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DEMOCRATIC PARTY GOVERNMENT:   FORMATION  
AND FUNCTIONING IN TWENTY-ONE COUNTRIES.

by

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Party Government Project

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DEMOCRATIC PARTY GOVERNMENT:

Formation and Functioning in Twenty-one Countries

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DEMOCRATIC PARTY GOVERNMENT

Table of Contents

Introduction

Chapter 1 Parties in Government - A New Theory

Chapter 2 Parties and Government Formation

Chapter 3 Distributing Ministries between Parties

Chapter 4 Party Policies in Government

Chapter 5 Reshuffles and Government Termination

Chapter 6 Parties and Governments: Pursuing Policies or Seeking Office?



## INTRODUCTION

Curiously, the behaviour of parties in elections has attracted more attention over the past three decades than the behaviour of parties in government - at least on a systematic and comparative basis. Yet there can be no argument over the equal if not greater importance of governmental processes for our understanding of politics. No matter how free, representative and responsible elections may be, any failure to respond at government level renders them totally ineffective.

Parties alone operate in elections as well as in government. They are consequently in a unique position to channel broad popular preferences into Government action. Studying the way parties do this is just as essential as the analysis of their electoral strategies for an understanding of democratic processes.

This in turn is vital to the justification of democracy against other types of political system. Without valid knowledge of how governments are formed and run by parties, we cannot argue with any conviction for the general superiority of the democratic system. We are simply basing assertions on ignorance of its central processes.

Nor is it enough to review the workings of party governments in one or two sophisticated Western politics. For this, quite fairly, provokes the criticism that democratic parties may govern efficiently and sensitively under favourable conditions, but where they face the social and political traumas of the rest of the world will prove just as unresponsive and ineffective as any other type of ruler. To demonstrate that democracy does live up to its claims, one must study the behaviour of parties in government for as many democracies as possible, comparatively and systematically.

This book reviews party governments in twenty-one democracies, in the underdeveloped as well as the developed countries of the world, operating under a variety of cultural and societal conditions. These countries are chosen as having maintained a democratic system for most of the post-war period. Countries which became independent or democratic later are excluded because their party systems and modes of government have in most cases not yet stabilised, and cannot be used as a basis for broad comparative and temporal generalisations. This still permits the inclusion of India and Sri Lanka in the analysis, together with Japan, Australia, New Zealand and Canada, outside the core democracies of Western Europe. As the object is to study countries with broadly similar government arrangements (although operating under a variety of cultural, social and economic circumstances), the United States and Switzerland are also excluded. The Presidential government of the United States, where the electorally successful party takes executive powers unconditionally and with a constitutionally guaranteed term of office, differs sharply from the systems operated in the countries chosen for study, where government's tenure of office depends upon its ability to win votes of confidence in the legislature. Similarly, none of the other countries has experienced the radical devolution of power to the cantons made in Switzerland and the consequent relegation of national government to a caretaker role which facilitates permanent coalitions between the main parties.

The criteria of selection nevertheless allow for inclusion of all the other major democracies of the world and thus for the testing of a comprehensive theory of democratic party government. The concern to develop such a theory stems from three considerations. The first is a desire to round off previous work with Dennis Farlie, on the behaviour of parties in elections and the effects of this on voting and election



outcomes (Budge, Crewe and Farlie (eds.), 1976; Budge and Farlie, 1977; Budge and Farlie, 1983). In Explaining and Predicting Elections (1983) a systematic theory of election outcomes was developed and validated for twenty-three democracies - the ones studied here with the United States and Switzerland. Explaining the behaviour of parties in government is a natural corollary to explaining how they gain the popular support necessary to sustain a governmental role. Together, the theories of elections and governments constitute an overall explanation of the central democratic process<sup>20</sup>.

Work on the theory of government actually began as part of the project on the Future of Party Government, directed from 1981 by Rudolph Wildenmann at the European University Institute in Florence. Analyses of the ways party roles in government will develop in the future, and indeed descriptions of the way it functions at present, all require a comprehensive theory of what parties do in government. This provides general reference points for detailed analyses of particular processes. In turn, these detailed analyses contribute to the development of an overall theory. So there is a symbiotic relationship between the broad comparative analysis discussed here, and the country and process-specific analyses produced by the project (series references to books from party project).

Not only did theory and book gain intellectually from <sup>THE</sup> wide-ranging seminars organised under the Party Government Programme, but they also gained necessary material support, in the shape of research assistance, photocopying and travel costs-without which the large amount of information needed to validate the theory would not have been assembled and processed. At an early stage the Nuffield Foundation also contributed to these costs in its usual enlightened and timely fashion (Grant No. SOC/181/755). I am grateful to all these friends and supporters whose

essential help prevents them from disclaiming all responsibility for what follows! In particular I should like to thank Rudolph Wildenmann, Val Herman, Norman Schofield, Dick Katz,

While the book has incorporated many of the criticisms and suggestions resulting from discussion with them, I am solely responsible for errors of execution and presentation.

The third impulse to generate a systematic theory of democratic party government stems from the desire to develop and unify work already done by others. While the comparative analysis of democratic governments has been neglected it has not been totally ignored. In particular, attempts have been made to create a theory of the way parties enter into coalitions, and distribute ministries, and to test this comparatively, within the context of an office-seeking model of party behaviour.

It will be obvious that the theory developed here (as any theory in the field must, in my opinion) starts from an evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of such office-seeking models. While these vary in detail, their basic assumption is that democratic parties aim above all at acquiring and keeping government office. More detailed implications are then derived from this and used to explain actual party behaviour.

Such models have had two enduring effects on subsequent research. One is to ensure that politicians' strategies and decisions are viewed as broadly rational and hence explicable in fairly simple terms. The theory stated in Chapter 1 stands like the office-seeking explanations within the broad 'rational choice' tradition, even if it attributes more substantive preferences to party politicians than <sup>the</sup> abstract maximisation hypotheses derived from economics.

The second influence from the 'office-seeking' models is apparent in the a priori, semi-deductive presentation of the book's underlying

theory. After initial assumptions have been stated, their implications are drawn out before being checked against actual party behaviour to see if they hold. Such a priori theory is useful because it must fill in all the links in its chain of reasoning, and is thus more specific and detailed about all the assumptions involved than most retrospective interpretations of pre-existing data. A fully articulated statement is not only more satisfactory in itself but provides a better basis for prediction of future behaviour. Although prediction is not the same as explanation, it is both of practical use - particularly in directing attention to what is going to happen in such a vital institution as government - and important in selecting the best theoretical explanation. The systematic and predictive form of the theory also has the advantage of dovetailing with the predictive theory of election outcomes already developed (Budge and Farlie, 1983).

Not that inductive, data-based work has been ignored. This book is from one point of view an attempt to synthesise these empirical findings within the framework of rational choice theory. Overwhelmingly, detailed research has shown that party leaders' policy preferences cannot be ignored in any realistic explanation of government processes. Such preferences not only limit what politicians will do and say to get elected (Robertson, 1976; Budge and Farlie, 1977, ch.11). They also make it unsatisfactory for them to govern without giving precedence to ideological predispositions and policy commitments (Budge and Farlie, 1977, pp.157-162; Rallings, 1984). These markedly affect, for example, different governments' expenditure decisions (Castles (ed.), 1982). Subsequent discussion not only incorporates the research-attested primacy of policy as a basic assumption, but uses some of the previous findings to decide between competing theories (Chapter 4 below).

The order of chapters is determined by the nature of the approach.

Chapter 1 discusses previous theory and research, and criticisms and developments which lead to the new deductive theory. This is summarised in the verbal propositions of Tables 1.1 to 1.3, with the supporting text. Together these constitute a systematic, comparative, comprehensive theory of government formation; initial distribution and re-allocation of ministries; policy-making and outputs; and decess. Chapters 2-5 each start by drawing out implications of the unified theory for their own area, and then report the fit between these implications and the actual record of post-war governments in the twenty-one countries. Chapter 2 is concerned with government formation; Chapter 3 with the initial distribution of ministries between parties; Chapter 4 reviews policies and expenditures; and Chapter 5 deals with reshuffles (often involving internal party factions) and the collapse of governments. Chapter 6 assesses the bearings of the empirical findings on general theory.

