they adopt non-competitive policies at national level. Once they perform well and are sure of winning, and given electors guided by party inertia, they could initiate centrifugal moves, i.e. accommodating the preferences of their core constituents and active members. This could be interpreted as a long-term initiative to build up a party's membership and a loyal vote—behaviour witnessed by the Conservative Party over the fifty-odd years covered in Robertson's research.

An important assumption underlying Robertson's finding relates to the exogenously-fixed preferences held by the voters. The defensibility of his argument, thus, derives from a static distribution of voters' preferences. Yet, with the severe economic recession of the 1930s, the Second World War, the decline in the international role of the British Empire and the advent of the Cold War, it is extremely unrealistic to accept that the aggregate distribution of preferences in the electorate as a whole remained constant. Changes in the aggregate distribution, in turn, undermine Robertson's argument because the shifted position of both parties could potentially have followed shifted preferences of the voters. The Labour Party during 1945–50, for instance, may have shifted to the right as a result of a similar shift of the electors favouring a return to the market economy. By the same token, the Conservatives' extreme policies of 1950 and 1951 could have been close to a new median voter position rather than to their members' stance.

Centrifugal competition, 1979–91

Bearing the above analysis in mind, it is clearly of relevance to examine the association between party strategy, voters' preferences and electoral success in light of the assumption that 'political preferences are formed within the democratic political process'.¹⁰ If party leaders are rational actors, then state power and a party's resources of legitimacy and influence are free goods for them to use for partisan advantage and it would clearly be irrational for them not to exploit them. Democracy, in this sense, ceases to be seen as a limitation (i.e. in policy terms) and choices imposed on the parties by civil society, and becomes instead a source for resources which enable parties to reverse this process. The argument can get quite metaphysical. Let us examine first why the consensus broke down and to what extent, if at all, preference-shaping strategies were implemented by the Conservative Party during 1979–91.

Kavanagh and Morris (1994) list three main reasons which combine to explain the breakdown of the post-war consensus: (i) intellectual challenge from the right which exalted free enterprise in place of state intervention and economic planning; (ii) prominent politicians who articulated the ideas and raised them on the Conservative Party's agenda; and (iii) the collapse of the policies associated with Keynesianism (i.e. demand management and income policies) in the 1960s and especially the 1970s.

The challenge to the prevailing Keynesian approach was based on F.A.Hayek's (1944) *The Road to Serfdom* and Friedman and Friedman's (1980) *Free to Choose* which argued that through pursuing his own selfish economic interests, man directly contributed to the good of all. As long as suppliers (e.g. manufacturers, retailers) were allowed to meet demands for goods at the price the public were prepared to pay, an invisible hand would regulate economic activity so as to ensure that profits were not too high through the need to keep prices as low as possible and invest in more efficient means of production. Providing it was efficient, business, employment and wealth would be maximised. The derived material inequality would furthermore inject dynamism into the economy, giving it a buoyancy which would raise earnings at all levels. To facilitate man's freedom to buy, sell and accumulate property, state power would have to be curtailed, and, according to Friedman, great stress would have to be laid on the control of the money supply and the reduction of inflation, even at the expense of sacrificing full employment.

These ideas were taken on board within the Conservative Party by Enoch Powell and, after his dismissal from the Shadow Cabinet in 1968, by John Biffen and Keith Joseph. They mapped out a new agenda for the Conservative Party and persuaded Thatcher and her colleagues of the virtues of free enterprise policies. The collapse of the Keynesian's demand management and income policies in the 1960s and 1970s,¹¹ as well as the government's failure to contain trade union demand, created a convenient breeding ground for what have become known as the 'New Right' ideas. During the 1970s, these ideas were incorporated into the thought and practice of the Conservative Party by Mrs (now Lady) Thatcher.

Following Hayek and Friedman, the first and most important intellectual innovation of the New Right was the rehabilitation of the market system as the essential engine of prosperity and liberty. New Right followers, or 'Thatcherites', believe that by rolling back the state from involvement in the economy, Britain's economic decline can be reversed. They seek to secure financial stability and the reduction of inflation by curbing the growth of the money supply and reducing government borrowing and public expenditure.¹² The adoption of a largely 'negative' view of liberty soon follows from this logic. It enhances the idea that a person is free to the extent that his actions are not impeded by the actions of others, normally in the form of laws and government prohibitions. Based on this conception, unemployment comes to be considered as a fact of life: an unavoidable phenomenon, as it is not the product of intention. The new conservatives also promote the idea that the pursuit of social justice is both economically inefficient and destructive of a proper morality.¹³ This view leads to the questioning of the welfare state because it undermines the obligations which recipients of entitlements have to the society that provided them, encouraging dependency rather than autonomy. To sum up, the ideas that society should be organised according to market principles, in which the profitability of an enterprise is the only indicator of its social value, and should be prepared to tolerate heavy unemployment as a necessary cost in the pursuit of adjustment to changing economic circumstances, underpinned the shift of the Conservative Party towards the right during the Thatcher period.¹⁴

*Preference-shaping strategies by the government
party*

An effort to account for this move and its electoral success focuses on four preference-shaping strategies implemented by the Conservative Party during 1979–91, namely, partisan social engineering, adjusting social relativities, context management, and institutional manipulation. During this period, Conservative governments have created a short-term change in the social structure (i.e. partisan social engineering) by reducing the number and influence of traditional Labour voters, namely, public sector employees and trade unionists. Public sector employment has been dramatically reduced by: (i) floating public enterprises on the stock exchange (thereby also offering voters the opportunity to buy their shares at less than the market price); (ii) selling off other enterprises to individual private corporations; (iii) hiving-off operations from the public sector to private firms; and (iv) introducing Compulsory Competitive Tendering (CCT) in the National Health Service (NHS) and local government. Regarding the trade unions, major legislation in 1980, 1982, and 1984 succeeded in reducing their numbers and curbing their influence. ‘Closed shops’ (i.e. factories where joining the union was compulsory) had now to be approved in a secret ballot by four-fifths of the workers. Secondary picketing (i.e. picketing of firms not themselves party to an industrial dispute) was outlawed. Moreover, secret ballots were introduced to approve strikes, elect top union officials, and approve the collection of union political funds. The costly and often violent miners’ strike of 1984–5, ending as it did with a split in the National Union of Mineworkers, further undermined trade union influence.

Added to the above was the Conservative post-1979 legislation which forced local councils to sell off properties to tenants at a large discount. There is little doubt that the sale of council houses has represented one of the most ambitious privatisation measures taken by the Conservative Party. The market value of council houses sold between 1979 and 1984 was over £11bn. After allowing for the discounts to be deducted, the sales netted £6.4bn. Perhaps most important, however, was the sheer number of households which became home-owners, since it was assumed that the measure could produce a major growth in Conservative voting amongst working-class households who used to live in council houses and vote for Labour. The Conservative government sold over a million council houses to sitting tenants—which may

roughly correspond to around 3 million voters—thereby turning them into home-owners.

The actual outcome of this policy is however rather inconclusive. Some studies suggest that there is no indication that the sale of council houses produced new recruits for Thatcherism (Heath *et al.* 1985). Put differently, those who bought the council houses were already Conservative-oriented voters. Other studies have argued that this housing policy led to more voters shifting their support from Labour to Alliance (Williams, *et al.* 1987)—indirectly benefiting the Conservative Party. Regarding general ideological values, William, Sewel and Twine have suggested that purchasers were more likely than non-purchasers to favour privatised and individualistic political attitudes, but (when controlling for social class) this relationship was restricted to manual social classes only. However restricted the change in voting behaviour and ideological values may have been, the reader may note that even a small change could have been critical in a number of strategic marginal constituencies. A classic example is the 'homes for votes' affairs in Westminster Council, allegedly involving the selective selling of houses in marginal wards at the expense of the homeless in the late 1980s. Thus, the Council's strategy—entitled Building Stable Communities (BSC)—targetted marginal wards and by selling off council houses to 'yuppies' turned them into safe Tory seats.

A particular attempt to improve the relative social and economic position of Conservative voters (i.e. adjusting social relativities) was also undertaken at that time. The Government has consistently moved to make council tenants worse off, by pushing up rents to market level, cutting public-housing subsidies and reducing new building by local councils. At the same time that massive discounts were offered to new (ex-council house) home-owners, rent from remaining council tenants was increased during 1981–2 by 80 per cent. Not surprisingly, the relative position of home-owners (i.e. likely Conservative voters) was dramatically improved in comparison to those who continue to rent (i.e. likely Labour voters).

An attempt to manipulate the objective situation of the British polity in a way which favoured the Conservative Party was also apparent during and after the Falkland War. The government extensively manipulated the mass media throughout the run-up to the 1983 general election, justifying its behaviour by the need to keep information useful to Argentina out of the public domain. The aims of the Conservatives' morale-building exercise were clearly to prevent the development of any major anti-war feeling—

despite the eventual loss of 260 British servicemen's lives—and to foster a widespread national chauvinism sympathetic to Conservative values and policies.¹⁵ Consequently, this strategy helped create a 17 per cent surge in the Conservative opinion poll ratings—moving from a post-war record low for any government to touch a 50 per cent popular support (Dunleavy and Husbands 1985).

