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BUREAUCRATIC RATIONALITIES AND THE PROSPECT  
FOR PARTY GOVERNMENT.

by

GIORGIO FREDDI  
UNIVERSITY OF BOLOGNA

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Badia Fiesolana

I - 50016 San Domenico (FI)

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BUREAUCRATIC RATIONALITIES AND THE  
PROSPECT FOR PARTY GOVERNMENT

Giorgio Freddi  
Facoltà di Scienze Politiche  
Istituto Politico - Amministrativo  
Università di Bologna

Introduction

This essay is characterized by perspectives and interests that are manifold. It has, however, a unifying theme that may summarily denoted as "politics and administration revisited". As is well known, the relationship between politics and administration has been, and is, one among the constant concerns of political science: this essay is largely constructed as an analysis and an evaluation of how the ways in which that relationship operates affect both the viability of party government and the governability of the complex polities of today.

The approach adopted here, then, is meant to broaden the scope of most discussions about politics and administration which, with a few exceptions, have been the province of specialists in the discipline of political science: by this I mean that such discussions have been concerned with the analysis of an admittedly important segment of the political system, but seldom have tried to explore its implications for the performance of the whole system. On the other hand, studies centered on the issues of either party government or governability, while taking into consideration a host of societal and cultural factors to account for variance in, and problems of, performance, give marginal, if not scanty, attention to the administrative instruments of governance.

Granted, then, that a large number of factors condition the performance of political parties and affect governability, public administration is here singled out as one, and crucially important, among such factors. As was pointed out at the outset, doing so involves tackling the traditional issue of the relationship between politics and administration: the conceptualization of such relationship, however, has undergone many a revision in a literature that spans a very long period. I am going to show that even the most updated revisions do not succeed in satisfactorily explaining the complex interplay of policy-making activities undertaken by political parties and elected personnel on the one hand, and professional administrators on the other.

In order to arrive at a more satisfactory and comprehensive approach, a critical survey of existing conceptualizations and of the empirical circumstances that have prompted their formation is needed. This endeavor, as will be seen, entails the development of both analytical and historical arguments: in the following sections an effort is made to present alternative definitions of the problem in as orderly a fashion as possible, with the aim of developing a new, more complete and explanatory conceptual framework. However, as doing so involves the exploration of empirical situations that - being historical - are sequentially arranged, some redundancies will be inevitable.

### 1. Bureaucracy and Party Government.

In the Western liberal and scholarly traditions, bureaucracy and democracy are perceived as being antithetic, antagonistic, and mutually exclusive or, to put it less bluntly, bureaucracy and bureaucratization are perceived as being inimical to democracy. The Weberian scenario whereby the modern world, its social and economic life, will be dominated and controlled by large and impersonal bureaucracies stifling individual enterprise and imperilling freedom has been with us for a long time.

Thus, it is not surprising that according to democratic theory the making of politically relevant authoritative decisions ought to be the exclusive province of elected officials and no decisional discretion ought to be left to professional and institutionalized administrative agencies, which, as a consequence, ought to devote

themselves to the mere execution of those decisions. During the 19th Century the Western world developed two radically different, - indeed alternative and mutually exclusive -, doctrinal and operational approaches to the problem of how to control the bureaucracy.

In the United States, political agencies were to control the bureaucracy by negating that administration could be kept separate from politics, by making public administration continuous with elective political organs and by affirming the political nature of administrative action. In other words, by instituting the spoils system.

In Continental Europe, where the liberal-representative regimes emerged at mid-century had inherited solidly articulated professional bureaucracies from the ancien régime, the normative theory was developed introducing the principle of separation between politics and administration. As is well known, the functional correlates of that theory are the twin principles of the political neutrality of the civil service and the purely executive (non decisional) role of public administration. These principles, which were treated as validated empirical propositions by European doctrine, that is as correct descriptions of reality, were adopted in America too at the turn of the century, when the merit system began its course, after the dismal administrative record of the spoils system had begun to imperil the very legitimacy of democratic government. They were, however, treated not so much

as empirically tested propositions but, rather, as moral imperatives which, if adequately pursued, would have made administration a truly neutral and "scientific" technique (Goodnow, Wilson).

We know that things have not quite worked in this way. In fact, modern political science has disowned the conception that has been just summarized as formalistic and axiological: administrative action is no longer defined as politically neutral, nor are bureaucratic agencies any longer maintained to be the passive and docile instruments of elective institutions. The position now generally accepted is that professional civil servants share in policy-making and, in doing so, start from ideological and/or political value-premises which might, or might not, coincide with those adhered to by the personnel of elective institutions.

If, then, the theory positing the separation between politics and administration has been so thoroughly abandoned, why do we continue to consider as relevant analyses and discussions revolving around the couple "bureaucracy and democracy"? Because, obviously, this is a central part of democratic theory, and plays a fundamental role in those political cultures which have accepted and absorbed the values and institutions of constitutional and representative government. The idea of a separation between politics and administration is culture-bound; it is a relevant issue in some political

systems (constitutional and representative), and a negligible and marginal one in others (authoritarian and traditional). Even though the political neutrality and the merely executive role of public administration have been invalidated as descriptive statements, as is propositions, and shown to be formalistic myths, they however retain much strength and appeal as normative statements, as ought to propositions. They, in sum, represent permanent values, desirable and essential objectives in democratic and constitutional polities.

The crucial role played by such values is made even more apparent as we turn our attention to the party government model (taken here as the one which is ideally fitted to articulate democratic theory in the context of mass democracy). Even though one finds many a shade of opinion in the literature, there seems to be a general agreement on the point, as Sartori puts it, (1976: ix) that "Parties are the central intermediate and intermediary structures between society and government". Descriptively, the functions that political parties perform can be divided into two main categories: those that can be characterized as inputs, such as mobilization and channelling of support, formulations of alternatives, recruitment and replacement of leadership (with which this essay is not concerned). And those functions having to do with outputs, performed by political parties when in power, such as formation and implementation of policy and control over public administration, (which are the main concern here).



What has been said so far implies that party government is strongly associated with a view of democracy whereby the political system is made democratic by the electoral and decisional roles of parties (Ranney). As the events and the literature of the approximately last twenty-five years have pointed out, however, this normative idealization of the role of parties has been called into discussion: the governability of industrial and post-industrial societies and, therefore, the ability of parties and party governments to cope with contemporary problems have become the subjects of serious concern (Crozier, 1975). For instance, the observation that bureaucrats frequently act as independent decision makers or in concert with organized interests, has cast doubts on whether parties are actually in control of policy. This train of reasoning has quite logically led many an observer to ask the question whether political parties have the capacity to perform the functions that both normatively and descriptively have been assigned to them.

At this point, the following question arises: having focussed our attention, both descriptively as well as normatively, on functions performed by political parties such as policy formation and execution, which conditions must obtain if we are to speak of party government? Two seem to stand out: the first is that all significant policy decisions are made by people chosen in partisan elections or else by those whom they appoint. In other words, "the party government model requires that party based leaders be able effectively to control the bureaucracy and other public or semi-public agencies." (Katz: 20).