It will be obvious from the outline that the theory here, unlike its predecessors, covers all the major preoccupations of parties in government, treating the actual formation of governments as part of their overall life-process rather than as the major problem requiring explanation.

This seems necessary if the explanation is to provide a context for general research into problems of party government. For historians, and institutional and policy analysts, the actual formation of a government is less significant than what it does during its lifetime. Concentration on the emergence of particular types of government is perhaps natural in theories that have emphasised the predominant concern of parties with gaining and keeping office. For other research it is only a starting point.

Besides explaining the processes internal to government formation, allocation and change of ministries, policy-making and termination, a

satisfactory theory should also relate them through a concise set of general assumptions linking what would ~~be otherwise recorded~~<sup>BE REGARDED</sup> as disparate areas of activity. If the assumptions can be shown to fit actual observations, either directly or through their implications, they can be taken as basic principles underlying the whole operation of democratic party governments. Tables 1.1 to 1.3 of Chapter 1 attempt to present such general assumptions succinctly in the shape of verbal propositions which can be precisely discussed and whose relevance to the various implications and applications checked in later chapters can be made very clear. The presentation and discussion of these assumptions, and of their underlying rationale, form the main concerns of this introductory chapter.

## CHAPTER 1

## PARTIES IN GOVERNMENT - A NEW THEORY

## 1. Previous Explanations: The Primacy of Office and the Introduction of Policy Considerations

Before a new theory can be developed, careful attention must be paid to the old. It is rare in political science to have a body of well-developed earlier theory. So some justification must be given of the need to modify it. Moreover the new theory, like any other systematic explanation of the behaviour of democratic governments, must define its position in regard to the ideas about 'rational choice', borrowed from economics, which have dominated studies of politicians' behaviour over the past twenty-five years. Because variants of such ideas constitute the only general theories of democratic government at the present time, it is essential to come to terms with them before developing any <sup>OTHER</sup> approach.

This does not mean that substantive research findings made independently of this framework should be ignored. These in fact constitute one of the main reasons for modifying current models and will be introduced into discussion at the appropriate moment. But discussion must begin at the theoretical level.

Office-seeking assumptions are not the only ones which might be postulated within the framework of 'rational choice'. Rational choice in a broad sense is simply adoption of the most cost-efficient course of action to achieve desired ends. Rationality relates to the pursuit of given ends and cannot of itself impose restrictions on the type of end endorsed (Budge, Farlie and Laver, 1982).

In economics the further restrictive assumption is imposed (as money

is so essential to gaining material ends) that maximising profits and minimising costs can be taken as a universal immediate objective for everyone in the market. By analogy, most extant models of party behaviour in government assume that possession of office is so essential to achieving all other party goals, including 'altruistic' or ideologically motivated enactment of their policies, that office becomes their universal immediate objective. Parties are therefore seen as trying to hold as many Government ministries as they can for as long a period as possible at least costs in terms of effort expended.

While the essence of money is that, once gained, it can be freely spent, office is usually held only on certain conditions. So the analogy is not perfect. What happens where the conditions of holding office preclude the achievement of preferred policy ends is not usually discussed in office-holding models. One analysis indicates that under such circumstances, negative utilities might emerge rather quickly (Budge and Farlie, 1977, pp.157-162).

This is simply commonsense. It is hard to imagine any politician in the real world agreeing to enact policies he opposes simply to stay in office. There are prudential as well as moral reasons for this. Even in a world of selfish utility-maximisers a reputation for responsibility and reliability is worth votes (Downs, 1957, pp.103-9). Yet if politicians seek office as their immediate overriding objective, they will adopt just such a course. Office is justified as essential to the attainment of other ends, but rather quickly replaces these within the strict office-seeking models (partly because other ends are vague and unspecified), ~~as the ultimate and only goal.~~

The basic assumption behind office-seeking developments of rational choice theory is therefore that parties (or, in some variants,

factions within parties) are united groups aiming at a maximal share of the spoils of office. They must therefore form a coalition which commands over 50 per cent of legislative seats (otherwise their equally selfish opponents would combine to vote down the government), but not much over 50 per cent, otherwise they would have to share their spoils more widely than would otherwise be required (Riker, 1962; Gamson, 1961). Although it applies mainly to coalition formation in a multi-party situation, and not to other government processes, this theory is general and comparative. It meshes conveniently with models of voting behaviour where parties are similarly assumed to be selfish office-seekers, adjusting policies to get votes (Downs, 1957; for a review see Budge and Farlie, 1977, chs.3-5). Combined, the two/form a comprehensive and unified explanation of democratic processes (including government policy-making, which would in this case be directed to aggrandisement of party interests and attracting further votes). If one party has a majority in government the situation from the point of view of office-seekers is even better, as they do not need to share their spoils with anyone outside the party.

Various extensions have been proposed to this basic position. Some of these have been along the lines of refining previous requirements, so that not only a minimal number of legislators but also of parties share the spoils. (For a review of such principles see Taylor, 1972.) None of these modifications, however, noticeably improves the fit of the original model to actual patterns of coalition formation in Western Europe (Taylor and Laver, 1973; Herman and Pope, 1973; Laver, 1974).

The most important extension to the original assumptions has been to introduce ideology into the rational choice framework, although more as an externally imposed constraint on the coalitions office-seekers can form, than as a modification of that primary urge. The argument, in



other words, is that given the existence of ideology it makes sense even for those not ideologically motivated themselves to combine with the closer parties rather than those further away. The reasons stem from the tensions and disagreements which ideological disparities would introduce. These produce higher costs - time and energy spent in internal government negotiations - which in turn diminish the net profit to be made out of office-holding. Moreover internal disagreements also render the fall of the government more likely.

For both reasons policy disagreements are viewed even on office-seeking assumptions as needing to be minimised either by ensuring that ideologically contiguous parties form the government (a minimal connected winning coalition (Axelrod, 1970)) or that overall diversity is reduced, even although this may sometimes involve 'jumping' small neighbouring parties (Leiderson, 1966; De Swaan, 1973). Such considerations are then assumed to enter increasingly into politicians' calculations, along with their desire to attain and keep office with the smallest group possible (again, of course, a majority party is ideal from this point of view). (For a review of the ways in which these criteria interrelate see Taylor, 1972.)

Such ~~an~~ extension to the original minimal winning criteria can be criticised. If ideology is so important a constraint, why should it, rather than office-seeking, not dominate the actions of politicians? Attainment of office is often postulated as a primary goal because it is the prerequisite to putting policy into practice. If, on the other hand, the attraction of ideology is great, its binding power in a coalition would surely substitute for common pursuit of gains from office, thus making for less concern with a minimalist criterion, as Browne and Rice (1979) and Grofman (1980) imply. Since ideological sympathies would draw together elements of Government and Opposition,

there would also be more prospects of external support (and internal disintegration) than the pure office-seeking theory allows.

Ideological sympathies and alliances fluctuate, as different aspects of policy assume prominence. However, both the original, pure office-seeking theories, and their ideological modifications, are static. They assume that the same factors influence politicians all the time. To some extent of course any general theory which tries to cover events in a number of countries over a considerable time period must provide an invariant framework to work within. But there are degrees of invariance, and it seems unlikely that politicians would always react in the same way to the wildly fluctuating vagaries of domestic and international politics, nor that ideological distances or policy agreements always remain the same. It would be desirable to have a theory which made some allowance for changing historical circumstances and politicians' reactions to them (Laver, 1974).

A deliberately simplified formal theory cannot, however, be adequately criticised on the grounds that politicians do not consciously apply it. They may, after all, act in the way it describes even if, for prudential or electoral reasons, they do not admit this or even are themselves not aware of doing so. The proof then rests on the extent to which actual coalitions form in ways specified in the theory. Unfortunately, when we look at the evidence, only 34 per cent of coalitions in twelve Western European countries between 1945 and 1971 are covered by the optimal combination of minimal winning and ideological distance criteria (Herman and Pope, 1973). An additional 30.2 per cent were formed by surplus majority governments, i.e. by a coalition of more than enough parties to form a minimum winning group. And another 35.8 per cent were composed of coalitions with less than 50 per cent of legislative seats - an even queerer phenomenon if opposition politicians were

indeed ruthless office-grabbers.