An attempt at electoral context management through the manipulation of the economic situation of the polity was also undertaken in the run up to the 1983 and the 1987 general elections. The Conservatives pursued a strategy of manipulating the money supply and the main economic policy instrument under short-term control for political profits (Clarke and Whiteley 1990). The purpose of this manipulation was to influence economic outcomes such as inflation and unemployment which, as the government correctly assumed, affected its popularity. In the year before the 1983 election, for instance, the Conservative government used its leverage over short-term economic indicators, such as the mortgage interest rate, as a key means of affecting public perceptions of its performance. In July 1982 controls on hire purchase were removed, stimulating demand by letting money circulate faster, while keeping the volume of money supply within government targets. As a result, consumer credit reached record levels, creating a consumption boom in the run-up to the election. Further, in 1982 the mortgage rate had been reduced by 1.5 per cent in September and another 2 per cent in December, relieving the financial burden on new home-owners and boosting industrial investments. Finally, the government had made major changes in the way unemployment statistics were calculated; those aged 60 and over, as well as trainee and job seekers who do not claim state benefits were omitted from official figures. Not surprisingly, a decline in unemployment was recorded at a stroke. By January 1983, the Conservatives' Gallop-measured support was 44 per cent and at the start of the campaign its support reached 46 per cent (Dunleavy and Husbands 1985:70, 75).

The Thatcher period also provides extended evidence of institutional manipulation, that is, using state power to alter the 'rules of the game' which structure party competition. In the mid-1980s, some of Thatcher's policies, such as selling council houses and cutting local councils' expenditure, were strongly challenged by Labour-controlled metropolitan county councils. It was, therefore, not by accident that the Greater London Council, the Metropolitan Councils and the Inner London Education Authority were abolished in 1986 (the former two) and 1990,

respectively. Some of their functions were transferred to the metropolitan districts and London boroughs,¹⁶ but a system of non-elected special purpose authorities, joint boards and joint committees was also established thereby contributing to the reassertion of officer influence and to the build-up of local invisible bureaucracy which lies beyond the reach of the local ballot box.

A significant outcome of the Thatcherite attack on the powers of local government and the resulting decline in their status, was that the Labour Party lost centres of sub-national power from which it could organise challenges to the government's policies. A further by-product of the Conservatives' strategy has been a reduction in the incentives for political activity and participation at the local level. Since a great many of Labour's members join the party because of their interest in activity at the local level (Seyd and Whiteley 1992), the party lost a potential source of new members and supporters.

There is little doubt, therefore, that the Conservatives' dominance over British politics during the 1980s, which has induced a sense of demoralisation and defeatism on the Labour Party, constituted a serious blow to active resistance to Conservative policies. The denigration of the public sector and the ethic of public service so common during the Thatcher era, has added to the overall decline in the status of the public sector in these years. The Conservative attacks on Labour local authorities and the abolition of the GLC and other metropolitan authorities have led to the narrowing of the 'structure of opportunities' for Labour's supporters and activists. Added to that was the relationship between macro-economic performance and party popularity wherein the former was manipulated for political profits as a constant feature of government policy-making during the pre-election periods in the 1980s.

*Preference-shaping strategies by government and
opposition: the debate over the Maastricht Treaty¹⁷*

Over the Maastricht Treaty, on the main issues that could have been placed on the left-right dimension, the Labour and Conservative parties proposed fundamentally opposing policies. By doing so they were able to orient themselves to the issue of Europe from their traditional ideological standpoints. As a result, even on potentially cross-cutting issues, which touched on sensitive aspects of national sovereignty (such as the plans for EC citizenship and the increased powers of the European Parliament),

Labour and Conservative policies reflected either side of the socio-economic cleavage rather than the 'national-supranational' divide.

This can be illustrated by looking at the Labour and Conservative policies on the ten main issues involved in the negotiation and ratification of the Maastricht Treaty. On each issue, clear 'left' and 'right' positions can intuitively be derived. In the classic conception of left and right, there is often a distinction between the political left-right, relating to progressive versus moralistic political values and arising from the French Revolution, and the economic left-right relating to interventionist versus free market policies and arising from the Industrial Revolution (Finer 1987). Consequently, someone on the 'economic' left is likely to support an EC central bank with a goal of full employment, whereas someone on the 'economic' right would support a goal of price stability. Similarly, an individual on the 'political' left is likely to want full citizenship rights, whereas someone on the 'political' right would be opposed.

Coding Labour and Conservative party policies on these issues illustrates the extent to which 'Europe' is subsumed under the left-right conflict:¹⁸

- 1 On the 'convergence criteria' for entering the third stage of EMU, Labour proposed the inclusion of indicators of 'real social and economic convergence', whereas the Conservatives supported the proposals for 'fixed' levels of price stability, public deficit and interest rates.
- 2 On the independence of an EC central bank, Labour proposed that a bank should be 'democratically accountable...(but) the Council should have overall responsibility for the external exchange-rate policy', whereas the Conservative Government hesitantly supported provisions for an almost fully-autonomous bank.
- 3 On the primary objective of a central bank, the Labour Party argued that a 'goal of price stability...should be pursued taking due account of general economic policy goals, in particular the promotion of a high level of employment', whereas the Government supported a 'single goal of price stability'.
- 4 On the level of economic policy co-operation, the Labour Party proposed the transformation of the Council of Ministers for Economics and Finance (EcoFin) into a 'permanent and fixed member organisation' and the 'control' of medium-term economic policy by EcoFin, whereas the Conservative Party

- had no policy on the status of EcoFin but argued for the 'co-ordination' of medium-term national economic policies.
- 5 On the level of fiscal harmonisation, the Labour Party discussed the possibility of 'binding minimum taxation rates... to avoid tax-cut competition', whereas the Conservative Party completely rejected the adoption of any policy on the issue.
 - 6 On the question of an EC citizenship, the Labour Party backed proposals for 'the development of European citizenship as the sum total of the rights and duties of European citizens...(and that) all Community policies must lead to the improvement of the living standards of European citizens', whereas the Conservative Party accepted certain 'voting rights' for EC citizens but rejected any guaranteed 'social' rights.
 - 7 On an EC industrial policy, the Labour Party fully supported a policy of 'encouraging an environment favourable to industry', with the 'co-operation of the social partners'; whereas the Conservative Party argued for a 'stringent European competition policy'.
 - 8 On social policy, the Labour Party proposed the 'implementation of a concrete social policy in parallel to the Single Market', whereas the Conservative Government claimed a victory after having negotiated the British 'opt-out' from the Social Protocol of the Maastricht Treaty.
 - 9 On 'economic and social cohesion', the Labour Party supported a 'Cohesion Fund for real fiscal transfers', whereas the Conservative Party rejected any transfer of resources beyond those necessary for the improvement of transport and communications networks.
 - 10 On the powers of the EP, the Labour Party proposed 'giving the EP the right of co-decision with the Council in those fields where the Council takes majority decisions... (and that) the EP should be involved in the investiture of the Commission President', whereas the Conservative Party opposed any substantial increase in the EP's powers, and proposed (instead) the 'establishment of the Ombudsman of the European Parliament'.

Labour and Conservative policies reflected, therefore, either side of the socio-economic cleavage, enabling them to subsume divisive issues (e.g. sensitive aspects of national sovereignty) within the dominant dimension of party competition (Maor and Smith 1993a, Maor 1995b). In addition, the parties were able to temporarily suspend competition on the issue in the electoral arena. In the April 1992 General Election, 'the subject of Europe was

conspicuous by its absence from the electoral campaign', and it appeared that 'the two major parties tacitly agreed not to discuss it, since each was split on the issue' (Bogdanor 1992:298). However, by the time of the ratification debate in the House of Commons, the Labour and Conservative parties had adapted to the challenges, and attempted to subsume the issue under the main dimension of party competition. Hence, the manifest divisions between the parties were not the issues of British 'sovereignty' (which remained latent 'intra-party' conflicts in both parties), but issues on the left-right dimension; such as the question of the Social Chapter 'opt-out'. However, this strategy was not completely successful for either party. The vicious battle between the pro-European Conservative leadership and the anti-European backbenchers continued throughout the process; and the Labour Party was forced to abstain in some crucial Commons votes, where the European issue combined sovereignty and socio-economic questions.

The implementation of preference-shaping strategies has important consequences for the role of party strategies during electoral campaigns in influencing voter preferences, and thereby, the electoral outcome. Once one realises that political competition dominates electoral choice, then voters become mere bystanders in the electoral process. Voters' choice, in this sense, is based on alternatives which are shaped by the parties (Page 1976), and influenced by short-term forces, such as inflation and unemployment. Using state power to manipulate these variants during 1979–91, the Conservative Party successfully undermined the social, institutional and political sources of power which a future Labour Party revival would have relied upon.

Centripetal tendencies, 1991–5

Centripetal tendencies during the early 1990s were evident, on the Conservative side, following John Major's policy switch over Europe, and the government's 'softer' approach to privatisation. Policy shifts by the Labour Party also contributed to such tendencies. A policy review document, *Meet the Challenge, Make the Change* (1989), as well as two subsequent policy documents, *Looking to the Future* (1990) and *Opportunity Britain: Labour's Better Way for the 1990s* (1991) signified a fundamental change of direction for Labour. To understand these developments we need to examine fundamental policy areas to see how they stand in the eyes of the two parties in the mid-1990s.