That political parties control effectively public administration, however, is not a sufficient condition. Party government, if it wants to retain legitimacy, must also exhibit some "problem solution capacity", consisting of several elements, among which one enumerates "the capacity to get a specific policy implemented", "the ability to frame policies that will produce the desired (by the policy maker) results", and "the ability to choose the 'right' aims or policies". (Katz: 25-27. Emphasis added.) In this volume, the essay which is specifically concerned with problem solution in politics, drives the point home even more forcefully. In fact, "democratic party government is likely to persist if, and only if: (a) the more important societal problems are put on the agenda, i.e. turned into policy problems, and (b) the more important policy problems are solved in an acceptable way and, (c) the more important political problems are solved in an acceptable way". (Sjöblom: 46. Emphasis added).

Now, the second condition of party government that has been just presented, (and particularly that, among its components, identified by Katz as policy implementation, and by Sjöblom as acceptable solution of policy problems), can be met in the complex politics of today only by resorting to the professional know-how and technical expertise usually associated with an institutionalized and permanent civil service. This latter condition, however, is at least partially incompatible with the former, which calls for direct control by parties over administration for, as it has been stated tersely, "recognizing that a permanent bureaucracy is an essential feature of all modern governments, this [the first] condition is violated to the extent that bureaucrats exercise independent policy making authority". (Katz: 20).

This antilogy leads us back to the two basic patterns of administrative organization which have emerged from the historical experience of Western political systems: on the one hand, the spoils system, with its attendant inefficiency, corruption and potential for delegitimation, which, nevertheless, maximizes the probability that elected personnel control the bureaucracy. On the other hand, the continental bureaucratic model which, while fostering expertise and technical know-how, has frequently seen its allegedly neutral cadres exercising independent policy making authority.

To recapitulate: in the context of the modernized and complex polities of the present time, the idea of separation between politics and administration, (as formulated in the 19th century) and the correlative principles of the neutrality and instrumentality of administrative action are neither descriptively valid nor empirically tenable. In all Western political systems, bureaucracies loom large over the political arena and have been exerting a more and more pervasive influence on decision-making. And yet, in polities where party government is conceived as the sole, or main, policy-making agency, those ideas and principles are taken to be the central prerequisites for the correct performance of the political system.

Apparently, we are faced here with what looks like an intractable problem of the either-or kind. In short compass: (a) party government must have direct control over policy making; (b) effective policy making can take place only when a problem solution capacity exists; (c) such capacity may be obtained only by resorting to a permanent professional bureaucracy, whose controllability by political parties should be insured via a neat and rigid separation between policy, and administration; (d) the theory of separation has been invalidated by the empirical observation whereby bureaucrats tend to act as independent decision makers.

I am going to argue that the apparent intractability of the problem depends largely on the fact that the theory of separation between policy and administration has been dismissed too lightly, as being both heuristically invalid and operationally impracticable. The policy-administration dichotomy, in other words, is treated in the modern literature of political science as being false, and as always having being false. This happens because the theory has been tackled from a static perspective, that is without paying attention to the circumstances that prompted its original formulation. But, as such circumstances are historical, the analytical approach that one wants to adopt must be sensitive to the diachronic dimension.

In pursuing this line of reasoning, the case will be made that the theory was not false when first enunciated, and this can be done by calling attention to the social, economic, and political conditions prevailing when and where the theory was originally formulated. It will then be shown that, much later, the theory was empirically invalidated when the conditions which prompted its formulation no longer existed. Finally, by means of an analytical investigation of the organizational properties of contemporary administrative structures, and of the rational requisites for different types of decisional processes, it will be argued that given the appropriate circumstances, the old theory can be valid today. Put differently,

what I am doing here can be seen as an effort to rehabilitate the policy-administration dichotomy. (1).

The relationship between politics and administration (and, more specifically, the constraints that such relationship imposes on the realizability of party government) is here treated as our dependent variable. Our independent variables will be more precisely identified as our argument unfolds in the following pages: they are constituted by a set of factors - cultural, structural, and behavioral - that either maximize or minimize the probability that the two conditions for party government which we have stipulated (party control over administration and problem solution capacity) are actually met. For the time being, they can be expressed as questions: (a) which factors help in explaining the degree to which a bureaucratic system exerts an autonomous power uncontrolled and/or uncontrollable by elected officials? (b) which factors explain whether a bureaucratic system has the capacity for effective policy performance?

In the following sections, approaches to, and conceptions of the policy-administration dichotomy are critically reviewed; a number of theoretical relationships among historical, structural, and heuristic dimensions having to do with policy performance are outlined; and hypotheses (that might be tested in future research) about which factors maximize the probability of party government are formulated.

2. The Performance of Western Political Systems: the Bureaucratic Factor.

After the Second World War, a disquieting syndrome - whose intensity has been growing with the passing of time - has become apparent in modernized and constitutional Western political systems, even though to different degrees in different countries: the inability of political parties and party systems, (and of the public institutions that they are supposed to activate and operate), both to adapt to the challenges posed by rapid socio-economic-political change, and to govern effectively. Numerous conditions have been pinpointed and offered as hypotheses potentially capable of explaining that syndrome, mainly focussed on the relationship between party system and society. Thus, attention has been directed to whether the party system is competitive or not; to whether parties operate in a homogeneous or fragmented cultural context, and to the way in which this affects modes of mobilization and the functions of interest articulation and interest aggregation. Frequently, the malfunctioning of institutions charged with policy-making and policy-execution is treated as a dependent variable, to be seen as a consequence of the failure of the party system to adequately process diverse and conflictful demands. In other words, governability, or the lack of it, would be a function of largely cultural factors.

The point of view taken in the present discussion

leads to an approach somewhat divergent from the one just outlined: while the influence of political culture on the performance of institutions is taken for granted, one should also take into account that institutions have properties of their own which affect policy-making and policy-execution pretty much independently. As Richard Rose aptly puts it "the discussion about 'ingovernability' is concerned with the ability of government to influence the larger environment of which it is a part as well as its citizens. While compliance follows logically from popular support for a regime, the effectiveness of a government in controlling the environment does not necessarily follow" (Rose: 5).

The trust behind this argument is that political systems may be encountering problems in performing effectively regardless of their prevailing ideological and/or cultural compositum and that, therefore, some light might be thrown on those problems by focussing on institutional functioning. This is made more plausible by the circumstance that the current debate about governability tends to include all the modernized Western political systems, which are thus depicted as sharing common problems and characteristics in the area of governmental performance. For instance, in a recent discussion of the problems of party government, Wildenmann sets forth an extensive catalogue of constraints, conditions and challenges that, in the course of recent decades, have made governing a difficult and frustrating endeavor in Western Europe: some are societal, or economic, or international, but

others are definitely structural and institutional, as the following quotations make clear:

"there is a diversification... creating a division of responsibility not in conformity with traditional models of government".

"...the task of government, including the implementation of policies, seems to be confronted with almost unsolvable problems" "...There seems to be a loss of control over governmental and administrative decision-making bodies, and a growing inability of party government to carry out organized and...legitimized policies..."