These conclusions hold when Governments are defined as administrations formed after a general election and continuing in the absence of:-

- (a) change in the prime minister;
- (b) change in the party composition of the cabinet;
- (c) resignation in an inter-election period followed by reformation of the government with the same prime minister and party composition (Hurwitz, 1971; Sanders and Herman, 1977).

This is a standard definition and it is the one adopted throughout this discussion. Normally we do think of such events as defining a government's period of office, and it brings our theories closer to practice when we use the commonsense definition. In a study which omits the criteria of elections and resignations, and thus assimilates governments with the same prime minister and party composition, Laurence Dodd (1976) does establish a tendency for governments formed on minimal winning principles to last longer. The difficulty is to sort out the implications of this when, for example, the 1949 Menzies Government in Australia lasted by this criteria for seventeen years! There are, after all, reasons why governments resign, even if they reform later along the same lines. It is likely, after this crisis, that power relationships and/or policy priorities have changed, so it makes sense to distinguish the two.

Recent work by Schofield (1983, chs. 2 and 3) using the same definition of government change as Dodd, has confirmed the tendency for minimal winning coalitions to last longer. It further appears that minimal winning coalitions tend to form as expected where there are a reasonably small number of significant parties. As fragmentation increases, in the sense of the number of significant parties going up,

surplus coalitions alternate in increasing numbers with minority governments. This could be interpreted as a reaction to <sup>THE</sup> confusion and uncertainty inherent in dealing with too many independent actors, and consequent difficulties of calculation. In turn the strain of making constant concessions and compromises seems to provoke internal splits and disagreements within the existing parties, thus increasing fragmentation in a continuing vicious circle.

These findings indicate that in certain circumstances the office-seeking, minimal-winning criteria are relevant. However, the criteria are not universally applicable and indeed may apply only under rather specific circumstances. This point is reinforced by the findings of Taylor and Laver (1973) and Herman and Pope (1973) using the generally accepted definition of government given above, that roughly a third of West European government coalitions did conform to minimum winning criteria (tempered, however, by considerations of policy distance). The new formulation outlined below is compatible with these findings in allowing for the application of minimal winning office-seeking considerations where policy agreement is lacking (see Table 2.1 below).

Because minimal winning criteria apply only patchily, steps have been taken to formulate rational choice criteria for coalition formation, based on policy distance of some kind which almost, or even wholly, exclude office-seeking from consideration (De Swaan, 1973, p.156; Browne and Rice, 1979; Grofman, 1980). Such formulations may quite happily predict the formation of surplus coalitions where the parties are ideologically contiguous. They have not yet been tested against a wide range of systematically collected evidence. But the fact that large numbers of surplus majority governments are known to form, attests to their realism in this respect. This shift from office-seeking to pure ideological or policy considerations in coalition theory suggests the need

to give explicit precedence to policy, as in the general theory of government below (Section 2).

The evaluation of office-seeking theory has concentrated on the emergence of government coalitions because it is here that it is most explicit and widely applied. Evidence on the allocation of ministries is ambiguous. Browne and Franklin (1973) related the share of ministries received by parties to their share of seats, and noted a strong proportionality between them. Parties, in other words, received an allocation of ministries proportional to the share of seats they had contributed to support the government. While this might seem to fit a straightforward office-seeking interpretation, maximisers of office among smaller parties crucial to the formation of government would surely demand a disproportionate share of ministries (cf. Olson, 1966, pp. ). Since in absolute terms this would still be worthwhile for larger parties to concede (for relatively few offices are involved relative to those which can be gained), one would expect on strict office-maximising assumptions to find strong disproportionality in favour of small parties. Some tendencies in this direction are noted by Browne and Franklin, but not to the extent that would be envisaged by the theory.

Strictly speaking, office-maximisation has been applied only to coalition formation and to some extent to the allocation of ministries, rather than to other aspects of government activity. As noted above, its close relationship to the office-seeking theory of party competition nevertheless implies that politicians will try to carry through policies supported by the majority of electors, since that is what will ultimately secure victory and office. Since this is the only consideration in their minds, past commitments or longstanding ideological attachments will carry no weight compared to current majority preferences (cf. Budge and Farlie, 1977, chs. 4 and 5).

On the other hand, the postulate of rapid policy adjustments of this kind contradicts the insertion into office-seeking coalition models of fixed ideological positions which render co-operation between neighbours more profitable than co-operation across greater ideological distances. If positions are constantly being adjusted to meet electoral preferences, fixed ideological positions will not exist, even for limited periods of time. Calculating transitory proximities will rapidly become unmanageable.

Thus the promised integration of the two branches of office-seeking theories, which in the abstract forms an attractive explanation of most electoral and governmental processes, actually conceals an important anomaly in regard to the extent and speed of policy adjustments. Either the office-seeking coalition theory has to drop assumptions about stable ideological positions for the parties, which would diminish its fit to existing evidence, or office-seeking theories of electoral competition have to modify their assumption that parties are infinitely flexible in policy terms.

In point of fact parties do seem to have stable policy commitments, to which in some cases they subordinate office but which in any case are bound up with their political aspirations. Because of the impossibility of making fine adjustments and calculations, electors vote on the basis of fixed associations between the parties and certain broad policies (Robertson, 1976; Budge and Farlie, 1983, ch.2). Certainly party strategists act on this assumption (Budge and Robertson, 1984). So parties have no hopes of evading the connection. If they do not carry through their characteristic policies while in government, they will not profit by their neglect (quite the reverse in some cases).

This interpretation saves the postulate of relatively fixed

ideological positions for the parties, which has been incorporated in some form into most office-seeking models. But it goes further in pointing to the dominance of policy considerations over a strategy of immediate office-seeking. Alterations to the original models have themselves mostly followed this direction, to the extent that policy considerations have replaced office-seeking altogether, as noted above.

Given the poor overall fit between office-seeking models and the actual behaviour of parties in government, the obvious way to build a new and more satisfactory theory is to turn the original formulation on its head, and give primacy to policy considerations. Instead of assuming politicians to aim at personal aggrandisement, we postulate that they put preferred policies above office. Participation in government is valued because it gives parties an opportunity to implement policy. Such an assumption links up party behaviour in government to what has been shown to happen in elections (Budge and Farlie, 1983). It also extends the motives behind the formation of government (Chapter 2) to those determining the distribution of Ministries (Chapter 3), to the principles of government policy making (Chapter 4) and to the purpose behind Ministerial reshuffles (Chapter 5). Although this theory of democratic government breaks with earlier theory on the primacy of policy over office, the break is not complete. The hierarchical principles postulated to underlie government formation leave a place for minimal winning coalitions in multi-party systems without policy agreement (Table 1.2). Prime Ministers who push preferred policies act indistinguishably from Prime Ministers who wish to keep themselves in office (Table 1.3). Formally, of course, the statement of theory is inspired by the shape of the earlier explanations. More broadly, the pursuit of policy seems quite as 'rational' as the pursuit of office, besides giving a more attractive picture of the democratic politician as an upholder of principle rather than a pursuer of place.

2. A Comprehensive Theory of Democratic Party Government giving Primacy to Policy Preferences

i. Assumptions

This section systematically develops the consequences of the critique in Section 1 and the tendency of office-seeking models themselves to incorporate ideology and policy. If policy preferences are taken as the major determinant of politicians' actions, one must specify what these are and how they affect behaviour within Governments. As will be seen, this still leaves a place for the minimal winning coalition, but as a last resort rather than as the general norm. As well as the shape taken by policy preferences, it must detail the circumstances under which a government can actually form (does it require a minimum of 50 per cent plus one seats in the legislature as the office-seeking argument implies? Or can it make do with less now the assumption of pure office-seeking has been modified?). Parties are not necessarily united internally, of course, although their endorsement of a large number of common interests renders it natural for many purposes to view them as single actors. This is entirely defensible for purposes of simplification, when (for example in the formation of governments) most parties have clearly defined purposes and positions on which most of their members at least temporarily agree. In dealing with the functioning of governments over a one to four year period, however, internal party factions emerge, even if they were not there before (but they normally are). Their existence affects the policies governments make, and perhaps even more closely the re-allocation of ministries and reshuffles which occur during the lifetime of most governments.