Europe

Major's commitment 'to put Britain at the heart of Europe' was shared by John Smith, the leader of the Labour Party (and after his death, by his successor, Tony Blair), as well as by the Liberal leader, Paddy Ashdown. John Major's views of Europe were recorded by his apparent acceptance of the substance of virtually all the Maastricht agreement. This was based on his recognition that:

For the vast majority in Britain, the Community is still the best means of advancing Britain's interests, political and commercial. After 20 years of membership, the overall balance sheet is positive. The disadvantages have been outweighed by the benefits: political stability throughout the Community and an economic prosperity in which we have shared.¹⁹

Major's commitment was however obscured by the Tory feud over Europe. Britain's forced ejection from the European Exchange Rate Mechanism (ERM) under pressure from financial markets represented an enormous defeat for Major, and for members of his campaign team who had helped secure his election as leader, especially Chancellor Norman Lament. A series of parliamentary crises in June 1992 (after Danish voters narrowly rejected the Maastricht Treaty) further undermined Major's position. A total of sixty-nine Conservative MPs, for instance, signed the 'Fresh Start' early day motion which became the rallying document for Tory anti-marketeters. Subsequently, on 4 November, the government depended on the votes of nineteen Liberal Democrat MPs to get the Maastricht 'paving bill' through the Commons. A total of twenty-one Tory backbenchers resisted all the whips' efforts, and joined Labour in voting against the Bill, with six more Tories abstaining.

Major's commitment to Europe was further marginalised by the controversy over majority voting following the applications of Finland, Austria, Sweden and Norway to join the Union. Progress on enlargement of the Union was stalled when the UK (traditionally proenlargement) and Spain objected to new rules regulating voting procedures in an expanded Council of Ministers. On the existing Council there were seventy-six votes allocated between the twelve Member States, and twenty-three votes, or 30 per cent, was sufficient to block decisions. After enlargement, it was proposed there would be ninety votes in all, and twenty-seven

(i.e. still 30 per cent) would be a blocking minority. The British argument, in essence, was that a twenty-three-vote blocking minority was desirable because it allowed a combination of two large states and one small one to veto decisions, and that an increase to twenty-seven, although arithmetically proportionate, would shift too much power to small states.²⁰ Major's climbdown was evident following the compromise reached; the threshold would be raised to twenty-seven votes, but twenty-three opposing votes would be sufficient to stall legislation for an (unspecified) 'reasonable period', during which time a consensus would be sought.²¹

It was, however, Britain's veto of the appointment of Jean-Luc Dehaene, the Belgian premier, as President of the European Commission (which led to the appointment of Jacques Santer, the Prime Minister of Luxembourg) which served to clarify the essence of Major's European commitment. The decision to veto Dehaene's appointment was based on him being chosen as a candidate (mainly by Germany and France) without proper consultation with all Member States. This event demonstrated that Britain would continue to play a prominent role in the EU only in so far as the process of integration would not be determined by a few Member States, but by compromises and consultations among all members.

Labour's hostility to the then European Community in 1983 had been consistent with its nationalist approach to economic issues. Following the policy reviews of the early 1990s, a pro-EC stance emerged. This stance began to develop only as Mrs Thatcher rejected moves towards a European currency and monetary policy during 1990 and 1991. In 1993 the Labour Party backed the Maastricht deal, but demanded that the UK should not opt out of the 'social chapter'. The new commitment to Europe was apparent in Tony Blair's (1994:18) leadership manifesto, wherein he asserted his 'commitment to strong European and global co-operation'. Overall, so long as the EU itself continues to develop, Labour looks set to support it and, further, to remain less divided on this issue than the Conservatives.

Mixed economy

Since 1979, two-thirds of state-owned industries and services have been returned to private ownership. Although Labour had argued it would re-nationalise such concerns, in 1989 the party declared it accepted the market economy. In *Meet the Challenge, Make the Change* (1989), it was proposed that a Labour

government's task would be to stimulate a successful market economy and that it would intervene only where that stimulation was not forthcoming from market forces. It stated that 'the market and competition are essential in meeting the demands of consumers, promoting efficiency and stimulating innovation, and often the best means of securing all the myriad, incremental changes which are needed to take the economy forward'.²² In the 1990s the Labour Party adopts the 'responsible social market model' in which government would intervene only when necessary provisions are not provided by the market, such as in the area of labour training or environment protection (Seyd 1993). Labour now wants an active, 'developmental state' intervening to generate economic growth and efficiency.

A classic example of the change in the Labour Party's orientation in this policy area was recorded over the issue of getting private firms to participate in capital projects which had traditionally been run by the state. The idea is to invest more, by tapping private money, and more cheaply, by using private management. A government plan, namely, the 1992 'Private Finance Initiative', implied an end to the rules which the Treasury had previously applied to block private involvement in public projects—rules intended to keep the distinction between 'public' and 'private' clear. The initiative was meant to promote wholly free-standing private projects needing government approval, 'private-public' joint ventures, buying services from private sector suppliers, and leasing, rather than buying assets. Both Labour and Liberal Democrat parliamentarians reaffirmed their faith in the initiative during a parliamentary debate.²³

Regarding the Labour Party's attitudes towards privatised industries, it confirmed that it would not reverse the sale of council houses and would tend to accept privatisation of coal, post or railways if and when they become *faits accomplis*. Further, it repositioned itself as the champion of the majority exploited by Tory-backed vested interests, such as bankers and farmers, and broke with the party's traditional embrace of economic planning. Perhaps most important is the Labour Party's acceptance of the market economy as both effective and efficient. This was evident as the party dropped one of its constitutional objectives—defined in Clause IV—to 'secure for the workers by hand or by brain the full fruits of their industry and the most equitable distribution thereof that may be possible upon the basis of the common ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange'. A Special Conference on 29 April 1995 approved a new Clause IV: Labour's Aims and Values (see p. 228). By recognising the

discipline of competition and backing a thriving private sector the party had taken its most decisive shift in the post-1945 period. Labour's new values according to its stated aims are social justice, equality, the fight against poverty and injustice, and solidarity. It is important to note that the words 'full employment' are omitted from the text, thus rejecting union demands for the party to commit itself to providing jobs for all. However, it is implicitly recognised as an objective that Labour would strive to give everyone the chance to realise their full potential, including the opportunity to work. This brings us to the differences between the parties over full employment, and the concept of 'Community'.

Clause IV: Labour's Aims and Values

- 1 The Labour Party is a democratic socialist party. It believes that by the strength of our common endeavour, we achieve more than we achieve alone so as to create for each of us the means to realise our true potential and for all of us a community in which power, wealth and opportunity are in the hands of the many not the few, where the rights we enjoy reflect the duties we owe, and where we live together, freely, in a spirit of solidarity, tolerance and respect.
- 2 To these ends we work for:
 - a dynamic economy, serving the public interest, in which the enterprise of the market and the rigour of competition are joined with the forces of partnership and co-operation to produce the wealth the nation needs and the opportunity for all to work and prosper, with a thriving private sector and high quality public services, where those undertakings essential to the common good are either owned by the public or accountable to them.
 - a just society, which judges its strength by the condition of the weak as much as the strong, provides security against fear, and justice at work; which nurtures families, promotes equality of opportunity and delivers people from the tyranny of poverty, prejudice and the abuse of power.
 - an open democracy, in which government is held to account by the people; decisions are taken as far as

- practicable by the communities they affect; and where fundamental human rights are guaranteed.
- a healthy environment, which we protect, enhance and hold in trust for future generations.
- 3 Labour is committed to the defence and security of the British people, and to co-operating in European institutions, the United Nations, the Commonwealth and other international bodies to secure peace, freedom, democracy, economic security and environmental protection for all.
- 4 Labour will work in pursuit of these aims with trade unions, co-operative societies and other affiliated organisations, and also with voluntary organisations, consumer groups and other representative bodies.
- 5 On the bases of these principles, Labour seeks the trust of the people to govern.

Source: The Labour Party (1995) A Special Conference Decision, 29 April 1995

Full employment and the concept of 'Community'

Full employment became a major issue during the 1990s as unemployment reached around 3 million. Between 1990 and 1992, British membership of the Exchange Rate Mechanism (ERM) raised unemployment but gave the government some freedom of manoeuvre. This membership was supported by both the Labour and Conservative parties. When Britain left the ERM, John Major rejected calls from both parties to reflate the economy. Although both parties recognise that actual 'full employment' is impossible, they still favour a more active government economic policy. Kenneth Clarke, the Chancellor, declared in May 1994 that 'unemployment must be the main preoccupation of economic policy-makers in the 1990s'. A month later, John Prescott proposed a commission for full employment as the centre-piece of the (Labour) leadership manifesto.²⁴ The parties differed however on how 'active' the government should be in the pursuit of full employment. According to Tony Blair's (1994:11) leadership manifesto, for example, 'we [i.e. a Labour government] must aim to eliminate the scars of long-term and youth unemployment. From reforms to employers' national insurance, to housebuilding

financed by phased release of local authority capital receipt....' The Conservatives, however, see a revived economy as the energiser for reducing unemployment.

The high level of unemployment during the early 1990s, and the derived concern for the health of civic institutions, has revived interest in the concept of the 'community'. Tony Blair (1994), for example, put the idea at the centre of his leadership manifesto. A pamphlet by John Gray (1994), a Conservative philosopher, laments that market forces 'unsettle communities and delegitimate traditional institutions'. David Willets, a former Thatcherite philosopher, predicts 'the collapse of neo-liberalism as a significant intellectual force'.²⁵ He further proposes that 'The challenge facing both our main political parties now is to formulate a coherent set of policies which shows that ...there must be a role for collective action but that collective action does not necessarily mean state action. The race is on.' Although both the Labour and Conservative parties recognise the importance of 'community' in 1990s politics, differences remain as to the causes of the present discontent, and the derived remedies. For Labour, they stem from a one-sided concentration on market forces, obscuring the duties individuals owe to one another, to the community, and to the broader society. For Conservatives, state intervention in peoples lives restricts the individual's ownership of important decisions (such as, school, training, etc.) and, consequently, drains the life-blood of community institutions. Labour proposes, thus, that government should deal directly with the by-products of the free market, whereas Conservatives suggest that government should indirectly deal with it through a revolution in the way public services are delivered.