"The ability of decision making bodies to solve fundamental policy questions has to be assessed" (Wildenmann: 7,10,16)

Our attention is here directed to a familiar picture: "old" governmental systems are forced to adapt to new requirements, that is those requirements largely generated by "the well known increased intervention of governments in the allocation and/or redistribution of the G.N.P. in connection with the evolution of the welfare state" (Wildenmann: 9) as well as by the new economic, managerial and industrial functions performed by the modern state. More specifically, our attention is directed to those phenomena that the literature frequently labels as "overload" and "overcomplexity".



These two terms should be denoted more precisely at this point. When we say that governments are overloaded, we do not imply a merely quantitative question, i.e., the functional load of governments is greater but, also, and preeminently, a qualitative question, i.e., the load is not only greater, but different from what it used to be, thus burdening and straining policy-making structures with task-domains that they were not meant to tackle originally.

The concept of overcomplexity can be denoted similarly: in the words of Richard Rose, "Because organizations 'institutionalize' decisions from the past, they do not ...adapt well to changing...conditions. The relative rigidity of government institutions intensifies overcomplexity, for some activities of government will reflect decisions made in circumstances no longer appropriate. Yet government agencies continue to move forward, propelled by inertia commitments" (Rose: 8).

What, in other words, the notions of overload and overcomplexity both suggest can be succinctly described as follows; first, poor policy performance is a function of the growing incongruence between the governmental institutional machinery (notably public administration) and the new tasks (of intervention into the economy and society) being undertaken by the political system; second, poor policy performance is not so much a question of inefficiency, that is of an unsatisfactory ratio between inputs and outputs but, rather, a question of ineffectiveness, that is of an unsatisfactory ratio of expected outcomes to actual outcomes; third, structural-bureaucratic arrangements are among the most important

factors leading to poor policy-performance, both per se (because of an inadequate fit between structures and functions) and as premises for decision-making (because different structures designed to pursue the same goals may do so with different decisional styles leading to more or less satisfactory outcomes).

These last three points are taken here as working assumptions: they have the nature of hypotheses which need to be tested empirically in a systematic fashion, but since some empirical and historical data are available, as hypotheses they exhibit some prima facie plausibility.

### 3. Structural vs. Attitudinal Conditions of Policy-Performance.

The central assumption of this essay is that the performance of the political-administrative system can and must be explained chiefly in the light of structural variables and modes of decision-making. However, as will be seen, this is still a moot question in the political science literature. A compressed summary of this issue is in order at this point.

In recent decades, constitutional and economically advanced political systems have been developing a set

of largely common features: a) governments have been acquiring a larger and larger number of functions to perform in their societies and economies; b) concomitantly, public bureaucracies have increased in size and have expanded their participation in policy-making; c) at the same time, the performance of the political and administrative system has become less than satisfactory; in any event, it has proved to be inferior vis-à-vis rising expectations, and incapable of processing the diverse and growing demands articulated by social and economic groups.

An issue which looms large in this area is well summed up by the following question:

to what extent are policy decisions (as formulated in elective organs and political parties) influenced by professional administrators?

For a long time, political science has accepted conceptions, originated from legal axiology, and most specifically set forth by such scholars as Wilson and Goodnow, which define administrative action as politically neutral, and maintain that bureaucratic agencies are the docile instruments of elected bodies. This point of view has been taken from granted up to relatively recent times. This has happened, interestingly enough, regardless of the ideological propensities of individual scholars: just to cite some classics, the positions of progressive writers like F. Neumann and C. Wright Mills, and those of conservative thinkers like L. von Mises and F. von Hayek, are virtually identical concerning

the negligible impact of bureaucracies on policy-making.

Now the situation is totally different: after the pioneering work of authors like <sup>Appleby,</sup> Kingsley and Lipset, there is now a vast body of literature whose position -generally accepted and validated empirically- is that higher civil servants take part in policy-making and, in so doing, start from value-premises which might, or might not, coincide with those adhered to by the nation's elected representatives and inherent in the party system.

The view that professional administrators conduct their business sustained by coherent and explicit systems of ideological beliefs has been empirically demonstrated beyond doubt. In a recent and monumental work, which applies sophisticated behavioral procedures to opinion data from seven Western political systems, important analogies and similarities between the ideological positions of politicians and bureaucrats have been identified: "...both types of policymaker typically express ideologically consistent points of view on the basic issues of social change and government activism that have structured politics in the West during this century. Bureaucrats may display a more inductive, less philosophical approach to public affairs than politicians...but this does not mean that their positions on fundamental ideological issues are any less coherent", (Aberbach, Putnam and Rockman: 130).

In the literature which pursues this line of inquiry a common trend can be discerned: it consists in a position

whereby a high correlation exists between the overall performance of the administrative system and the political attitudes of professional bureaucrats (as well as those demographic factors that more directly influence political socialization).

A conclusion frequently arrived at from this position is that where we observe a high congruence between the values prevailing in the political system and the attitudes of the higher civil service, the performance of the administrative system is satisfactory, whereas the opposite is true when the values of the political system and the attitudes of the civil service are incongruent, antagonistic and/or incompatible. (Putnam). An implication of this is that effective party government (as was defined at the outset) would be largely a function of the political attitudes and ideological profiles of higher civil servants.

The assumption behind the approach being discussed (i.e., that the political attitudes of the bureaucracy as a social group explain and/or predict their professional and institutional behavior) revolves around a central concept, that of the responsiveness of the civil service as contrasted with the traditional and legalistic concept of impartiality or political neutrality of the professional administrator. As J.D. Kingsley wrote: "...the essence of bureaucratic responsibility in the modern State is to be sought, not in the presumed and largely fictitious impartiality of the officials, but in the strength of their commitment to the purposes that State is undertaking to serve" (Kingsley: 274).

In a more recent discussion, Putnam has defined responsiveness as the ability of a bureaucracy to react

positively, with readiness, faithfulness and efficacy, to the needs and demands of society and of its political representatives, and to show, at the same time, more concern with programmes and problems than with procedure and rules; and the same author points out that the political opinions and values upheld by bureaucrats are a most important indicator of their proclivity to act responsibly.

That behavioral studies of administrative action emphasize responsiveness as a central concept makes, of course, perfectly sound sense in methodological terms, as responsiveness may be gauged quite effectively on the basis of attitudinal data. The substantive results obtained by such studies are extremely valuable, moreover, as they increase and systematize knowledge about elites and their relationship to the values of the political system. A different appraisal must be made, however, when, either implicitly or explicitly, a relationship between responsiveness and effectiveness is postulated: the empirical evidence made available so far does not warrant such a conclusion. More specifically, I contend that the relationship between the political responsiveness of the civil servants and the effectiveness of administrative action is far from being unilinear;

The political attitudes of higher civil servants constitute a set of variables which -of great interest per se- do explain only a part of the performance of the administrative system. More precisely, while such attitudes are crucially important in interpreting crisis -situations

bordering on or leading to regime- transitions, they do not explain much (taken alone), if we are interested in understanding administrative action and policy performance in more or less stable contexts.

On the contrary, a different kind of variable is centrally relevant in the latter connection, which is usually neglected or downplayed by studies investigating the relationship between politics and administration and the decisional role of professional bureaucrats. I define this kind of variable as the organizational properties of administrative structures qua structures.