Table 1.1 spells out the general assumptions of a new theory designed to cover these and related points, and to provide an integrated basis for



explaining all the major aspects of party behaviour in government.

(Table 1.1 about here)

The assumptions are stated verbally, as precisely and clearly as possible. The advantage of presenting them together in a table is to render them more easily memorable and to emphasise their interrelationships. A tabular presentation serves also to highlight any ambiguities or unforeseen complexities, which the object is to eliminate. In the table the assumptions form a progression from those necessary to cover the question of government formation to those dealing with other aspects of government (though most assumptions have implications for more than one area, as will appear).

Although it might be regarded as purely definitional in nature, Assumption 1 does specify the minimal condition for a government's existence - the state of affairs which parties must aim to create if they wish to form a government and which they must maintain if they want to stay in office. At first sight it may seem obvious (in the Parliamentary regimes being discussed) that governments need a majority in legislative votes of confidence. The ability of the government to gain legislative support is, after all, specified in most constitutions (written or unwritten) as a legal requirement for its survival.

Note, however, what this very bare assumption is not saying - that is its real significance in our argument. It does not maintain as an office-seeking approach does, that the Government must have a majority of seats in the Chamber in order to win votes of confidence, on the further assumption that all non-government parties impelled by the urge for immediate office will gang up on the Government at every opportunity. Since office-seeking has been abandoned as the primary motivation, there is no reason why opposition parties may not offer voting support to a

government from outside, or at least abstain, if they have policy aims which may be served by these courses of action. Moreover, two non-government parties, even if they dislike the government and wish to replace it by themselves, may still like that alternative better than its replacement by the other. Hence they will rarely vote simultaneously against it. For all these reasons a government may survive quite comfortably for a considerable period with less than 50 per cent of legislative seats - indeed, quite often with less than 40 per cent. Thus Assumption 1 is quite compatible with the observed frequency of minority governments - which are almost as common as minimal winning coalitions.

With the question of what is at stake clarified, Assumption 2 states explicitly the point that has been made generally above - that parties' main concern is with setting up governments which will carry through their preferred policies, rather than simply being in government for its own sake.

Assumption 3 states explicitly what parties' preferred policies are. In order of priority these are to conserve democracy, if that is in any sense under threat; where such a threat is absent to deal with distributional and planning matters related to Socialist policies (whether the parties concerned are for or against them); and where these are not salient, to pursue their own characteristic policies (which are most often designed to benefit the social groups from which the party draws its support).

In making such explicit assumptions about parties' and politicians' preferences, the new approach breaks decisively with earlier ones. Under the desire to preserve generality wherever possible, most formal models seek to make their assumptions and implications compatible with any general aim which actors may hold. On the other hand, since it is

necessary to postulate certain goals for actors in order to give the formal reasoning some application and content, this usually involves a narrowing down of postulated goals to pure office-seeking, on the ground that attainment of office is prerequisite to pursuing any policy. While this reasoning has a surface plausibility it is obvious that it breaks down in the many cases where the price of entry to office is the abandonment or even drastic modification of preferred policy.

Politicians, on the contrary, usually seem to have certain specific policies in mind when they set up or enter governments. These policies vary with circumstances. Politicians, like anyone else, tend to switch their priorities in response to changed situations. The wording of Assumption 3 allows for this. Thus in a crisis of the regime, it is highly unlikely that the very politicians who have been most influential in shaping its practices, and who in many ways are the chief beneficiaries of existing arrangements, will not make their main concern its support and defence. Such politicians will, by definition, be in the majority since if they were not, the democratic regime would already have ceased to exist! Whatever their previous differences over social and economic policy, or in regard to the various group interests they represent, they will come together when the system of bargaining whereby these differences is settled is itself attacked. In that, they have a common interest overlying the disputes they carry on within the bargaining process.

In a normal political situation, democracy is not seriously threatened. This gives free play for such 'ordinary' disputes to emerge. The most pervasive and general of these relate to the programmes of Socialist parties or related 'progressive' parties (Budge and Robertson (eds.), 1984, ch.20). Whether or not these are full-blooded Marxist or simply reformist in intent, they all threaten upsets in established relationships which tend to involve most people in the society. As a

result, all parties will tend to line up on either the Socialist or anti-Socialist side when these issues come to the fore, sinking the differences which at other times might have separated them. Under such circumstances they will be willing to refrain from pushing points to which at other times they should have been firmly wedded, since their clients would, in their view, be more decisively affected by the success or reversal of the Socialist programme where there seems a real possibility of it being effected.

Where this is unlikely, and no threat to the democratic system exists, then parties and politicians are free to pursue the policies most characteristically associated with them. As we have noted, these are often interests or needs of supporting or associated groups. Socialist parties will follow this course too, but in a more incremental and piecemeal fashion than in periods of outright confrontation with bourgeois parties.

Assumption 3 is, of course, specifically phrased so as to cover the post-war situation in the democracies covered here. It is probable that the same specification would apply pre-war, although its applicability to that period will not be checked here. Although the assumption does tie democratic politicians down to a set of substantive preferences, it is hard to see what other motives could be operating in their situation, whether in the post-war period or at another time. So the loss of generality may be more inhibiting for mathematical manipulation than for substantive explanation.

Assumption 4 might almost be termed the principle of inertia operating within our framework. Parties are concerned with setting up the government arrangements which will most effectively attain their policy preferences. To change the normal arrangements more drastically

than is required for that purpose is self-defeating, as this might provoke all sort of alarms and resistance, thus rendering it harder to carry the preferred policy through. This is because overturning established arrangements is both a signal that further, more drastic changes are to be expected (thus giving opposition more time to rally) and anxiety-provoking in itself. In a sense, usual political guarantees are being withdrawn. Thus there is a premium - even for parties bent on radical change - on associating with themselves some party which has often been in government.

This consideration applies mainly, of course, to parties in a coalition system, where governments tend to be made up of two or more parties. But it is not absent from two-party majority systems, where one party constitute a government on their own. Normal governments then consist of one or the other of the major parties. Where one of these parties is being replaced, however (as in Britain the Liberals were by Labour in the twenties), it will always be prudent for the newer party to associate itself initially in government with one of the older parties.

We have commented on the postulate of party unity and common purposes. Assumptions 2 to 4 in fact ascribe common preferences and motivations to parties as such. This is realistic in that any party which keeps together as a functioning entity must preserve a minimal set of common purposes vis-a-vis other parties. Office is rarely enough to provide a unifying bond, because as already pointed out the mere achievement of office gives little satisfaction if it does not provide a means of co-operating with like-minded individuals to effect policies. If a party is so divided as not to agree internally on some preferred policies more than its factions do with groups outside the party, then no motivations exist for keeping it together.

Within this set of common purposes there is, however, room for differences of emphasis and priority. Within most parties these give rise to different groups and factions, which compete to place their own adherents within Ministries and to influence Government policy. Assumption 5 explicitly recognises the existence of such factions and groups, but also incorporates the qualifications made above - their struggles are contained within the overall party framework. This consists both of shared, overriding, policy agreements and sanctions which will be brought to bear upon those who violate these.

Most individuals in a party will belong to a faction, and Ministers and Prime Ministers are no exception. Their loyalty to their faction as well as to their party will motivate their behaviour, with consequences which will be most evident in the area of internal Government change. Specifically related to this area is Assumption 7, which makes the perhaps trivial but nonetheless essential point that Ministries do not normally disappear with Ministers, so the quitting of office by an individual for whatever reason provides the stimulus for a change in the composition of the Government. We shall follow through the consequences of this in relation to Table 1.3 below.

#### ii. Implications for government formation

Since governments have to be formed before they can be reshuffled, we first, however, deal with the implications of our assumptions (specifically Assumptions 1 to 4 in Table 1.1) for the way in which Governments are initially constituted. Here we are primarily concerned with which parties enter the Government, rather than with the question of how Ministries are shared between them. We deal with this later (Section 2.iv below). As in the case of office-seeking theory, the implications from the assumptions take the form of criteria specifying what the party

composition of governments will be under given distributions of legislative votes between parties. They are stated in Table 1.2. Criteria i, ii(a), iii and iv derive from the first three assumptions of Table 1.1 and Criteria ii(b) and v from Assumptions 1 to 4 of that table.