Welfare state

Unlike Mrs Thatcher's plans for an overall privatisation of the welfare state, Major has a different agenda. At the outset, he continued some of Mrs Thatcher's reforms; hospitals and schools, for example, were allowed to become self-governing trusts (i.e. opting out of local authority control). After the 1992 electoral victory, however, Mr Major began focusing on the widening of individual ownership by revolutionising the way the welfare state operated. The Tories started to widen individual ownership by selling council houses. They continued with privatisation, tax concessions for savings and handouts to people choosing private pensions. The next phase, according to Mr Major, is ownership of the important decisions in peoples' lives—on schools, pensions

and training. To do this requires a revolution in the way public services are delivered. This theme—formulated as the Citizen's Charter—was Major's big idea for the 1992 General Election. The Charter aims to improve, rather than privatise, such key services as British Rail, Education and the National Health Service (NHS). It is designed to 'institute expectations for citizens with regard to the services the state provides' (Dowding 1993:177). Individual charters, such as for NHS patients, parents of state school children, and tenants of public housing authorities, include fairly detailed expectations about service delivery, though the main emphasis is on increasing the quality of public services.

In the Labour Party, a Policy Review document published in 1989 proposed that the quality of public services should be improved by putting the needs of the user before those of the producer. In *Meet the Challenge, Make the Change* (1989), there was an attempt to shift the party away from its close identification with the public-sector trade unions and to air its awareness of public criticism of the welfare state for benefiting the producer rather than the user. The report proposed that the party should adopt 'a consumer centred approach to the provision of goods and services'.²⁶ Local authorities would be required to agree service agreements with their customers, and if the agreed service levels were not achieved, then financial sanctions would result. Labour's policy transformation was not restricted to a user-friendly public-service, but was further broadened to encompass taxes. By 1992, the party was forced to drop an 'alternative budget' plan to increase tax on the well-off, as it was widely seen as contributing to a last-minute surge of opinion poll support for the Conservatives. John Smith, the party leader (until his death in 1994), proved highly reluctant to give a further lead to Labour's future direction on the welfare state. By 1993, however, the party was forced to accept some of the Conservative logic; it realises that universal free benefits may need to yield a greater use of the market. The deepest post-war recession, growing fraud of public benefits and unpopularity of tax increases, led the party to look for more cost-effective ways to target benefits. Tony Blair, Smith's successor, has thus defined the Labour Party's programme for economic efficiency in a way designed to extend opportunity through enhanced education and training, rather than direct state benefits, or a coercive industrial strategy.²⁷

Trade unions

During 1980–83, the Labour Party was committed to reversing union-restricting legislation undertaken in the Acts of 1980 and 1982. Although *Meet the Challenge, Make the Change* (1989) made clear that ‘trade unions have a central role to play in a successful economy’, there was no commitment to repeal the law on the closed shop or on picketing. The only repeals of Conservative legislation proposed are those of: (i) allowing workers to be sacked after a strike ballot decision; (ii) enabling employers to split companies in such a way as to legally avoid primary dispute action; and, (iii) enabling employers to use *ex-parte* injunctions to curb industrial action. Thus, instead of maintaining collective rights, the Labour policy report shifted towards guaranteeing basic legal rights for individual workers. This commitment was also recorded in Tony Blair’s leadership manifesto:

Employees should have the same right to decent standards in work as management take for granted. That is why I support the Social Chapter and our programme of employment rights for full-time and part-time workers, including a statutory minimum wage. We must end all kinds of discrimination at work.

(Blair 1994:11)

In essence, the Labour Party has differentiated itself from the Conservative Party over minor aspects, such as safety and discrimination at work. As the ‘new’ Clause IV indicates, there is no commitment of the Labour Party for ‘full employment’. The commitment for a minimum wage should not be overemphasised as arguments regarding the minimum amount to be paid provide an excuse for a decision not to decide.

Foreign and defence policy

During the 1980s, the Labour Party was opposed to Britain’s membership of NATO and to its nuclear deterrent. Labour’s non-nuclear stance between 1983 and 1987 had been, however, a temporary aberration from its previous orthodox defence record. *Meet the Challenge, Make the Change* (1989) proposed to retain Britain’s nuclear forces, and thus took the party back to the mainstream. During the 1990s, the party also amended its policy towards British membership of NATO, advocating a strong and active role in the organisation in contrast to the Conservatives’

passive role. From 1993 Labour appeared closer to the Clinton administration in Washington than did the Conservatives.

Equality

This area remains one of pragmatic difference. During the 1980s and early 1990s Britain has experienced widening inequalities between rich and poor. Successive Conservative chancellors lowered the tax burdens on the better-off and refused to use state funding to reduce economic disparities. Their policy was based on the premise that greater equality undermines economic performance; material inequality injects dynamism into the economy, giving it a buoyancy which raises earnings of all levels. By contrast, during the 1980s the Labour Party was committed to socialist equality, that is, reducing inequalities by raising the tax burdens on the better-off. By the 1990s, however, it had abandoned this commitment, without giving up the belief in the need to reduce inequalities. As Tony Blair (1994:9) noted: 'We must challenge the Conservative dogma... It is time to assert that tackling inequality and social injustice is not only right, but essential to social partnership for a successful economy, and the maximum use of all our human resources.'

To sum up, Labour appears to have accepted much of the Conservative logic during the early 1990s. Whether this shift is long-lasting and whether centripetal tendencies will become a clear centripetal direction of party competition, we must await the actions of a future Labour government to discover. A strong reason to believe that such a direction will emerge lies in Tony Blair's comfortable victory in the party leadership election—57 per cent of the votes— more than his two rivals, John Prescott and Margaret Beckett, mustered between them. More significantly, Mr Blair was not just the choice of Labour MPs (who, until 1983, were solely responsible for electing the party leader), nor of the trade unions (who helped choose Neil Kinnock and John Smith). Mr Blair won in all three sections of the electoral college with 61 per cent of the parliamentarians, 58 per cent of the constituency members, and 52 per cent of the trade unionists. He therefore has a wider democratic mandate than his predecessors or than the leader of any major political party in British history. The breadth of Blair's mandate should help him to loosen the party's commitment to electorally unattractive policies, i.e. to accommodate the party to the preferences of the British voters. If Labour win, they could then play a very different ball game—as the Conservatives did.

CONCLUSIONS

The starting point of this chapter was the premise of competitive democracy. According to the traditional view, the minimum defence of competitive democracy is that competing political parties will not be able to consistently and openly deride the electorate's will. Though American political scientists tend to interpret this view of preference-accommodating strategies as the mechanism of party competition, one cannot ignore the ability of governmental parties to use state power for partisan advantage. Dunleavy and Ward's (1981) preference-shaping model, for example, offers an account of party competition in which the distribution of voters' preferences is determined endogenously within the competitive process. Further, the above discussion indicates that there is considerable empirical evidence in the British case that such strategies exist, and were pursued by successive Thatcher's governments during 1979–91. What remains largely unexplored is whether party leaders actually and consciously decide to flout the electorate's will; the extent to which they are able to do so; the extent to which opposition parties can respond; and the derived consequences in terms of a democratic deficit which is likely to be generated by such strategies.

An equally important task is to integrate the various models of electoral competition. We have discussed four well-known models which have contributed substantially to the comparative study of political parties. The problem is that each model is usually studied in isolation, and without reference to the process of government formation and coalition negotiations which follow elections. An attempt to integrate models of electoral competition should stem, in my opinion, from the premise that when an institution is transformed, and when a short-term societal change is recorded, one should examine carefully both the actions of governmental parties prior to such changes and the impact of these changes on the parties. In reality, institutions and societies may undergo transformations. In principle, these transformations may be advanced, delayed and possibly even created, by political parties.

8

Conclusions

Despite the singular title that is commonly used to refer to it, party theory is not a single coherent enterprise. In fact there are many party theories, each based on its own assumptions. At root, however, students of comparative politics in general, and those who deal with comparative political parties in particular, tend to think in terms of a discipline divided into two research camps. While some scholars collect, count and classify data, process it by computer, discover statistically significant correlations and devise causal explanations, others engage in historical research through in-depth examination of specific cases. This division in the discipline is one of the reasons that theory-building in party research is getting a little long in the tooth; while its empirical applications do not perform much better. Another reason for this is that because a significant body of work has already accumulated, external queries about the nature of the problems it addresses are often shrugged off; that which is used on a large scale is automatically considered useful.

Even rational choice explanations no longer do a great deal to advance knowledge or debate in the area of party theory. Take, for instance, the topic of inter-party electoral competition. Existing accounts claim to offer an empirical, non-normative account of the topic. However, by focusing exclusively upon strategies of accommodation—be it voters' preferences or party members' wishes—as the mechanism of competition, this literature risks being contaminated with naivety and over-optimism. As rational choice literature has become more formalised in ways which disguise its basic assumptions, the importance of factors internal to the process of inter-party competition has largely dropped from view. I refer here particularly to the ability of governing parties to exploit state power for their advantage by engaging in agenda-setting and institutional manipulation (Dunleavy 1991).