An analysis and interpretation of policy-performance centered on the study of organizational properties implies that administrative behavior and processes shall be considered in the light of structural determinants (Thompson: 6-9). The concept of structural determinants as utilized in this discussion is defined quite broadly: it includes not only the formal features of administrative organization, but also factors of a cultural and/or ideological nature, such as the values which, deeply implanted in formal structures and procedures, act as decision-premises and affect thoroughly the processes of institutional socialization of bureaucratic actors (Blau: 224-331).

An analytical treatment of organizational properties as conditions of policy-performance, and an inquiry of the conceptual arguments supporting the approach suggested here are developed in Sections 4 and 5 according to the following outline.

The administrative institutions of Western Europe

emerged as professional organizations a very long time ago (Armstrong ). Their formation took place simultaneously with -and partly antedated- the consolidation of the modern state, that is during the period of mature absolutism and enlightened despotism and, to a larger degree, during the age of oligarchic liberalism. A tenable assumption, then, is that such dimensions as organizational format, division of work, professional socialization, institutional ideology, and so on, are still guided by the original historical matrix.

When the bureaucracies under discussion were organizationally rationalized and assumed the formal structure that, to a large extent, they still exhibit (late 19th Century), their functional load was relatively light and not very diversified. Basically, administrative activities were aimed at preserving law and order and regulating minor areas of social and economic life. As was noted previously, a massive load of functions bearing upon direct socio-economic intervention has been assigned to the public sector in recent decades. This has caused administrative agencies to undergo a crisis of adaptation of old organizational models to new functional tasks and exerts important consequences on the performance of both the bureaucratic and the political systems.

According to the main argument advanced here, the above mentioned crisis only partially and marginally depends on the political attitudes of top-bureaucrats, allegedly -and sometimes demonstrably- opposed to the



socio-economic activities that mass-democracies have assigned to the public sector. Rather, the most important conditions explaining the crisis of adaptation being discussed are represented by the organizational properties of the legal-rational model of bureaucracy (especially as observed in administrative law systems emerged and consolidated in the 19th Century), whose principles are largely incompatible with an effective intervention in the social and economic sectors.

As was observed previously, mass-democracies whose governments are directly concerned with social welfare and the management of the economy have altered radically the context of administrative action. And yet, the performance of the political system has grown more and more dependent upon the ability of the 19th Century bureaucracies to cope successfully with such a new task domain. As a rule, and in varying degrees, this adaptive effort has not been satisfactory: the main reason for this must be found in the fact that the administrative rationality of those bureaucracies, and the organizational and normative structures supporting it, were never meant to deal with social welfare and with managing the economy in a democratic, participatory, and pluralistic environment.

#### 4. Diachronic Conditions of Bureaucratic Performance.

In the preceding section attention has been called to the fact that a professional public administration emerged and was consolidated in Continental Europe in a period which antedates both the industrial and the liberal revolutions. This fact sets Continental political systems apart from other Western systems such as the English one - where a professional civil service was instituted toward the end of the 19th Century when both economic modernization and the constitutionalization of the polity had been accomplished - as well as the United States - where the merit system became a widespread phenomenon in a context of mass democracy and advanced industrialization.

This makes Continental bureaucracies much older than their Anglo-Saxon counterparts and, as a consequence, the task of analyzing their structures and pinpointing their organizational properties is particularly complex. In fact, organizational forms and types have a history and such history determines some aspects of the structure and values of present organizations. In particular, careful attention should be paid to the notion that "the organizational "inventions" that can be made at a particular time in history depend on the social technology available at the time" (Stinchcombe: 155), as well as on the cultural values and models definable as authoritative at that same time, and that all tend to be perpetuated even in the face of radical changes

in the environment. To sum up, the main thrust of the argument developed here is that present behavior and performance of public bureaucracies are affected by historically emerged structural and value-determinants.

What has been suggested so far does not, of course, imply a static rigidity of organizational models through time but, rather, as periodic reorganizations have occurred, the survival of older structural and value-features on which newer ones have been superimposed, so that a given concrete administrative structure or apparatus ends up by being characterized by a series of chronologically successive and organizationally overlapping features. The older an administrative system, the more numerous are these strata, and the more intermittent, latent, and difficult to pinpoint is their influence on present behaviour and performance.

The structural evolution of Continental administration spans three such strata: the preliberal and preindustrial period (late absolutism) when the basic structure of professional administration was laid out; the liberal period (19th Century) when the rationalization of those structures was effected; and the post-liberal period (that of the welfare state and of public management of the economy) when these older structures have had to face an entirely new task domain (Freddi, 1982). This section has been constructed as an analytical attempt to isolate and characterize those organizational

properties of Continental administration which respectively proceed from the preliberal and liberal periods. Only the conclusions immediately relevant to the argument unfolded here are set forth in this section. (2)

#### 4.1. The Constraints of the Preindustrial Period: Hierarchy and Generalism.

A term coined by those writers who tried to apply scientific management to public administration best summarizes the organizational properties of hierarchy and centralization as consolidated in absolutist administration and perpetuated to the present day: "generalism". Its ideal type can be outlined here, by stressing those structural traits of the classic continental bureaucracies of today which were already clearly observable in the administrative apparatus of mature absolutism and enlightened despotism.

Candidates for administrative positions are selected on the basis of educational qualifications at a relatively young age, no previous practical training or work-experience being required of them. Entrance tests are largely designed to ascertain a certain degree of "cultural literacy" rather than to assess and predict future performance along specialist lines. Normally, organizational participants are expected to spend their entire working lives in the public service, nearly always beginning at the bottom of the organizational ladder. Professional training is acquired within public administration; the

relevant skills are learned on the job, after the selection process has taken place, and generationally transmitted to the newcomers, who are thus slowly and safely coopted to higher and higher positions. This peculiar form of recruitment is possibly the most fool-proof mechanism for institutionalized resistance against change ever conceived.

Organizational subunits, or offices, are ordered according to the principle of hierarchy; in the same fashion, incumbents of organizational roles are ordered according to a hierarchy of ranks to which differential degrees of material and psychological gratification are attached. Advancement along the career-ladder is competitive, and promotions are granted according to criteria which combine seniority, merit, and political "savvy"; in more general terms, what we observe is a system of extrinsic rewards administered by the hierarchy of authority (Thompson: 5).

This approach to work-performance and role-assignment best demonstrates the inherent properties of generalism: by this I mean that the European central administrative structures are staffed by individuals whose training, qualifications, aptitudes and, in general, professional orientation are assumed to be homogeneous. Participants, then are supposed to be capable of playing all organizational roles that are formally associated with a certain rank. The organizational logic of such a structure does not allow for individual specialization, for assignments

that permanently require functional specificity. On the contrary, the system works on the assumption that participants are omnicompetent vis-à-vis the different functional spheres that can be distinguished within the whole compass of governmental activity. Personnel policies, in fact, are oriented toward individual rotations among several functional alternatives, and toward role interchangeability.