(Table 1.2 about here)

The relationship between criteria and assumptions is clear-cut. If (by Assumption 3(a)) politicians' chief concern when the democratic regime is threatened is to defend it, it must follow that all pro-system parties will seek the most effective means of doing so. This is to form a government of National Unity, far in excess of the bare numbers needed to survive votes of confidence (Assumption 1). Only by staging an unusual show of unity and determination can threats (whether external or internal) be outfaced. Such a 'surplus majority' government is inexplicable in terms of pure office-seeking, but it is very understandable in terms of a general party agreement on a burningly important question of the day - a question, almost, of survival.

The desire to safeguard the regime will also incline democratic parties to shun co-operation with parties opposed to it, under any circumstances. This is not an implication of the assumptions which appears as a separate criterion on Table 1.2, but it does appear throughout as a constraint on the composition of any coalition government, within the other criteria.

Where no threat to the regime is perceived, Criterion ii in Table 1.2 states that any party with an absolute majority of legislative votes will form a government on its own, or (with an eye to the normal arrangements in a country where absolute majorities are unusual) will at least dominate the government, probably in association with a small

'party of government' (i.e. a minor party which almost always participates in the ruling coalition). Criterion ii(a), on single-party government based on an absolute majority of legislative votes, of course covers the classic situation produced by competition between two evenly balanced major parties. Whether differences over the Socialist programme are salient, or in their absence the party is concentrating on its own characteristic, group-related policies, single-party government will form the easiest way to achieve its preferred goals. The same applies, of course, where for prudential reasons a small party has shared in government even though this was unnecessary in purely numeric terms.

However, taking democracies as a whole, the emergence of an absolute majority for one party is relatively rare. In its absence, a quasi two-party system may temporarily be created by a resurgence of Socialist/non-Socialist divisions. As we have suggested, the repercussions of a full-blooded Socialist programme affect most people in the society quite strongly. Support or opposition to these forms a cement between parties which overrides normal conflict. The salience of the Socialist programme thus creates a quasi two-party competition between opposing ideological tendencies, in which the opposed coalitions act like majority parties. In such situations there is no question of some of the parties on one side being detached to co-operate in government with the other. Since the Socialist/non-Socialist cleavage is central to party competition, such an event would be as unthinkable as some faction of a majority party joining the opposition. Even anti-system parties excluded from actual government participation are driven by ideological imperatives to offer support to their own side in this cleavage.

Socialist or non-Socialist loyalties, where these become salient, are thus perfectly capable of providing a strong basis of support for government, even in a comparatively fragmented multi-party system.



Their saliency, like the existence of anti-democratic threats, will, of course, vary over time. In some countries the prevalence and importance of division within the Socialist and non-Socialist camps themselves may prevent the differences separating them from ever coming to the fore of politics. In such cases, and also at times when these divisions are muted by other events or the passage of time, other arrangements emerge.

We are talking, it will be remembered, of situations where no party has a majority of legislative seats (otherwise, by Criterion ii, it would automatically form and dominate a government). However, there are a wide variety of intermediate situations between the emergence of a single majority party and complete fragmentation into a range of small parties. The case considered next is a dominant party system with one outstanding party - outstanding either because it has nearly missed a majority or because it is obviously larger and more important than any other legitimist party. Since a democratic regime is unlikely to continue functioning where an anti-system party is largest, this last characteristic also implies that it is outstanding in relation to all the other parties.

Such a dominant party is likely to have been repeatedly in government in the past, so its claims to office are enhanced by the desirability of preserving normal arrangements. Its size renders it the obvious basis for building an administration - a consideration reinforced by its ability to bring down most Governments excluding it. Such a party can well, with the tolerance of non-government parties, form a viable government on its own. Failing tolerance, it may be able to rely on divisions between the other parties keeping it in power as the most acceptable alternative.

Of course, the position of a dominant party is strengthened if other parties will join it in a governmental coalition. Its contribution

assures it a directing role in the government anyway, and the continuance of the government is more assured through the adherence of other parties.

The absence of a majority party does not, therefore, preclude the possibility of government formation on the initiative of the largest party. Obviously the position of the government is weaker where it commands only a minority of seats, or is subject to the possibility of intra-party disputes. But it is not by any means untenable.

The absence of a dominant party serves to convert the situation into the classic case of multi-partism, where a considerable number of relatively equal parties exist - none being of sufficient weight numerically to give it an outstanding role. In this case none of the parties forms such an obvious basis for the government as to force the other parties to negotiate with it. Coalition-building must proceed instead by negotiation between equals.

Threats to the regime or Socialist-bourgeois tensions will not provide a common focus for the negotiations since by definition they do not exist in the situation we are discussing (if they did, either a surplus-majority government would form under Criterion i, or a quasi-majority tendance government under Criterion iii). There is still a possibility of attitudinal cement being provided for a Government through agreement, however, since in the absence of other concerns each party will have its own characteristic policies which it wishes to pursue. If potential partners' concerns do not conflict too much on the questions which are currently salient to them, a common programme can be hammered out as a basis on which to form a government. Such agreement is important since it reduces tensions and costs of internal negotiation. It renders joint progress towards desired goals more likely, thus increasing

satisfaction with the existing alliance and averting the possibility of the Government foundering amid mutual recriminations.

The negotiation of such a programme is one way of proceeding in a fragmented multi-party system. It is entirely possible, however, that party preferences conflict so much on salient current issues that no genuine agreements can be negotiated. Governments, on the other hand, must still be formed. Since the bargaining process cannot be based on ideology or policy, the pursuit of office becomes paramount. Here we enter the situation postulated by minimal winning theories - but only because prior policy-based considerations are, by definition, non-operable. In default of policy agreements, it is certainly advisable to keep the number of parties in the governing coalition as small as possible, to minimise the costs of disagreement and internal negotiations. The size will be set, however, not by the need to gain an absolute majority of all legislative seats but by the need to group parties with enough support to win legislative votes of confidence. Policy agreements may be absent but enough disagreements can exist among the major non-governmental parties to prevent them all lining up against the governing coalition at one time. We should consequently expect parties in such a situation to form a combination of the least number necessary to attain a consistent majority on votes of confidence. (Operationally, as explained in Chapter 2, we should know what level of support is necessary for votes of confidence by taking the average number of seats Governments have held in the past.)

Both the formation of governments by agreement and on the basis of a minimum winning combination are constrained by the other factors emphasised in Criterion v(c) - the need to include normal parties of government and to exclude anti-system parties. After our earlier discussion the latter requires no additional justification. The inclusion

of normal government parties is of even greater importance to the fragile governments emerging under Criterion v, since the repercussions of not including them might well be enough to upset the whole arrangement. Besides, such parties are often the ones motivated to begin negotiations with other parties and to smooth over differences between their partners. Their familiarity with administration also removes another potential point of friction from an already trouble-prone situation.

Even where policy agreements are absent, the minimal winning coalition may not be quite as small as in abstract it might be, owing to the need to include established government parties. We shall take this factor into account when reviewing the success of the criterion in Chapter 2.

The important point to note is the incorporation of the minimal winning criterion (realistically modified) in our 'rules' of government formation. This takes cognisance of the findings cited in Section 1 on the incidence and longer duration of such governments in certain situations. As the earlier critique stresses, however, the criterion becomes relevant only when ideological and policy considerations do not provide an alternative basis for the creation of a government. It is a procedure of last resort, applied in the absence of other, more satisfactory, modes of action. While our formulation offers a synthesis with earlier theory, it does so on an assumed primacy of policy considerations. This also carries over to the other implications considered below.

### iii. Outside support of governments

On pure office-seeking criteria, parties which consistently or generally support a Government of which they are not part are acting with total irrationality. Since they do not share in Ministries or other spoils, they can have no comprehensible reason for offering support,

apart from building bridges to the next government. But in office-seeking theories parties have a short time perspective - as is only realistic in politics. If we view the matter from a concern with policy, however, there are very good reasons for some excluded parties supporting Governments. This is whenever the existing Government, however unattractive, offers a better chance of the party's policies being put into effect than any of the other likely alternatives. Even where the Government's policy is only marginally better from the viewpoint of the party, the costs and trouble involved in a governmental crisis may well induce it to maintain support at crucial junctures.