This is not to say that the rational choice revolution has failed when it comes to party theory; indeed, the previous chapters have

shown how this sub-field has been transformed to a great extent following insights generated from rational choice literature. However, it seems to me that despite initial high hopes, the fact that so many academic practitioners of comparative party research have not enthusiastically jumped on the bandwagon of this revolution in the way that they teach their courses or even in the way they conduct their research may be taken to indicate either a scepticism or a disillusionment about the possibilities and achievements of this revolution. This situation only emphasises how little consensus has been achieved, both regarding the nature and purpose of the party theory sub-field and the criteria for determining what constitutes valid or acceptable research in this area.

This absence of consensus can put students in a difficult position when they seek to formulate research questions. The fact that their research must satisfy dissertation committees, peers and external examiners who may profoundly disagree on what constitutes good scholarship may lead to sleepless nights, if not years. To overcome this problem students should comprehend the precise nature of the research problem they wish to resolve. This book is an attempt to assist them in doing so by highlighting a research agenda which revolves around the trade-offs faced by party actors. Underlying this agenda is the premise that the intra-party arena is the key for understanding party behaviour.

An increasing number of scholars recognise the intra-party arena as the key for understanding party behaviour (Harmel and Janda 1994; Katz and Mair 1995; Luebbert 1986; Panebianco 1988; Maor 1995a; Mule 1995). Party behaviour is shaped, and probably dominated, by intra-party considerations. Although party leaders are the key players in the internal party scene, they do not monopolise it; the interests of party sub-groups are also represented and are involved in one way or another in the party's decision-making process. Students of politics should by now recognise that functional patterns of representation and authority should not be over-emphasised. A party secretary, for example, may be responsible for the co-ordination for the activities of the party organisation and liaison with the leaders of the parliamentary groups. However, students of politics ought to analyse the ways by which party secretaries try to capitalise on their relationships with grass roots members and use them as a resource in internal party struggles. Alternatively, students may analyse the ways by which party actors capitalise on their relationships with interest groups or other external organisations and use them as a resource in intra-party conflicts. Thus,

attention should be directed at those individuals and sub-groups challenging party policies and strategies by mobilising support for their causes at any of the party's organisational levels.

Focusing on the intra-party arenas as the key to understanding party behaviour, this book singles out two sets of trade-offs faced by party élites. The first group—shown in [Table 1.1](#)—consists of trade-offs related to party behaviour, whereas the second group contains trade-offs related to motivation of party actors. The former points to a series of trade-offs related to the development of the political party over time as well as to the day-to-day management of party affairs. During its early years, for example, a party may make the building of a large membership its top priority and, thus, may not be in a position to design strategies appropriate to victory in the larger electoral arena. It therefore faces trade-offs such as the need to organise popular support among newly enfranchised voters, on the one hand, and the parliamentarians' room for manoeuvre within the party on the other. Another important trade-off at this stage is between the 'rewards' activists get from the party leadership and the constraints activists impose upon the party leadership.

Once the party is successful in obtaining membership resources, it becomes feasible to begin to design strategies of competition for electoral victory as well. The choice of strategy determines the trade-offs party élites face, such as the need of the party élites to modify the party's electoral strategy on the one hand, and the need to accommodate party organisation to changes in electoral strategy on the other. Additional trade-offs faced by party élites at this stage are between: (i) the need to extend the party's electoral support beyond its traditional voters and the need to simultaneously mobilise traditional voters; and (ii) the wish to maintain and advance electoral strength and the need to respond to pressures arising from the electorate as well as from interlinked political markets. It is these trade-offs that drive party change and party system change.

The second group consists of trade-offs faced by party actors who have a plurality of aims (Strom 1990a). In contrast to conventional models which treat motivations of party actors as unidimensional, this book is in a way a plea to students of politics to address these motivations on a multi-dimensional basis. By multi-dimensional I mean that party actors may choose to concentrate on maximising votes, office, policy, defending the interests of their social base or defending their position as party leaders. Hence, different modes of behaviour (e.g. coalitional

behaviour, electoral behaviour, factional behaviour, etc.) may be motivated by different aims.

The trade-off faced by party actors with a plurality of aims derives from the premise that the ways in which party élites/managers (or faction leaders) deal with problems depend largely on their ability to generate and sustain different types of change. Coalitions of these élites try to exercise control over party behaviour through their ability to manipulate access to major institutional arenas and their control over the allocation of resources between the party's sub-units and social groups. Such coalitions also try to control the interpretation of information central to the structuring of orientations and preferences of party members and specific societal groups. Since, however, party leaders do not monopolise the space for party politics, internal conflicts and rivalry may threaten party stability and cohesion, thereby forcing party élites to modify their aims. Thus, in a way, this book is a study about the ability of party élites for *creative adaptation*, meaning their capacity to filter intra-party and external stimuli and to shape party's policy and strategy.

Indeed, the core concern of the book is to find out the ways by which party actors solve trade-offs and the outcomes of their solutions. By focusing on questions such as: Can intra-party politics promote strategy or policy change? Can a change in a party's policy or strategy affect intra-party politics? the book stresses the importance of internal factors in explaining differences in party behaviour. Students of politics who decide to follow this line of research should clarify the preferences of the main party actors from the start. They need to be reminded that intra-party groupings may be well placed to shape party decisions in line with their considerations. They need to recognise that the solutions of the trade-offs faced by parties and factions structure intra-party politics as a set of interconnected games stretching over party arenas—the dominant mode of which is mainly the compromise. This, in turn, indicates that the overall outcome of party conflicts is likely to be non-zero-sum. This assumption is, in my opinion, a prerequisite for any study which addresses the trade-offs of factional behaviour.

Appendix:

Comparative politics as a discipline

As comparative politics is, in my opinion, the most important basis for a science of political parties, a brief overview of this discipline provides a convenient reference point. This overview is selective and makes no claim to comprehensiveness as the purpose is to briefly explain the contested approaches to comparative politics. These different approaches have resulted in the lack of one generally accepted party definition.

Comparative politics as a discipline is a loosely-structured body of knowledge where alternative approaches, models and methodologies compete with one another.¹ It has grown out of the wish to know more about one's own political system by comparing it with others. Simple as it seems, it hides numerous diverging directions, shifts and transitions. It was previously believed, for instance, that knowledge about the institutional framework of politics would not only help to understand the peculiar features of one's own polity, but would also enable one to draw conclusions about its merits and disadvantages. This approach was dominated by the idea that supplying descriptive information on the structures of a political system and actors would be sufficient to further knowledge about political processes, and that the analysis should therefore remain of a descriptive nature based on facts (Bryce 1929).²

In the early 1950s, when Roy Macridis (1953; 1955) inveighed against this traditional stream of comparative politics, his first and major charge was that it was 'essentially noncomparative'. Macridis argued strongly in favour of a more 'scientific' approach to politics and considered a truly comparative approach the most promising way to go:

Comparative analysis is an integral part of the study of politics. The comparative study suggests immediately the laboratory of a scientist. It provides us with the opportunity to discuss specific phenomena in the light of different

historical and social backgrounds. It suggests variables of a rather complex order that can be dissociated from the cultural background and studies comparatively.... The comparative study of politics is beginning only now to enter a new stage which reflects in essence the progressive systematic orientation in the study of politics. It is beginning to assume a central role in empirically oriented study.

(Macridis 1955:1, 3)

This so-called 'revolution' aimed at changing the very purpose of the field from the description of the institutions of foreign governments to the explanation of political behaviour. The new purpose entailed a shift from the configurative—that is, describing the interaction of a wide variety of variables in a single system—towards the comparative—that is, generalising about more settings or systems using fewer variables (Mayer 1989:15). Take, for example, the topic of the fragmentation of the Italian party system. The configurative approach—which assumes any given aspect of a system makes sense only in the context of the system as a whole—would hold that one cannot understand the fragmentation of the Italian party system except as a product of the interaction of Italian history, culture and geography. The comparative approach—which assumes that a single variable can be extracted and analysed in isolation from the rest of the system—would assert that it makes sense to relate the party system fragmentation variable in a number of systems to some other single variable in those systems.

The 'revolution' advocated, therefore, a move away from the traditional mode of conducting comparative politics. This mode has been identified with the following properties (Bill and Hardgrave 1973): (i) *configurative description* exemplified by detailed descriptions of some countries without the use of any explicit conceptual framework; (ii) *parochialism* or a bias in the selection of relevant variables to be studied in terms of a fixed list of fact finding categories, most of which were related to rules and institutions; (iii) *formal-legalism* exemplified by descriptions of the rules supposedly governing the operations of cabinets, legislatures, courts and bureaucracies; (iv) empiricism or the lack of theory, at least at the level of intention and recognition; and (v) non-comparative or most of the texts in the field of comparative government either studied single countries or engaged in parallel descriptions of a few countries. The move away from the traditional mode of comparative politics led scholars, such as LaPalombara (1956) and Macridis (1955), to believe that

comparative politics as a distinctive field within political science would be able to bridge the growing gap between theoretical approaches and the empirically-based study of politics. Almond and Powell (1966) argued, moreover, that the description of phenomena in one or more countries was no longer justified as an end in itself but only in so far as such descriptions contribute to the goal of cross-nationally applicable explanatory theory.