There is, however, another important structural characteristic: differentiation among participants takes place only along the vertical dimension. This implies the assumption that although all functions performed by a given administrative structure share an identical generalist nature, they are, at the same time, characterized by increasing degrees of difficulty, and call for more expert and refined handling as one goes up the hierarchical ladder. Generalism -that is, the assumption of functional omnicompetence -geared to the vertical dimension of hierarchy, leads to a second assumption: that of hierarchical omniscience (Thompson: 40-82; Crozier, 1963: 213-269). In sum, these administrative institutions are characterized by a preoccupation with the monistic ideal (Barnard): administration is a monocratic institution articulated on a vertical sequence of superior - subordinate relationships in which the superior is the source of legitimate influence upon the subordinate. The cultural definition of roles is autocratic and authoritarian. The nexus between higher and lower participants is not mediated by considerations of functional or specific competence; on the contrary,

it is based on a system of rights and duties.

There is, then, a confusion between the notion of right and that of ability, so that purely formal responsibility for something and competence to do something are assumed to coincide. It frequently follows that the greatest importance is attributed to suppressing conflict, to avoiding a pluralistic orientation, and to preventing innovation.

As can be readily observed, many of the features of Max Weber's ideal type of bureaucracy are recognizable in this discussion, but not all. Notably, those that are found wanting concern the normative stance of legal-rational bureaucracy. This happens because, while the structural features of absolutist administration already incorporate, to a very large extent, the formal set-up of contemporary Continental administration, the conception and management of authority-relationships is radically different. And the difference can be explained by the modifications introduced into or, better, layered over the administrative apparatus during the period of constitutional liberalism.

#### 4.2. The Constraints of the Rechtsstaat: Legal Rationality.

Continental European constitutional liberalism, speaking in a very general way, took the form of the Rechtsstaat: order, certainty, predictability, equality before the judge and the tax collector were the goals pursued by a bourgeoisie that was aiming to avoid capriciousness, arbitrariness, and unreliability in political rule. By and large, the liberal regimes of

Europe tackled their tasks retaining the administrative apparatus of the preliberal period practically unchanged in its organizational structure: centralization, hierarchy, authoritarianism, <sup>and</sup> unresponsiveness remained its dominant characters.

Yet, against this largely unchanged set of structural features and value-premises, a set of new guiding principles, characterized by properties of their own, emerged to fit the old administrative machinery. The single most important such innovation was a meticulous, detailed, systematic, and explicit regulation of the administrative apparatus, extended to the relationships obtaining within such apparatus, to those between the apparatus and its political environment, and to those between administrative agencies and individual citizens. This complex regulation assumed the form and status of positive law and developed into a self-contained legislation, guided by rules of its own. A peculiarly European institution was thus born, i.e., the system of public and administrative law, regulating the skewed and hierarchical relationships taking place within the compass of sovereignty, and sharply distinguished from the body of civil law, which regulates relationships entered into by legal equals.

The system of public and administrative law that emerged elaborated some central principles which define the relationship between bureaucracy and its socio-political environment - principles that characterize, so to speak, the external "slope" of public administration. The more detailed principles that guide administrative action - that characterize its internal "slope" -, be they



value-premises, standards of behavior, organizational charts, rules of procedure (the combined impact of which results in what I call the organizational properties of the bureaucratic structure), can be seen as practical and operational applications of those central principles.

In the following paragraphs an attempt is made succinctly to characterize the central principles of legal-rational administration; then a brief analysis of its more detailed and operational traits is set forth.

a) Administrative impartiality, i.e., the idea that administrative action is politically neutral (Gerber, Laband, ). The principle has exhibited, and still exhibits, great vitality: legal doctrine still treats it as an is proposition; public opinion treats it at least as an ought to proposition; bureaucrats on the whole deem it to be relevantly descriptive of their role. Historically, this principle has been crucial in supporting legislation introducing job-security for civil servants, and in arguing that a professional bureaucracy can alternatively serve with equanimity political parties supporting different ideologies and sponsoring different programs and policies.

b) The purely executive role of public administration, i.e., the idea that the law - the authoritative decisions formulated by political parties and the elective agencies expressed by political parties  
/- embodies per se the substance of administrative action. Bureaucrats merely need apply logical deductions to the law, and administrative decisions will ensue from it automatically. In other words, we have here the hypostatization of public administration as a passive

machine, as an instrument in the hands of its political master.

As was pointed out at the outset, modern political science has shown both principles to be empirically untenable. Now there is consensus in the literature on the fact that civil servants are active in policy-making, enjoy a quasi-monopolistic control over information, act to strengthen their already strong position by exercising discretionary controls over policy-execution, and engage in all these actions either representing their own values of siding with fractional groups and views. Elsewhere I have discussed at some length the historical and epistemological conditions that explain why the two principles emerged in 19th Century Continental Europe (Freddi, 1982). Here, it shall be sufficient to outline them succinctly pointing out how, due to those conditions, the twin principles of administrative neutrality and instrumentality constituted valid and realistic descriptions of what was actually taking place: that is, public administration was, in fact, both neutral and instrumental. The Continental legal theorists who first formulated the theory of separation did so by abstracting and conceptualizing the basic trends of the administrative state that was then consolidating.

The (now mythical and then factual) principle of neutrality came forth from the following factors: (a) a political suffrage limited to the upper middle classes; (b) a representative assembly seating well-to-do politicians basically agreed on fundamentals and free from head-on ideological combat; (c) a higher civil service recruited from the same social strata from which those members of parliament who formed the ruling elite had also come (indeed, there was much horizontal mobility between the political establishment and the higher civil service). It should not be surprising

then, that such conditions of social, economic, and cultural homogeneity engendered a happy propensity to agree, and an excellent rapport between politics and administration that could correctly be described as administrative impartiality or neutrality.

The factors behind the principle of administrative instrumentality are equally compelling: the period analyzed by the legal theorists is that of laissez faire economy. The state did not interfere in the workings of society and of the economy. It was a state of regulation, and not of intervention; a guarantor of order and a referee, not an activist agency. No wonder again that, to a large extent, the functions performed by public administration could correctly be described in logical-deductive terms, as a form of syllogism not dissimilar from that observed in the work of a judge acting as the interpreter of a codified system of law.

Thus, professional administrators performed their functions neutrally and instrumentally not because the law ordered them to do so, but thanks to the socio-political and economic circumstances that denoted the 19th Century administrative state. The bureaucracy of that state had acquired the nature of a servo-mechanism: it behaved, to use the metaphor coined by Herbert Kaufman, like an 'internalized gyroscope'. Political parties and elected officials, in sum, could avail themselves of an administrative apparatus comparable to an efficient automation completely identified with the public goals then being pursued: as a consequence, our conditions for party government - control and problem solving capacity - were essentially met.

As was pointed out in Section 2, basic features of contemporary

political systems, notably mass democracy and the welfare state, have practically obliterated those conditions: on the one hand, no longer does one observe cultural, social and ideological homogeneity between civil servants and political personnel, and thus no longer can one maintain that bureaucracies are naturally representative of the political class (Kingsley, Subramaniam, Meier) and, hence, led to behave in a neutral fashion. On the other hand, the task domains which characterize the bureaucracy of the welfare state and of economic intervention cannot be satisfactorily performed via the deductive processes of legal-rational administration.