This point is spelled out in Implication 1(iii) of Table 1.3 (which summarises other applications of the assumptions). It is a

(Table 1.3 about here)

difficult proposition to test since it carries the danger of circularity - immediately an outside party supports a government this might be taken as proof that it must see the alternatives as worse. However the implication need not be circular provided there is direct evidence on how party leaders view the situation. And it does fit the real situation in which such outside support is often given, where the office-seeking hypothesis does not. Chapter 2 deals with some of the operational difficulties of testing this point.

A particular case of parties offering support without participation comes with anti-system parties. These are generally excluded through the deliberate reactions of the other parties, inspired by their overriding urge to preserve democratic procedures (Implication 1(i)). For anti-system parties themselves, support will be most clearly called for at times when the Socialist programme is salient, as it strongly affects their own clients and policies. In such a situation they will line up

with the other parties on their own side of that cleavage, in order to maintain a Government of their particular tendance (Implication 1(ii)).

#### iv. Distribution of ministries

Most theories of democratic government confine themselves to the party composition of coalitions (taking single-party governments as the extreme case of a minimal winning coalition). On office-seeking criteria, however, the distribution of ministries is equally or even more important, since control of a Ministry is the main reward sought by parties for entering Government in the first place. Even on policy criteria, control of Ministries is important, because it is the crucial element in the formulation and (perhaps more important) the implementation of programmes in a particular area. All this is simplified in the case of a single-party government, of course, since all ministries are then at its disposal and the problem of distribution then relates to intra-party factions - with which we deal below (Section 2.vi). Most of the discussion in this section relates to coalition governments, normally of several parties.

The few treatments which have dealt explicitly with the distribution of ministries, mostly on an office-seeking basis, have stressed proportionality as the major criterion for allocating offices within a coalition. That is, each party expects, and gets, a share of ministries more or less equal to the share of legislative votes it contributes to Government support. Empirical evidence for this equivalence has been produced from a matching of seats and ministries for European cabinet coalitions from 1945 to 1970. This produced an almost one to one equivalence between shares of seats and shares of ministries (Browne and Franklin, 1973). The authors of this study noted that there may also be a form of 'qualitative' as well as 'quantitative' proportionality in

operation, whereby the allocation of 'important' ministries may supplement the quantitative norm. The only available evidence on this aspect of the distribution - for coalitions in Indian State Governments - indicates that larger parties did not necessarily receive the more important ministries (Bueno de Mesquita, 1975).

A policy-based approach must put more emphasis than the office-seeking formulation on parties' concern not just with important ministries, but with ministries in the particular areas of their interest. Thus it is not just a question of getting an equivalent return for their support in general, but of securing a specific Ministry or Ministries because of their significance for the party's policy concerns.

At the same time proportionality between seats and votes cannot be ignored. Precisely because all coalition partners wish to advance their own goals so far as possible, they will seek control of as many government ministries as they can and thus limit the numbers available to other parties. Each party has a sanction in that withdrawal will lessen the Government's chances of survival. The most likely division that they can agree on will be one which (a) secures each party the Ministry(ies) important to it (subject to the constraint that some of these may be of equal importance to other parties in the Government, so not all Ministries of concern may be secured); (b) maintains a rough equivalence between a party's support in the legislature and the number of Ministries it obtains.

This provision in regard to proportionality matches Browne and Franklin's findings on European coalition governments. Whereas they interpreted this as evidence of a strict proportionality rule based on office-seeking, proportionality is regarded here as the second stage in a bargaining process directed at securing policy-relevant ministries.

The crucial question in deciding between these interpretations is whether there is in fact any general connection between specific types of party and the types of ministry they obtain. This point is investigated in detail in Chapter 3. Implication 2(ii) in the table forms a summary of this argument.

It should, however, also be taken in conjunction with Implication 2(iii). Not all types of party exist in all countries, although the major types of Ministry do. There is no Agrarian party in Britain, France or Germany, for example, and no Christian party in either of the first two countries. What happens in these cases to Ministries which would otherwise have been allocated to the missing party? Its policy concerns are likely to be taken up by parties of a similar disposition, who seek to occupy the Ministries it would otherwise have wanted to secure. For example, since the countryside is the place where traditional loyalties usually survive longest, one would expect religious parties to take up rural interests where a specifically agrarian party is absent. This point will be expanded in Chapter 3, through a specification of the policy interests of each type of party, and listing of the Ministries that are as a result salient to them.

For larger parties with a developed comprehensive ideology, most Ministries are relevant. Hence the amount and importance rather than the type of Ministry is a prime concern. In this they will conform more to Browne and Franklin's rules of quantitative and qualitative proportionality. Not for the first time, office-seeking and policy-pushing criteria produce similar predictions here. The most important ministry in view of its centrality and dominance of the Government agenda is the Premiership. The largest party in the coalition can be expected to assert its claims to this, perhaps even being willing to cede otherwise salient Ministries and to take somewhat less than its strictly proportional



share in order to get it. The rationale here is that all parties covet this central post for its policy advantages: in resulting struggles or bargaining, the party with most resources will generally get it and this will be the largest party.

These are the major, general findings expected over all coalitions. There are the further Implications 2(iv) and 2(v), however, which state conditions under which this type of share-out will be less evident. This follows from the assumptions that coalition governments differ considerably according to whether they form in response to an anti-democratic threat, as appendages to a majority or dominant party, as quasi-majority coalitions of a Socialist or Bourgeois tendance, as agreed multi-party cabinets in the absence of the preceding conditions, or as minimal winning groups unable to agree on current issues. In the case of a Government of National Unity, where the overriding imperative is preservation of the regime, it would be unreasonable to expect parties to stick out for Ministries of their own concern. Somewhat similar considerations apply to participation in a tendance majority where the main consideration is the victory or defeat of the Socialist programme rather than parties' specific policy interests. Where a small party tags along with a majority or dominant party it can similarly not expect to get more than basic demands - perhaps the one Ministry of most pressing concern (provided this is not also desired by the dominant partner). The greatest scope for bargaining comes with coalitions of many relatively equal partners. The general trends mentioned in Table 1.3 should be more evident here - and even more among relatively disagreed minimal winning coalitions than among coalitions formed on the basis of agreements on current policy. In the latter case, parties have through the coalition agreement some guarantee that preferred policies will be pushed regardless of the particular ministries they control. Where agreement has proved impossible, however, parties have no guarantee of getting their own way other than

through control of particular ministries. Hence there should be an additional premium on occupying those of major concern to each partner.

#### v. Policies pursued by Governments

All these points will be covered in detail in Chapter 3. The discussion now turns to related questions of policy-making. In a policy-based approach this is central: far from Governments adjusting policy in order to gain office, its implementation is the major reason for parties taking office in the first place.

Since it is so central, the question has been thoroughly discussed already. So the way in which implications follow from assumptions is obvious. Governments will give first priority to support of democracy where it is endangered (3(i)). Where Socialist-Bourgeois tensions are high, Governments will be mostly concerned with the points at issue between them, typically the distribution of income and other resources and extension of government intervention (3(ii)). And where neither consideration prevails, parties will be concerned with their own characteristic policies (3(iii)). We do not rely on the sketchy characterisation of these made in Table 1.3 but spell out the connections between parties and their preferred policies, with supporting argument, in Chapter 4.

Generally the office-seeking explanation has neglected questions of policy-making. The only answer it has provided to the question of what Governments actually do when in office derives from the related theory of party competition: parties in government adjust policies to the preferences of the majority of electors so as to gain more votes in the next election. This is not a very clear or specific answer, however. There may be no clear majority. Moreover, in a coalition each constituent party would work to please its own clientele since by definition in a

multi-party system electors' opinions diverge widely. Where parties seek to enhance their reputation by acting reliably and responsibly this involves fulfilment of election pledges. Since these are the parties' declared policies the general office-seeking theory of party competition (but not its spatial formulation (cf. Budge and Farlie, 1977, chs.3-5)) becomes equivalent at this point to the policy-making one: both concur on the assertion that parties in office will pursue their characteristic policies. Nevertheless the policy-making formulation arrives at this implication by a more direct route, and is to be preferred (if the implication is upheld in comparison with the evidence) on grounds of theoretical parsimony and clarity.