Despite these high hopes, however, the transition did not materialise and became a 'stalled revolution' (Mayer 1989). Only a few years later Verba (1967:113) asked himself: 'why has there been so much movement and so little movement forward?'. In part, he replied, 'the answer is in the toughness of the problem'. A quarter of a century later, the field remains highly pluralistic with respect to approaches, methods, and focus (Daalder 1993). Further attempts to find a more coherent approach to comparative politics proved unproductive due to their focus on partial problems within the field, such as choosing the correct method,³ selecting the right concepts,⁴ and finding the proper data.⁵

Recently, in an attempt to enhance the rigour and claim of comparative politics as a distinct approach, Keman (1993) provided an innovative view of comparative politics as a discipline. The main premise underlying Keman's (1993) analysis is that the 'political' in a society can be described on the basis of the 'triad' of 'politics, polity and policy' (Schmidt 1991; Keman 1992). Politics refers to the political process, that is, the interaction amongst political actors over conflicting interests that cannot be solved by themselves. Polity refers to the formal or informal rules of the game, that is, the institutional framework within which political interaction takes place. This framework often emerges in order to facilitate conflict resolution and to help achieve a consensus among conflicting actors through compromising alternative preferences. Policy refers to the process of policy formation, that is, the options chosen or decided upon for political action to solve conflicts and problems. This is equivalent to what others would call the 'authoritative allocation of values in a society' (Easton 1962).

Together, this set of theoretical references forms the core subject of comparative politics. They separate the political from the non-political in the explanation of circumstance, events and developments, enabling the researcher to focus on the interaction between political actors and institutions and the way this affects a system's capacity to perform in accordance with the needs and demands of a society. The behaviour of political actors (i.e. politics) is thus understood within the context of political institutions (i.e.

polity), and the variation of the policy performance of a political system is accounted for by examining the interaction between the working of institutions and the related room for manoeuvre of political actors. In other words, what defines comparative politics is the selection and comparison of the 'political' in a variety of different situations in order to establish theoretical and empirically refutable propositions that explain regularities (i.e. regarding the relationship between societal and political actors, the accompanying processes of institutionalisation of political life, and the societal change that emerged simultaneously) in terms of causality. 'It is this process and the attempts to explain it by systemic comparison that distinguish comparative politics from other fields in political science and at the same time makes it a field within political science' (Keman 1993:47).

Notes

1

CLASSIFYING PARTY DEFINITIONS

- 1 A generalisation is a general statement of uniformities and regularities. Meehan (1965:91–2) identified three forms of generalisations. The first is a universal generalisation (all of one thing is the same as another); in some cases a universal generalisation is a law, for it has withstood intensive testing. The second form is a probabilistic generalisation (a percentage of one thing is equal to another); a probabilistic generalisation is frequently referred to as a proposition. The third form is a tendency generalisation (one thing tends to be another); a tendency generalisation is expressed in tentative and conjectural terms and is thus a hypothesis, which may be true but not yet tested.
- 2 Illustrative of this point is Joachim Raschke (1983) who confuses normative reasoning with empirical theory on parties, as well as Greven (1977: 120f.) and Raschke (1977:59f.) who undertake a purely theoretical study which did not apply its own distinctions in empirical research.
- 3 For an attempt to examine models of political parties and their relationship to democratic philosophy, see Pomper (1992).
- 4 For classifications of political parties, see Raschke (1978), Smith (1994), McHale (1983), Steed and Hearle (1985), Humphreys and Steed (1988), Lane and Ersson (1994).
- 5 For the various aspects of a 'definition', see Sartori (1984).
- 6 The following discussion of the three dimensions as well as the examples being used are based on Strom (1990a).
- 7 'Electoral victory', as a single attribute or in combination with others, is indicated as the party's fundamental goal by Schlesinger (1991) and Epstein (1980a).
- 8 Downs' (1957) idea was later amended in accordance with the structure of voting systems. Some work has been done on the consequences of different voting systems for party strategies—at least if one interprets Duverger's (1964) law as implicitly entailing

arguments about the adaptation of parties to different methods of voting. Other studies suggested that, in a single district, it makes more sense to maximise pluralities than votes (Hinich and Ordeshook, 1970), whereas in multi-district contests the party maximises its probability of winning a majority of the contested seats (Robertson, 1976). Recently, Cox (1990) has analysed the impact electoral laws have on the position-taking incentives of parties. Among the factors found to produce centripetal incentives are increases in the number of votes per voter, outlawry of 'partial abstention' and decreases in the district magnitude. For formal research into the electoral incentives produced by Proportional Representation, see Sugden (1984), Greenberg and Weber (1985), and Austen-Smith and Banks (1988).

- 9 The disparity which exists between policy- and office-seeking approaches should not, however, be over-emphasised. In practical terms, control over political office may bring about policy gains. Not surprisingly, the policy-seeking premise is typically presented as a supplement to, rather than a substitute for, office motivation (Axelrod 1970; Browne 1973; De Swann 1973; Lijphart 1984; Luebbert 1986). Scholars who adopt the pursuit of policy as the prime motivation typically assume that parties also pursue office at least instrumentally, as political office is taken to be a precondition for policy influence. These scholars therefore identify parties as groups which are concerned with government portfolios as well as with public policy.
- 10 Theoretically, Strom (1990a:569–70) argues that, in general, the three characterisations share three unrealistic assumptions; they are generally static (i.e. each political interaction is analysed separately), treat parties as unitary and unconstrained actors, and ignore the institutional environment as a determinant of behaviour. Riggs (1972:122–5) and Panebianco (1988) go much further in their criticisms, arguing that party goals cannot be predetermined since a given activity may be motivated by different goals. My view is that the specific activity of a certain group—tied to a specific environment—may define its goal. In other words, parties which carry a specific activity in a specific environment may be motivated by a specific goal. Goals, under these conditions, may be predetermined, and distinguish parties from other organisations. Yet, a different activity undertaken in the same environment, or a similar activity undertaken in a different environment, may be motivated by another goal.
- 11 A median voter is defined as someone with exactly as many people holding more left-wing views as there are people holding more right-wing attitudes. Converging on the median voter's views maximises the pool of voters from whom either party in a competition may hope to draw support. The 1983 Labour Manifesto moved away from this position, resulting in an electoral defeat.

- 12 This conception about the policy influence of opposition was later used to show how minority governments may have a more or less permanent role in particular political systems. This was done by exploiting the distinction between majority government and viable government, allowing minority governments to be viewed in the same light as majority governments once the policy preferences of the government and opposition parties are taken into account (Laver and Schofield 1990).

2

PARTY SYSTEM CHANGE

- 1 See, for example, Ingelhart (1977).
- 2 See Lijphart (1975) and McRae's (1974) analyses of 'consociational democracies'.
- 3 See, for example, Smith (1994:20).
- 4 Indicators which are based on the number of parties are Rae's (1971) fractionalisation index, and Mayer's (1980) aggregation index.
- 5 See, for example, Daalder and Rusk (1972), Converse (1966), Converse and Valen (1971), Pedersen, Damgaard and Rusk (1971), and Frogner (1976).
- 6 See, for example, Robertson (1987) and Klingemann, Hofferbert and Budge (1994).
- 7 The ECJ, for example, had quashed sections of the British Act of Parliament (the Merchant Shipping Act 1988) which provided that UK-registered boats must be 75 per cent British-owned and have 75 per cent of crew resident in the UK.
- 8 According to the British law, Scotland must have a minimum of 71 seats, Wales must have at least 35 and Northern Ireland has 17 seats. The deliberate overrepresentation for Scotland and Wales was originally designed to assuage nationalistic feelings. Boundary Commissions which are responsible for drawing the boundaries are supposed to keep the Commons as near as possible to 613 MPs. These guidelines are largely ignored and the number of seats is about to increase in the 1997 general election.
- 9 *Campaign Against Racism and Fascism* (1992).
- 10 'Black people' are defined for the purpose of this survey as those whose families originally came from the West Indies or Africa.
- 11 *Guardian*, 20.3.95, p. 1.

3

PARTY INSTITUTIONALISATION

- 1 According to Huntington (1968:12-23), the level of institutionalisation can be measured by the following indicators. First, adaptability: the more adaptable an organisation is, the more

highly institutionalised it is; the less adaptable and more rigid it is, the lower its level of institutionalisation. Second, complexity: the more complicated an organisation is, the more highly institutionalised it is, and vice versa. Third, autonomy (i.e. the extent to which political organisations and procedures exist independently of other social groupings and methods of behaviour): in a highly developed party, the organisations have an integrity which they lack in a less developed party. The latter, in turn, is highly vulnerable to outside influence. Finally, organisational coherence: the more unified and coherent an organisation is, the more highly institutionalised it is; the greater the disunity of the organisation, the less it is institutionalised.

- 2 Ideal types are heuristic constructs which coincide with a polar (i.e. pure) concept. They are used to accomplish several related tasks: they aid conceptualisation of research subjects; they help in the identification and assessment of adequate causes, and they provide a basis for explanations of historical diversity. Ideal types are therefore models that are selectively developed as aids to genetic explanation. Genetic explanation, in turn, shows why it is that a given subject of study has certain characteristics, by describing how the subject has evolved out of some earlier one. With ideal types, researchers formulate and, more importantly, evaluate genetic explanations of historical diversity.
- 3 See, for example, Macfarlane (1966), Felling (1975) and Williams (1974).
- 4 For an elaboration of 'concept stretching' and its implications, see Sartori (1970, 1991).
- 5 The Tories' idea of representation was based on the belief that the nation was a unity greater than the sum of its parts, an organic entity which could be personified by a monarch whose authority had divine sanction. Public administration should be in the hands of the monarch, who would summon Parliament when he needed consent to the introduction of law or the imposition of taxes, but would not expect to take the initiative in major questions of state affairs. The Whig idea was that the authority of the sovereign should be limited and that the nation's representatives in Parliament should share fully the responsibility for governing the country. A balanced constitution whose supremacy lay with Parliament reflects the limit of royal power. For an elaboration of the differences between Tories and Whigs, see Beer (1957) and Birch (1964).
- 6 Note that before the Fourth Reform Act of 1918 probably 40 per cent to 50 per cent of adult males were excluded from the voting register.
- 7 Such an orientation seems necessary when organisational development is taking place through territorial diffusion; on one side stretches a tangled web of each group's opportunities, constraints and responses, on the other side is the aim of party formation with

an agreed structure, a characteristic mode of operation and a broad policy.