We should, nevertheless, take stock that the twin principles of neutrality and instrumentality still hold much sway and continue to be the backbone of the institutional ideology of legal-rational administration, with important operational implications. Indeed, the organizational design and the procedural rules of legal-rational bureaucracy should be interpreted as structures that give body and concreteness to those central principles.

The key-words used so far in characterizing the systematic goals of the Rechtsstaat are: certainty, predictability, reliability. Moderate liberalism was bent on erecting a state where the abuses, the capriciousness, and the corruption of despotic rule should not occur. Public administration is that component of the Rechtsstaat where this preoccupation is best in evidence:

it is a system designed to insure maximum controllability. The socio-economic stance of 19th Century regimes greatly reinforced the systemic values of the polity: "The best government is the government which governs least". The paramount goal is the avoidance of undesirable events - such as waste and abuse-not the furtherance of positive objectives. In sum, we have what has been called the "limited" or "negative" state.

The standard legal doctrine definition of control is verification of whether a function has been performed according to preestablished rules. Keeping in mind this definition as well as the basic value-premise whereby the government pursues negative and/or limited goals, the structural and functional characteristics of 19th Century legal-rational bureaucracy fall in place very neatly. Very sketchily, such characteristics can be outlined thus:

a) the administrative process - that series of decisions and executions which begins with the identification of a policy objective (the law) and eventuates in the accomplishment of the same objective - is segmented according to a sequence of acts, issued individually by the several administrative subunits (ministries, boards, agencies, departments) which, on the basis of their precisely defined competences, participate in the realization of the final goal.

b) each such subunit performs its task as if it were, so to speak, a monad. It guards jealously its own area of competence, and it is not expected, in the performance of its task, to take into consideration

the interests and sub-objectives which constitute the competence of other subunits. In other words, the institutional objective aimed for here can be characterized as the pursuit of accountability via the avoidance of organisational redundancy and the accentuation of formal controls.

c) the assumption is that administration is a self-propelling and self-contained machine. The logic of legal rationality calls for "each role to be perfected, each bureau to be exactly delimited, each linkage to articulate unfailingly, and to produce one interlocking system, one means-ends chain which possesses the absolutely minimum number of links, and which culminates at a central point" (Landau, 1969: 354).

d) all these characteristics and traits are reinforced by the judicial and formalistic bent of mind of the civil servants, whose professional socialization is largely in the field of legal interpretation (Juristen Monopol).

To sum up: the impressive work of administrative rationalization carried out in 19th Century Continental Europe ended up by fusing and enmeshing two fundamental organizational properties. The first - which, as we have seen, has both a preindustrial and preliberal matrix - is hierarchic centralization: superiors provide exact value premises to their subordinates who, accordingly, do the same for their subordinates, and so forth. The result is a "transitive and asymmetrical structure

giving rise to the chain of command and compliance" (Landau; 1980: 199 ).

The second has reemphasized the drive for centralizing authority in order to anchor the legal - rational notion of accountability: it is based on the assumption that it is possible to formulate unambiguous value premises and precise goals which, in turn, lead to a "formal deductive system, synoptic in character, and entirely consistent". (Landau, 1980: 201 ).

Self-consistency, then, is the paramount value in legal-rational bureaucracy, the core of its institutional ideology. This engenders a circular process causing immobility in decision modes - what Crozier<sup>(1963)</sup> has called the "bureaucratic vicious circle" - for the performance standards and norms of behavior enforced by the formal organization derive from the values crystallized in the bureaucratic ideology.

This circular process not only induces decisional immobility, but also stability of performance criteria through time, regardless of external stimuli. As Blau has argued cogently (270-331), organizational ideology is supported by two factors: legitimating values and the process of institutionalization. Legitimating values buttress authority, functioning as media of organization and thus extending the scope of organized control; they are enforced through the socialization of participants. Institutionalization, in turn, through a set of formalized procedures, perpetuates organizing principles and internalized cultural values which, again, are transmitted

via processes of organizational socialization.

These are the reasons which prompt and reinforce the suggestion that studies of the political attitudes of bureaucrats (the end-result of political socialization) are not likely to shed much light on decision modes and policy performance. Many more insights can be gained by concentrating on institutional, organizational, and professional socialization. And this is exactly why so much attention is here being devoted to structural constraints.



5. Synchronic Conditions of Bureaucratic Performance:  
Administrative Raionality or Administrative Rationalities?

What has been said so far does point indirectly to the fact that the task of public administration is now not only quantitatively much larger, but qualitatively different. A formalistic, logical-deductive orientation to administrative decision-making was tenable in a context exclusively concerned with the maintenance of law and order. Now it has become a fiction. A managerial aptitude rather than a judicial bent of mind is needed. When public agencies are concerned with social welfare, managing the economy, actually running large industrial concerns, top civil servants are daily confronted with decision-situations of a pragmatic-inductive nature. Cost-benefit considerations, choices between technically alternative solutions nearly always leading to different political consequences, bargaining with clienteles and special constituencies are but a few examples of situations likely to occur in the normal course of administrative activity. No matter how detailed, well framed, and up-to-the-point legislation may be, it certainly cannot provide concrete guidance to solve such complex problems.

Two immediate consequences can briefly be indicated here: on the one hand, the more "modern" functions of the state have made it inevitable for the higher civil servants to play a central role in actual policy making. On the other hand, the persistence through time of the fiction whereby what the civil service does is merely instrumental execution of what political parties and elected officials, chosen according to partisan criteria, have decided

creates a smoke-screen which keeps the level of awareness of what actually happens very low, and hence reduces the probability that relevant and indispensable controls be effectively exercised.

The search for a streamlined predictability and reliability of administrative processes had been prompted by essentially negative considerations: in other words, they can be construed as an expedient contrived to prevent abuses, waste, and corruption. Legality, not flexibility, systemic maintenance, not operational effectiveness, had been the objectives. Within these limitations, the design had been successful.

Under modern conditions, however, the reverse is true. The series of bottlenecks designed in the 19th Century have now become strangleholds on the 20th Century functions. Delays, inability to adapt, failure to spend allocated moneys before the planned deadlines, ritualisms, buck-passing, and displacement of goals are some of the results.

The conclusion of all this is then obvious: legal-rational bureaucracies are not compatible with the functions of the welfare state and of governments concerned with managing the economy. Both administrative value-premises and organizational techniques must be radically overhauled if a new compatibility between administrative structure and policy-functions must be engendered.

In order to put in perspective the requirements of an interventionist administration operating in a democratic context, and such to augment the probability that the party government model and its prerequisites be realized, an investigation of the organizational properties that such an administration ought to possess is indispensable: and this is best done by contrasting them with the properties of legal-rational bureaucracy. At the outset, and painting with a broad brush, one must point out that the limited, negative state of the 19th Century performed authoritative functions mediated by the attributes of certainty and predictability: on the other hand, the interventionist and pluralist state of our days deals with uncertain and problematical situations and it does so allegedly guided by criteria of effectiveness and responsiveness.