The other body of investigation which bears on government (as distinct from administrative) policy-making is that related to the 'outputs' of government. This has generally concentrated on relating social and political characteristics of governmental units (class and occupational distribution, tax base, percentage votes for parties, etc.) to expenditures of Government in various areas. The main finding from this line of research has been the influence of social and demographic factors as compared to the relative unimportance of party control or electoral strength. The main thrust of 'output' research thus challenges the implications of the 'policy-making' theory that party control makes a considerable difference to what governments do.

Recently, however, the thesis has been challenged for mixing such disparate governmental units at varying levels of development that socioeconomic factors are bound to predominate. Where a country completely lacks resources, it cannot, obviously, finance a welfare programme. Where comparisons are based on units at broadly comparable levels of development, political differences - particularly the electoral strength of Right-wing parties - clearly show through. (For citations to

the output literature and findings which show the overriding influence of party, see Castles (ed.), 1982.)

This finding is, of course, congenial to the thesis argued here. The various views will be contrasted with evidence in Chapter 4. Included among the countries under examination are governments like those of India and Sri Lanka which are at a lower level of development than the others. Nevertheless the analysis should escape the criticism of comparing unlike cases since it does not compare expenditure levels and other policies between countries with different party governments, but rather the performance of different types of Government within the same country. Indian Governments in comparison with Western may be able to spend very little, but a Congress government should do different things from a non-Congress coalition.

#### vi. Turnover of personnel

Not only does the office-seeking formulation neglect policy considerations, it completely ignores internal change within Governments. Yet this is of great significance to their life and behaviour and any explanation seeking to be comprehensive must cover it.

The first implication (4(i)) follows directly from Assumption 7 in Table 1.1. Both incorporate the trivial but necessary point that the departure of a Minister usually involves replacing him (rather than abolishing the Ministry). He may be succeeded by a person from outside the current administration, but more usually by somebody from inside, who has to be replaced in turn. Thus the resignation of a single member usually produces repercussions which go beyond his particular post. Unless a major change had been impending, however, this type of event will not involve extensive transfers and turnover of personnel. Where affairs have been handled satisfactorily there is no inducement to disturb

existing arrangements more than is absolutely necessary, and so the extent of change will be limited. On the other hand, given that senior politicians tend to be elderly, such enforced resignations are quite frequent and need to be explicitly noted as producing change extraneous to the main line of the other arguments.

These are taken up forcefully again in the second implication (4(ii)), which relates the extent of internal change and reshuffles to the power of the Prime Minister. We have already noted (Assumption 5, Table 1.1) that factions with distinct policy preferences will exist within most parties. Internally they will act in relation to each other just as externally parties do in relation to each other. That is, they will seek control of certain ministries within the overall party share, and try to advance their preferences by implementing them within ministries and seeking to influence overall party actions. Since factions will, by and large, agree more with other factions within the same party than with factions outside, overall unity will be preserved by an ability to negotiate compromises and by procedures for party unity and discipline which are explicitly designed to prevent disputes from getting out of hand. Nevertheless internal struggles, even though muted, may be expected to go on. Where there is a single-party government these will be the main source of government dissensions. In a coalition, of course, dissensions between parties overshadow internal factional jockeying and also put more of a premium on party unity.

By Assumption 6 in Table 1.1, we assume that the Prime Minister, like other members of the party, is a member of a faction committed to forwarding its policy emphases. He will advance these in part through his agenda-setting and related powers. To exert these he has, of course, to retain office and more immediately to prevent the emergence of alternative centres of initiative within the government. The most



obvious way to buttress his position and that of his faction is to move rivals fairly frequently, to prevent them consolidating a power base inside their own Ministry.

Quite apart from helping his own faction, the Prime Minister has also to enhance the effectiveness and unity of the overall party so far as he can. This involves fairly prompt action to replace inefficient and unpopular Ministers by better nominees.

These considerations apply mainly to single or predominant-party governments. In coalitions the Prime Minister's power is limited by the necessity of getting other partners' agreement to the replacement of their Ministerial nominees. Unilateral attempts at replacement are liable to provoke a government crisis. Because of the difficulty of replacing Ministers once a coalition agreement has been hammered out, internal change should be much less in the case of coalitions compared to single-party or predominant-party governments. Again, of course, one has to recognise the varying situations under which coalitions come into existence. Where an overriding sense of purpose binds the coalition together, as in the case of anti-democratic threats or Socialist-Bourgeois confrontation, partners are probably disposed to accept changes for the sake of maintaining unity. Where the coalition is simply a convenient tactical adaptation to the circumstances of the moment, change is more likely to result in crisis.

The incidence of reshuffles and replacements can then be related to restrictions on Prime Ministerial power, which are least in single and predominant-party governments and greatest in minimal winning coalitions without policy agreements. Factions within a party may, of course, be stronger or weaker, and to the extent that other factions are stronger the Prime Minister's freedom of action is less. It may also be

constrained by institutional structures or constitutional conventions giving more autonomy to other Ministries, although this is not likely to be the case in the Parliamentary regimes with which we are concerned.

#### vii. Dissolution of Governments

As noted, attempts by the Prime Minister to replace Ministers in a coalition government may cause the breakdown of a coalition government, especially one composed of relatively equal partners and formed on the basis of ad hoc agreements, or even without these. This is recognised in Implication 5(v) of the table. Since each party has joined to advance its own policies as effectively as possible, a major threat to these - either in the shape of a direct attack or in the loosening of its control over a Ministry - will cause withdrawal. This is also likely where a party sees its future policy effectiveness impaired by continuing participation in the Government (Implication 5(vi)). Both reactions are again more likely in tactical coalitions than in Governments of National Unity or in those based on Socialist or Bourgeois tendances.

In coalitions all parties hold an initiative in regard to the life of the Government. In single-party governments such decisions rest mainly with the Prime Minister. As the representative of a particular policy line, he is likely to resign (or dissolve Government and Parliament if he has the power) if defeated on what he regards as a major point. If such a defeat occurs, the usual mechanisms for ensuring party discipline and unity have broken down and resignation forms the most attractive alternative. By this he may ensure an eventual triumphant return if he proves indispensable, or at least be able to mount a tough campaign for his alternative from outside Government. These considerations also apply in a coalition government where the Prime Minister is acting to represent his party rather than an internal faction (Implication 5(ii)).

In his role as party leader, the Prime Minister will also be concerned with long-term effectiveness and hence with electoral advantages. If he has the power of dissolution in his own hands, the point at which he chooses to exercise it will certainly be the most electorally advantageous for his own party when it stands a good chance of increasing its vote share (or attaining a majority of seats in competitive two-party systems). This should be at a point when the positive aspects of the party and government record outweigh the negative (Implication 5(iii)). Alternatively he may choose a time which will minimise his party's likely loss of votes.

Like all the other types of Government behaviour discussed above, termination and dissolution can thus be seen as reflecting party and factional concerns with policy. Where prospects for advancing declared preferences radically diminish, support for government continuance declines. Where continuance seems less fruitful for advancing preferences in the long run than dissolution, then the latter is adopted as a better strategy. This implies a bolder risk-taking approach to participation than would be implied by the office-seeking hypothesis, where selfish maximisers would be inclined to hold on to the last moment to enhance their gains from office.

All the implications discussed (5(iii) - 5(iv)) relate principally to periods when there is no overpowering reason for government unity. They are expected to apply where there is no threat to the regime nor confrontation of Socialist and Bourgeois tendencies. In a modified form they may operate in the latter case. Additional reasons for government termination will, however, follow from the ending of the circumstances which have provided cement to hold a coalition together - the quietening of Socialist-Bourgeois tensions and the withdrawal of threats to the regime. <sup>for example.</sup> These are covered in Implications 5(i) and 5(ii).



#### 4. Conclusions

The three summary tables ~~discussed above~~ provide a comprehensive, comparative theory of democratic government which integrates the various aspects of party behaviour at that level of politics. It is comprehensive because it can be applied to all the major aspects of Governments' existence - how they form and change, what they do, how they end. It is comparative because it applies to all types of Government formed by elected parties - single party, dominant party, or coalitions of various types. Hence it can be applied to all democracies, not just to Anglo-Saxon, Scandinavian, Southern European or Third World. These are shown to differ because of specific divergences in the results of elections.