- 8 In the 1860s, the mass organisation of the Conservative Party was constituted by the National Union which had not at first counted for much. It was overshadowed by Conservative extra-parliamentary organisations which enjoyed extensive connections in the country, such as the Metropolitan Conservative Alliance and the Central Constituency Registration Association. Both constituted a federation of the numerous Working Men's Associations which came into being just before the passing of the Second Reform Bill. See, for example, Blake (1985).
- 9 At that time of the affiliated membership 94 per cent came from the unions, see Pinto-Duschinsky (1981:61).

4

MODELS OF PARTY ORGANISATION

- 1 See Mair (1994:2), and Katz and Mair (1994)
- 2 A competing approach to democracy which employs a Machiavellian power-perspective, treats participatory elements as only one among many production tasks which must be balanced against each other. This approach can be illustrated by Ware (1987) who argued that 'democracy' needs to be serviced on three main dimensions: interest optimisation, the exercise of popular control and civic orientation. Political parties may contribute to the advancement of all three. Ware's main concern, however, is the second—the participatory element. Because of the gap between ideals and realities, he feels forced to conclude that 'parties in the twentieth century have largely been exemplars of unfulfilled potential' (Ware 1987:215–16). But one important reason for this is the lack of democracy in other arenas in society—like industry—parties alone cannot foster 'a more publicly oriented electorate (1987:242). For the importance of political parties as a vital feature of liberal democracy, see Seyd and Whiteley (1992), and Whiteley, Seyd and Richardson (1994).
- 3 Some scholars have suggested that parties may be interested in community contacts made by members during inter-election periods (Ware 1987; von Beyme 1985).
- 4 In the cell party, members organised into small cells, based on the workplace, with an emphasis on vertical communication from leaders to members. There is little horizontal communication between cells, and internal factions are banned. It is a highly centralised party which supervises its legislative representatives. Communist parties world-wide are classic examples of cell parties.
- 5 This observation proceeds from the conception of a purely ideological group (that is, one which is open only to those members who share its goals and interests) as an ideal party. The ideological party, according to Michels, eventually transforms into a moderate group

due to 'the nature of oligarchy to sacrifice ideological purity to the methodical organisation of the masses for electoral victory' (Linz 1968:268).

- 6 The post-1945 transformation of the West German party system provides a classic illustration of the catch-all process at work, see: Smith (1989b: 55–9).
- 7 What is particularly important in the present context is that the changes in all organisational arenas—following acute pressures for change to this new type of party—were not inevitable. For Kirchheimer, the adoption of a catch-all style was an option, and, moreover, was only likely to be followed by certain parties and in certain systemic conditions. Changes were likely to take place in large parties which operate in large states. Although in principle even the smallest of parties may have pretensions to adopt a catch-all style, the specification of 'large party' is important since it is a party's proven ability to retain the loyalty of a substantial section of the electorate—in excess, say, of 30 per cent of the vote—which gives it a leading or even possibly a dominant position in the party system (Smith 1989b).
- 8 For an attempt to quantify these features, see Krouwel (1993, 1994).
- 9 Classic examples of countries where the process is likely to be highly developed are Austria, Italy, Norway, Sweden, Denmark and Germany. Conversely, the process is likely to be least developed in the United Kingdom.
- 10 Even those who are excluded from government—such as the British Liberal Party, the Italian Communist Party, etc.—are rarely denied access to state subventions, patronage and mass media. In some systems, such as Ireland and the United Kingdom, opposition parties are actually accorded a higher level of subvention precisely because they lack the resources of governing parties.
- 11 Clause III(d) of the 1924 Labour's Constitution.
- 12 These formulations are taken from the 1918 Constitution, the Manifestos and Programmes of the Labour Party in the inter-war years. The text of the 1918 constitution is to be found at Appendix I. pp. 140–2, of *1918 Labour Annual Conference*.
- 13 Clauses II(4) and III(3) The Constitution and Standing Orders of the Labour Party.
- 14 Conservative Party, 1990: Clause 2.
- 15 The decline of party membership is a general phenomenon in Western Europe. Since 1945 there has been a gradual decline in individual membership of most socialist parties in Western Europe (Bartolini 1983). Exceptions to this trend are the social democratic parties in Belgium, Finland, Germany and Sweden. The record of the traditional Conservative parties is among the worst of all European party families. With the exception of the Norwegian party—which counters the trend not only among the ideological counterparts abroad, but also among its competitors at home—the

- Danish, British, Swedish and Finnish parties evidence a decline both in terms of absolute members and in shares of the electorate during 1960–90 (Katz, Mair *et al.* 1992b).
- 16 For the factors which explain the trends in party membership and party activism, see Whiteley, Seyd and Richardson (1994:226–33).
 - 17 This point was first raised by Kirchheimer (1966a).
 - 18 David Steel was elected by a special convention of constituency representatives, the composition of which was determined according to their support among voters.
 - 19 The introduction of mandatory reselection of sitting MPs was the result of a conflict between the left and the centre/right factions whose struggle for control of the party was increasingly expressed in battles over candidate selection and the rules relating to it (Kogan and Kogan 1982).
 - 20 Since there is no formal Conservative Party Constitution, ‘rules’ here refer to Rules & Standing Orders of the National Union of Conservative and Unionist Associations.
 - 21 Robert McKenzie (1964) examines Labour’s intra-party democracy and argues that the parliamentary party dominates the policy-making process and, furthermore, parliamentary democracy requires that this should be the case. A substantial reason for this lies in the notion that cabinet government requires that parliamentarians make policy and are accountable solely to their electors. McKenzie’s views prompted academic controversy (Birch 1964; Rose 1974) and various objections (Beer 1969; Minkin 1978). Minkin (1978), for instance, disagrees with McKenzie concerning the norms of parliamentary democracy—for him parliamentary and party democracy can coexist. He argues that the party leadership is required to proceed by bargaining and conciliation with the extra-parliamentary party, and leadership concession are sometimes necessary in order to maintain its overall authority.
 - 22 Another example is provided by Hugh Gaitskell’s conflict with the party conference in 1959 on the issue of unilateral nuclear disarmament where a defeat over the issue at the 1960 conference was reversed in 1961.
 - 23 Gamble (1974) challenges this view by arguing that Conservative politics were an elaborate conciliatory process between the contradictory requirements of power and electoral support. Thus, the opinion of party activists expressed at annual party conferences were not ignored.
 - 24 *The Constitution: The Federal Party, The Party in England* (1994:21).

5

COHESION AND DISSENT

- 1 See, for example, Beer (1965), Valen and Katz (1964), and Rustow (1955).

- 2 See, for example, Duverger (1958) and Ranney and Kendall (1956).
- 3 See, for example, Lowell (1902) and Beer (1965).
- 4 These approaches are based on several methods of measuring the cohesion of parliamentary groups. The *Congressional Quarterly*, for instance, computes 'party unity scores' as one way of measuring party cohesion. A party unity score expresses the percentage of time that a member votes in agreement with a majority of his party on votes that split the parties, that is, when a majority of voting Democrats opposes a majority of voting Republicans. Aggregated over all party members in the House of Representatives and the Senate, the mean party unity score is seen as an overall measure of cohesion within each party when party majorities take opposite stands. An alternative measure—known as Rice's (1928:208–9) 'index of cohesion'—is based on the theory of probability. It is obtained by dividing the number of party members who voted and converting the percentage obtained to a scale from 0 to 100 (by subtracting 50 from the percentage and multiplying by 2), the starting point being the assumption that a fifty-fifty split in a party signifies zero cohesion. The measure ranges therefore from 0.0, in the case of a party splitting 50/50 in supporting and opposing a Bill, to 1.0 in the case of all its members voting on the same side. The level of party cohesion is simply the mean index of cohesion for all votes in the analysis.
- 5 Ozbudun (1970:343–4) also proposed that class polarisation within society correlates with party cohesion. Here he was ambiguous about whether polarisation is a party-level or a system-level factor.
- 6 See, for example, McClosky *et al.* (1960), Constantini (1963), Eldersveld (1964).
- 7 See, for example, Nyomarkay (1965) and Ignazi (1992).
- 8 It is not surprising therefore that Zariski concludes by noting that 'this promising field of political science is in a state of disarray' (1978:32).
- 9 *The Next Ten Years*, No Turning Back Group, p. 8.
- 10 *Guardian*, 16 August 1991.
- 11 The survey of politicians includes MPs, parliamentary candidates and parliamentary applicants. Active party members are considered those who attend selection meetings. The information was collected in 1992.
- 12 'Three line whip' means that all the parliamentary group is requested by the Whip's office to attend the vote on the floor of the House and to support the party's line.
- 13 The 1922 Committee is the most powerful backbench committee in the Conservative Party. The Committee takes its name from its formation by a number of Conservative MPs who were first elected in 1922. Led by Gervais Rentoul, they held two meetings in April 1923 in which officers were elected. The Committee thus came into being, as an informal body, in 1923 (Norton 1993a). The Committee's comprehensive structure has developed during the 1950s, allowing

for the transmission to the leadership of backbenchers' advice and opinion with the chairman of the Committee having ready access to the party leader. Weekly meetings provide a forum for discussion of general issues. More detailed policies are the prerogative of the twenty-four subject committees and the seven geographical area committees which also meet on a weekly basis.