Now, if the functional load of contemporary Western European governments is characterized by situations that are both uncertain and problematical, it follows that all policies, by their nature, lie in the future tense and are, therefore, hypothetical (Landau, 1973 and 1980).<sup>(3)</sup> Their results then, can be defined as outcomes on a test of adequacy of policy, which <sup>is</sup> like saying that policies are solutions to problems.

If a policy fails to produce the specified outcome, this may arise because:

- a) it is simply an incorrect hypothesis
- b) it has not been executed properly - i.e., its implementation is weak, which means that in its initial formulation, it was incomplete -
- c) it was misinterpreted, which means that those charged with its execution, changed it, either unintentionally or willfully.

In almost every area of the governmental scope of action, therefore, we observe a competition of solutions with respect to a given situational problem. This is why we quite often observe heated and vigorous debates on all sorts of policy issues. In only one area of policy rarely, if ever, do we have explicit discussion: in the area of organizational policy. It would seem that, in most cases, the heroic assumption of Taylorism is made whereby the one best way to organize is known.

That there can be, or must be, different organizational structures for different types of problem situations, escapes notice. The basic form (emerged in absolutist Europe and explicitly rationalized and politically tamed in the 19th Century) remains virtually universal: the hierarchic pyramid, generalism, the twin myths of functional omniscience and of hierarchic omniscience, the search for predictability and certainty. There are variations on the theme, but they are usually minor. The fundamental (legal-rational, Weberian) assumption remains that all we need in order to make a correct decision in the single case is logical deduction from the law.

Since, as was affirmed above, policies are hypotheses, organizations which either make and/or administer policy must be sensitive and must respond to error. A central concept must be emphasized here: that contemporary bureaucracies deal in knowledge, that their work is empirical and experimental, and that it has been made thus by governmental intervention in the economy and in society. Administrative

activities are not any longer simply matters of law; they are also, and predominantly, matters of fact. If bureaucracies are not organically aware of this, and are then organized so as to preclude appreciation of fact, they are, as a consequence, incapable of detecting error (Landau, 1973 and 1980; Wildavsky, 1972).

Let us go back to the notion whereby all organizations are systems of knowledge. Presuntively, the knowledge necessary (i. e., of technical instrumentation and cause-effect relations) is contained in an organizational structure: in the law which "structures" it, and in its rules and regulations which, according to the perspective developed here must be viewed as decision rules - rules which provide solutions to problems. An organization design is therefore an empirical claim, namely that its structure contains the knowledge necessary to accomplish its tasks.

If we conceive of the organizational structure as a body of knowledge, then its operational outcomes are a function of that knowledge. If an organization had been constituted with perfect knowledge, it would mean that it would never be surprised: save for the equivalent of measurement errors, everything would proceed as expected, and nothing would be problematical. Thus, surprise, deviation from expectation, anomaly mean that the organization has less than perfect knowledge (Landau, 1980), and that, as a consequence, an error has been made.

In a well-run organization, the appearance of error signals an organizational (that is, structural) inadequacy.

Steps are then taken to find a correction. Constant corrections mean that an organization is continually modifying structure so as to reduce the probability of error. When this occurs over long periods of time, the organization takes on the properties of its task environment and ceases to resemble its original structure. If, in fact, an organizational system created a very long time ago (as in the case of many branches of Continental administration) retains its basic original structural features, it either has had perfect knowledge (which is impossible) or it has not learned very much from experience.

Returning to a quotation from Landau (1980:207) "a perfect knowledge system takes <sup>the</sup> form of an abstract calculus. As in classical mechanics, it is hierarchical and pyramidal, asymmetrical and transitive". Through processes of logical deduction, one moves down the logical chain. If the system is purely formal, it has no empirical content: therefore, a perfection can be attained. It is, however, a formal or logical perfection. If, on the contrary, it has empirical content, then deductions must be tested - verified or falsified. The greater the power of the system, the less the probability of surprise: the less the probability of surprise, the less the error. In other words, events occur as predicted. If outcomes <sup>occur that are</sup> unexpected, the system is immediately re-examined for error and save for measurement or test error, they are corrected.

As was shown in the previous sections, virtually all classical bureaucracies exhibit the form of this kind of knowledge system: they are pyramidal, hierarchical, and therefore asymmetrical and transitive. A structure distinguished by such attributes is naturally led to

assume that near perfect knowledge is in hand and, universally, this is a case of institutionalized self-deception (Landau, 1980). Bureaucracies in general, bureaucracies involved in social and economic intervention in particular, simply cannot be characterized by such a type of knowledge. So long as they maintain this fiction, then their procedures, rules, and regulations are purely formal, devoid of empirical power, and problem solving capacity. Consistency, - as was noted in section 4.2 - becomes their modal pattern of operations, regardless of stimulus, and thus we observe mechanical rule following and displacement of goals.

All that has been said in the last few paragraphs impinges on the notion of administrative rationality; and it leads to a conclusion: in the same way that it is incorrect to assume the existence of one best way to organize, so it is equally incorrect to assume that there is one best administrative rationality.

It is, therefore, important to distinguish among types of rationality, so as to avoid the risk of concentrating all the attention on just one definition, such as that of legal rationality, or on that close relative, the rationality of efficiency, as defined by the economists of the neo-classical persuasion, and generally cast in terms of input-output ratios (Buchanan and Tollison, 1972; Downs, 1967; Niskanen, 1971; Bréton, 1974; Tullock, 1963; Peacock, 1979). As we shall see shortly, we may as well speak of the rationality of effectiveness, defined as the ratio of expected outcome to actual outcome. Or we

may, under conditions of conflict, speak of the rationality of acceptability. (Lindblom. March and Olsen. Wildavsky, 1960). What is necessary at this point is to make clear that rationality is a systemically bounded concept: what is rational in one circumstance is irrational in another.

The importance of this fact has particularly to do with the concept of legal rationality cast mostly in terms of certainty, consistency, predictability, reliability, syllogistic logicality, (and which, as we have seen, is frequently assumed to be the only type of modern rationality).

Now, legal rationality must be understood in a twofold perspective. <sup>Following Max Weber,</sup> legal rationality is first to be understood in contrast to tradition and charisma: it refers to a set of behavioral constraints that differ from the latter. And its main point is not just directed (as the ideology of the Rechtsstaat would have us to believe) against arbitrary action by governmental authorities, for there is little that is arbitrary in traditional, precedent-bound systems. Rather, and most importantly, legal rationality has to be understood in terms of providing an objective basis or standard of justification for actions taken by bureaucrats. Hence the establishment of sets of rules and regulations that are technically warranted. Technical warrants, however, are not synonymous with efficiency and certainty (the objectives predominantly pursued by legal rational administration). They can also be based on criteria of effectiveness and criteria of acceptability.

Distinguishing rationalities relates directly to distinguishing decisions. In raising the question of organizational policy, the point is that different situations



are different precisely because their modal patterns of decision differ. Hence, for different types of situations, we need organizational structures that permit the most "rational" types of decisions. What is required now is to establish a typology of decisions as clearly as we can so that each subset is easily identifiable.

The seminal contributions of Simon (1947 and 1960) are, of course, crucially important in this respect. As is well known, Simon characterizes an administrative decision in a modernized and secularized context as a function of both fact and value. In traditional and sacred contexts, one can find examples of decisional situations which do not admit of fact as a legitimating basis for decisions. There, a factual challenge is perceived as deviation from dogma, and as deserving suppression and sanction.