This theory is more extensive than existing formulations. It is also more plausible than office-seeking theories. Politicians may be out for themselves some of the time (and some politicians all the time!). But they also make stands of principle and have declared policies distinct from those of other parties to which they publicly commit themselves. If politicians merely wanted office, Governments should be markedly stable once an initial division of offices was agreed. We know, however, that this is not so: they often fall apart over policy disagreements, while even within a single-party Government factions emerge which are distinguished primarily on policies.

The policy commitment hypothesis also seems to fit existing evidence better than office-seeking, since it is compatible with all the types of government which actually form. The rest of the book is devoted to checking the fit further, by elaborating the implications of the explanation and checking these in detail against evidence from the twenty-one democracies. Chapter 2 examines the question of government formation; Chapter 3 the allocation of ministries; Chapter 4 policy-making; Chapter 5 internal change and termination. Chapter 6 presents

an overall evaluation of results and discusses the particular modifications that they entail.

The development of this discussion follows the actual stages in which the project was conceived, starting from an a priori theory of Government formation, extending its implications to other aspects of party behaviour in Government, and then collecting and analysing information to check these. As the data were collected after developing the theory, its fit with subsequent findings should validate it more convincingly than is possible with a priori interpretations of previously available evidence.

TABLE 1.1

## General Assumptions of an Integrated Theory of Democratic Party Government

1. In parliamentary democracies the party or combination of parties which gains a majority on legislative votes of confidence forms the government.
2. Parties seek to form that government with a majority on legislative votes of confidence which will most effectively carry through their declared policy preferences under existing conditions.
3. (a) The chief preference of all democratic parties is to counter threats to the democratic system.  
(b) Where no such threats exist, and Socialist-Bourgeois differences separate the parties over salient current issues, the preference of all parties is to carry through policies related to these differences.  
(c) Where neither of the preceding conditions hold, parties pursue their own group-related preferences.
4. Normal governmental arrangements are most effective in getting policies carried through. Subject to their declared policies being advanced, therefore, parties seek to form governments with a party composition as close to the normal as possible.
5. Within parties, and subject to overall policy agreements and disciplinary and procedural constraints, factions seek to transform their own policy preferences into Government policy most effectively.
6. With the exception of essentially caretaker administrations, Government ministers, including the Prime Minister, are members of parties; and within them, of factions.
7. Ministers are replaced if forced to resign from their particular post.

TABLE 1.2

## Hierarchical Criteria for Government Formation

Implied by Assumptions 1-4 of Table 1.1

Criterion i Where the democratic system is immediately threatened (externally or internally) all significant pro-system parties will join the government excluding anti-system parties.

In the absence of immediate threats to democracy:

Criterion ii(a) Any party with an absolute majority of legislative votes will form a single-party government;

Criterion ii(b) except where such majorities are unusual, where it will form the dominant party of a government excluding anti-system parties.

Where no party has a majority of votes and Socialist-Bourgeois differences over current issues are salient:

Criterion iii the tendance with the majority will form a government either including or with support from all numerically significant parties in the tendance (anti-system parties can only provide support and are excluded from participating in government).

If no such Socialist-Bourgeois differences exist the party which:

Criterion iv(a) is largest and has a near-majority of votes

or

Criterion iv(b) is manifestly larger than any other pro-system party will either form the government alone in countries where single-party government is normal, or will form the dominant part of a government (excluding anti-system parties).

TABLE 1.2  
(continued)

Where Socialist-Bourgeois differences are not salient  
and no single party has sufficient votes to meet  
Criteria ii or iv, coalitions with a plurality will be  
formed:

- Criterion v(a) to group the parties most agreed on the specific issues currently salient;
- Criterion v(b) failing such agreement to minimise the numbers of parties in government to those which will provide a majority on legislative votes of confidence;
- Criterion v(c) in any case, to include the normal parties of government (if any) subject to v(a) and (b), and to exclude anti-system parties.

TABLE 1.3

Major Implications of the General Assumptions of Table 1.1 for Other Parties' Support of Government from Outside, for the Distribution of Ministries, for Policy-Making, and for Dissolution of Governments

1. Support of Government rather than participation

(i) A party regarded as anti-system cannot because of the opposition of other parties participate in Government, and can only support and not join Governments which will pursue some of its preferred policies (Assumptions 1-4).

(ii) Where threats to democracy are absent but Socialist-Bourgeois differences are salient, anti-system parties will support parties of their own tendency from outside Government (Assumptions 1-3).

(iii) A party which cannot persuade others to form a Government which will put into effect any of its characteristic policies, will not join the Government which is formed, but will vote for/abstain in favour of that Government if it considers all practicable outcomes (including an election) would further reduce the possibility of putting its policies into effect (Assumptions 1-3).

2. Distribution of Government Ministries between parties in a coalition

(i) The largest party in a coalition will take the Premiership (Assumptions 1, 2, 3(c)).

(ii) Subject to rough overall proportionality, each party will seek control of Ministries in their own areas of policy concern, e.g. Agrarian parties will seek the Ministries of Agriculture and Fisheries and Regional Affairs; Labour parties will seek Ministries of Social Affairs, Economic Affairs, Labour Relations; Conservative parties will seek Defence, Interior, Justice, Foreign Affairs, etc. (Assumptions 2, 3(c)).

(iii) Where a particular type of party does not exist, the most similar

TABLE 1.3  
(continued)

of the existing parties will seek ministries in its area of policy concern (Assumptions 2, 3(c)).

- (iv) These tendencies are least evident when governments are formed to counter anti-democratic threats and less evident when tendance governments are formed in a situation of Socialist-Bourgeois hostility.
- (v) A small party in a Government which could be formed by a large party on its own will not necessarily get a proportionate share of Ministries.

### 3. Policies pursued by Governments

- (i) Where there is a threat to the democratic order, Governments will direct their main policies to countering it (Assumptions 1, 2, 3(a)).
- (ii) Where there is no such threat but Socialist-Bourgeois differences do separate the parties over salient current issues, Governments will be chiefly concerned with redistributive policies and Government control and intervention (the direction of policy being decided by the Socialist/Bourgeois complexion of the Government) (Assumptions 1, 2, 3(b)).
- (iii) Each party in the Government will have some of its preferred policies put into effect, i.e. Governments including an Agrarian party will pursue policies more favourable to farmers and rural interests than Governments without an Agrarian party: similarly with Labour parties and the working class and Conservative/Liberal parties in regard to business, etc. (Assumptions 2, 3(c)).

### 4. Turnover of personnel

- (i) The death/illness/withdrawal of a member of a government always produces a reshuffle (usually limited) (Assumption 7).

TABLE 1.3  
(continued)

- (ii) The turnover of individuals in ministries is greater where the Prime Minister has more freedom of action; and declines as the Prime Minister has less freedom of action in relation to:-
- (a) other ministries
  - (b) party factions
  - (c) coalition parties in government
- (i.e. where the Prime Minister has greater opportunities he is able to move factional opponents to prevent their creation of a power base, to take action in event of failure by a minister, to conserve general prestige of government, etc.) (Assumptions 1, 2, 3(c), 5).

#### 5. Dissolution of Governments

- (i) When a threat to the democratic order ceases, Governments formed to meet it terminate.
- (ii) When Socialist-Bourgeois differences cease to be salient, tendance Governments formed in relation to them terminate.

Where there is no threat to the democratic order and Socialist-Bourgeois differences are not salient:-

- (iii) When a Prime Minister can fix the date of an election, he will dissolve Government when he feels confident he can improve his party's vote share in an election (associated with a good Government record) or lessen vote losses (Assumptions 1-3).
- (iv) When the Prime Minister is defeated within the Government on a major current policy by another party/party faction, he will resign and effectively dissolve the Government (Assumptions 2-6).
- (v) When disagreement on major current policies or Ministerial replacement provokes withdrawal of support by a coalition party partner, the Government will dissolve (Assumptions 1-3, 5-6).



TABLE 1.3  
(continued)

- (vi) Where in a coalition government one party has markedly declined in popularity, it will withdraw and force a dissolution of government (Assumptions 1-3).

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