- 14 The convention—established in 1841 and maintained since—is that a defeat of the government on a vote of confidence requires the prime minister to tender the government's resignation or request a dissolution of parliament.
- 15 *The Economist*, 16 January 1982.

6

INTRA-PARTY CONFLICTS AND LEGISLATIVE BARGAINING

- 1 Research on intra-party determinants and parliamentary competition is positioned within the broad context of coalition bargaining and government formation. For the three research concerns that have emerged in the literature—namely, representation, party policy and the nature of parliamentary government—see Baron (1993).
- 2 We have at our disposal at least seven indicators of organisational decline. Intra-élite conflicts, for example, may be manifested by the resignation of élite members (i.e. the 'exit' option) and by dissensions in parliament, petitions and appeals to party élites with the intention of forcing a change in party strategy (i.e. the 'voice' option). Élite-follower conflict, by comparison, may be manifested by a decline in party membership (i.e. the 'exit' option) and by demonstrations of party activists, petitions and appeals to party élites with the intention of forcing a change in party strategy (i.e. the 'voice' option).
- 3 See, for example, Bacharach and Lawler (1981).
- 4 For the importance of informal rules in government formation, see Mershon (1994).
- 5 See, for example, Bogdanor (1983a:139).
- 6 *H.C.Deb.* vol. 915, col. 1493–1755. On the usage of guillotine during 1974–9.
- 7 *Guardian*, 18 February 1977.
- 8 *H.C.Deb.* vol. 926, col. 1361–66.
- 9 A joint statement by the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Liberal Party, see Steel (1989:129–30).
- 10 Lord Owen, interview with the author, February 1990, London.
- 11 William Rodgers, interview with the author, February 1990, London.
- 12 Lord Owen, interview with the author, February 1990, London.
- 13 Lord Donoughue, interview with the author, February 1990, London.
- 14 Richard Holmes, interview with the author, February 1990, London.

- 15 Steel contested the 1976 leadership election under new rules which provided for an electoral college composed of constituency representatives, and was elected by a majority of 5,509 out of 19,573 (*Keesing's Contemporary Archives* 1976:27898).
- 16 The guillotine has been described as 'the most drastic method of curtailing debate known to procedures', and the 'extreme limit to which procedures goes in affirming the rights of the majority at the expense of the minorities of the House' (Erskine May: 1976:448).
- 17 Russell Johnston, interview with the author, February 1990, London.
- 18 Prof. James Cornford, interview with the author, February 1990, London.
- 19 This was evident in a speech made by David Steel to the Annual Conference of the Scottish Party on 19 June 1977.
- 20 Richard Holmes, interview with the author, February 1990, London.
- 21 Lord Donoughue, interview with the author, February 1990, London.

7

MULTI-PARTY ELECTORAL COMPETITION

- 1 For rational choice models of multi-party electoral competition, see Shepsle (1991).
- 2 Przeworski (1985), and Przeworski and Sprague (1986:55–79).
- 3 Based on an econometric model estimating the class composition of left party electorates over several decades, Przeworski and Sprague find that two corporatist Scandinavian countries have low trade-offs (Denmark and Norway) and the other two have intermediate trade-offs (Sweden and Finland). In the remaining three European countries for which they provide data—Belgium, France and pre-1933 Germany—trade-offs are strong because corporatism is absent, the Left is divided, or competitors campaign on cross-class appeals.
- 4 Przeworski and Sprague (1986) take the socialist or total 'left' parties share of the vote in each election, or both, and, on the basis of census data regarding the proportion of workers and allies in the electorate, attempt to correlate the real and potential workers' vote for socialist parties in a given election in relation to their share of the 'middle-class' vote in the preceding election. They do indeed find a pattern that confirms their hypothesis. 'Whenever a party succeeds in winning the vote of one non-worker in the current election, it suffers the loss of...votes of workers it would have recruited in the next election'. And this has cumulative effects over time. Thus, 'to recruit allies a party generates ideological and organisational transformations which continue to weaken the salience of class identification among workers' (Przeworski and Sprague 1986, 66–7).

- 5 See, for example, Sainsbury (1980), Tilton (1990), and Tingsten (1973).
- 6 See Smith (1989b).
- 7 For a contradictory argument, see Beer (1965).
- 8 See Beveridge (1942).
- 9 See Plant (1983), and Garner and Kelly (1993).
- 10 This assumption casts considerable doubts on Przeworski and Sprague's (1986) analysis which suggests that socialist parties have become captives of a past that condemns them to decline, along with the working class. Data which contains developments throughout the 1980s reveals an opposite direction. At the outset, even though support of the Labour Party fell at the same time as the working class contracted, studies found that only about half of Labour's long-term decline can be accounted for by changes in the social structure (Rose and MacAllister 1990; Crewe 1990). Further, by the early and mid-1980s, issues and ideologies influence voting much more than occupation, income, union membership or housing (Lewis-Beck 1988:82; McAllister and Mughan 1987:57). This empirical evidence is in accordance with Kitschelt's (1992) data on class composition of left party electorate and the overall electoral fortunes of these parties over time. Kitschelt argued that whatever the strategic dilemmas left-wing parties are faced with in the electoral competition, these choices are unlikely to be constrained by a simple trade-off between appeals to workers and to allies among social constituencies. In fact, socialist parties appear to possess considerable freedom in choosing their strategies and electoral coalitions. Contrary to Przeworski and Sprague's theory, he posited that parties that operate in an environment prone to yield severe trade-offs have improved their electoral performance most from the 1970s to the 1980s, while parties facing intermediate or mild electoral trade-offs performed worst.
- 11 See, for example, Marquand (1988) and Skidelsky (1988).
- 12 See, for example, Burch (1983), and Norton and Aughey (1981, 79–89).
- 13 Social justice presupposes that the spread of incomes that resulted from a market can be evaluated by reference to criteria external to the market and which are independent of the rules of procedural justice (property, contract and crime rules) that service it: these criteria are normally need, desert and merit.
- 14 See, for example, Crewe and Searing (1988).
- 15 See, for example, Harris (1983), Hobsbawm (1983), and Nairn (1983).
- 16 This move has led to a complex split of functions with thirty-two London Boroughs having individual responsibility for education, housing, social services, local planning, leisure and environmental health, and sharing combined responsibility in other areas. In the metropolitan arena, thirty-six metropolitan district councils have

- undertaken a range of functions similar to that of the London Boroughs.
- 17 This sub-section on the Maastricht Treaty was written jointly with Dr Simon Hix.
 - 18 The following positions are taken from party policy documents, government and opposition declarations, and leaders' statements in the House of Commons (Labour Party NEC 1990, 1991a, 1991b; HM Foreign Office 1991, HM Treasury 1990).
 - 19 John Major, 'Raise Your Eyes, There is a Land Beyond' *The Economist*, 25 September 1993, p. 23.
 - 20 Spain was concerned that it would allow northern countries to block decisions on Mediterranean issues.
 - 21 The controversy over majority voting and Major's climbdown have probably contributed to the Conservatives' humiliation in the Euro-elections. The June 1994, European election was held in Britain under first-past-the-post voting system which is practised nowhere else. The Conservative Party saw its thirty-two seats fall to eighteen. This was a humiliation, given that Britain's seats at Strasbourg had risen (along with France and Italy) from eighty-one to eighty-seven, an expansion to compensate for the extra seats given to Germany after unification. The Conservatives' loss was a gain not just for the Labour opposition but also for the Liberal Democrats, whose 17 per cent of the vote won them two seats—their first ever in Euro-elections.
 - 22 Labour Party, *Meet the Challenge, Make the Change* (London: Labour Party, 1989), p. 41.
 - 23 Parliamentary debate, 19 April 1994.
 - 24 *The Economist*, 9 July 1994, p. 27.
 - 25 David Willets is quoted in *The Economist*, 25 June 1994, p. 33.
 - 26 Labour Party, *Meet the Challenge, Make the Change* (London: Labour Party, 1989), p. 54.
 - 27 *Financial Times*, 11/12 June 1994, p. 1.

APPENDIX: COMPARATIVE POLITICS AS A DISCIPLINE

- 1 See Chilcote (1981), Wiarda (1985), Mayer (1989), Blondel (1990), Bebler and Seroka (1990), Rustow and Erickson (1991), Hague, Harrop and Breslin (1992).
- 2 Bryce (1929) employed the comparative method describing a number of political systems—ancient Athens, the republics of Latin America, France, Switzerland, Canada, the United States, Australia and New Zealand—in order to arrive at what is constant in human behaviour: a set of psychological principles promoting democracy.
- 3 See, for example, Ragin (1987, 1991), and Przeworski and Teune (1970).

- 4 See, for example, Almond and Powell (1966), Kalleberg (1966), Wallerstein (1974–1989), Apter and Andrain (1972), Roberts (1978), Dogan and Pelassy (1990), Wiarda (1985).
- 5 See Ragin (1987:7–9), Przeworski (1987:2–4), Lijphart (1984:46–66), Mayer (1989:64–74), Lane and Ersson (1994), Rokkan (1970), Dogan and Pelassy (1990:3–44).

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