This peculiarity, however, is not limited to traditional and presecular societies only. In fact - as we have seen - Western bureaucracies too can take on this property, when, e.g., they root themselves in decision-rules which have become a dogma (certainty, legality) and, therefore, guard against challenges of fact. Needless to say, organizations which exhibit these modes of decision are incapable of detecting error and of effecting corrections, and thus are ill-fitted to cope with the task domains introduced by public intervention into society and in the economy.

A modern, technically based organization should exhibit quite different characteristics: it should not preclude value judgements while simultaneously employing factual warrants in establishing and justifying its decisions. Dogma should have no place in such an administrative

system,<sup>(4)</sup> only error. Error would signal the need for correction and an organization built on this principle should devote considerable amounts of its resources to the task of correction.

Keeping in mind that three types of administrative rationality have been distinguished (efficiency and/or certainty, effectiveness, and acceptability), and using Simon's basic formulation, we can now establish a decision matrix, which further clarifies decision types:

	+	-
	V	
	A	B
+	Syllogistic Programmed Synoptic Computational Algorithmic ↓ <u>Authoritative decisions</u>	Bargaining Negotiation Trade-off ↓ <u>Responsive or acceptable decisions</u>
F	C	
-	Pragmatic Experimental Heuristic Incremental ↓ <u>Effective decisions</u>	

On the F axis, Facts are to be understood in terms of knowledge of cause-effect relations, of instrumentation, of process laws: in a more directly administrative language, they refer to organizational means. Were a + appears, the knowledge necessary to achieve a goal exists. Otherwise, it does not: organizational means are inadequate to the task.

On the V axis, Values are to be understood as motivational, as setting up drive-states or predispositions which give rise to organizational goals. A + means the goal consensus exists: there is agreement and organizational goals have been unambiguously defined. A - means lack of agreement and/or ambiguously defined goals.

This discussion of alternative operational definitions of administrative rationality can be concluded with a few interpretative comments about the figure presented at p. 48. Cell A accommodates legal-rational bureaucracy as well as the rationality of efficiency<sup>(5)</sup>: it is the locus where decisions of a logical-deductive nature are made, whose validity is a function of the system of norms and /or parameters from which they issue. Their cornerstone is codified law. When quite some time after the administrative structures having these properties had been erected, governments began to intervene in the social and economic sectors, an important phenomenon became evident.

Many of the new task-domains and decisional situations which were<sup>thus</sup> assigned to public administration are characterized by internal logics of their own, be they those of economics, of technology, of social welfare. What they have in common is a high empirical content, which means that satisfactory decisions can be made only after careful experimentation

and repeated testing (Cf. cell C). The point is well illustrated, from different angles, by such authors as Lindblom, Allison, March & Olsen. In sum, policies have acquired here the nature of hypotheses and the bureaucrats who had been trained to think of themselves as deductive logicians had to tackle problems usually faced by empirical technicians.

At the same time, governments began more and more frequently to act as brokers, mediators, articulators, trying to process the diverse and contradictory demands issuing from pluralistic and mass-democratic societies. (This is the case of cell B). The degree of authoritativeness of governmental action decreased markedly. Traditional überparteilich civil servants were faced with the task of advocacy, calling for political responsiveness and aptitude for compromise.

In some political systems new structures, both administrative and normative, were erected to deal with the new functions. In other political systems, notably those with entrenched and powerful legal-rational bureaucracies, the opposite trend was observed: the new functions were forced into the old structures. The decisional situations located in cells B and C, were treated according to the criteria postulated in cell A.

Management- that is the approach to decision-making that best sums up the contents of cells B and C -was equated with control, an approach perfectly suited to the decisional situations described in cell A. Unfortunately, management and control are terms inversely related to each other. If a situation can be controlled, it means that it is not problematical. The assumption that problematical situations can be controlled has led to the lamentable situations that have been illustrated in the first pages of this paper: management problems that are overwhelmed by premature programming and premature control systems.

To sum up: administrative institutions cast in the legal-rational mold "tend (statistically speaking) to commit Type II errors: accepting as true hypotheses that are false". (Landau 1980:216).

6. Party Government and Bureaucratic Effectiveness and Responsiveness: A Framework for Comparative Analysis.

As was stated at the outset, two conditions must exist for the model of party government to be realized: control over the bureaucracy by elected officials and an administration capable of a satisfactory or, at least acceptable policy performance.

The discussion developed thus far has shown that in order for these conditions to obtain, bureaucracy must be denoted by the two characteristics of responsiveness (defined as readiness to pursue policy-goals in accord with the values prevailing in the political system), and of effectiveness (defined as a satisfactory or acceptable ratio of expected outcomes to actual outcomes).

Historically, two alternative strategies have been employed to bring about those desirable characteristics: on the one hand, the American spoils system which, while bestowing on elected officials a capacity of total control over the bureaucracy, led to disastrous consequences in terms of effectiveness - let alone graft and corruption - and prompted Wilson to suggest that the American system of government, if it wanted to become effective, would have needed to create an administrative system modeled after that of the Emperor of Germany. On the other hand, a politically neutral and technically competent civil service, that is legal-rational bureaucracy (by and large, the above mentioned administration of the Emperor of Germany).

In the preceding sections, a good deal of attention

has been devoted both to the socio-political characteristics of European civil servants of the late 19th and very early 20th centuries, and to the organizational properties of European bureaucracies during the same period.

So far as the socio-political characteristics of the civil service are concerned, we have seen that, for reasons both cultural and sociological, higher civil servants tended to be attitudinally homogeneous vis-à-vis elected officials. This happy coincidence made for continuous decisional processes between the political and administrative classes, so that the latter performed pretty much like an automatic servo-mechanism (hence the idea of neutrality).

At the same time, the organizational properties of the bureaucratic apparatus proved to be admirably fitted to the task domains of the administration of the limited or negative state of law and order and of laissez faire. They were made obsolete and/or insufficient when the task domain of the bureaucracy came to include interventionist policies. Here the central point concerns modes of decision-making. More specifically, the argument was developed in the following manner: a) administrative rationality, that is the mold of decision-making, is the function and product of organizational structure and procedural norms; b) different functional task domains call for different decision modes, which will obtain only in the context of an appropriate administrative rationality; c) satisfactory performance is a function of a positive correlation between task domains and administrative rationalities, of which three can be distinguished:

- 1) legal rationality, conducive to synoptic, sillogistic and deductive processes leading to authoritative decisions in a context where goals are unambiguously defined and means are fully adequate;
- 2) the rationality of intervention, involving incremental and pragmatic processes, leading to effective decisions, (provided that the adequacy of organizational means is constantly tested empirically);
- 3) the rationality of advocacy of, and/or intermediation among interests, involving processes of bargaining and negotiation, conducive to acceptable decisions whose main objective is the clarification of ambiguous and uncertain goals.

It was argued, then, that the unsatisfactory policy performance plaguing contemporary political systems stems from the fact that both the functions of intervention and those of intermediation have been forced into the mold of legal rationality - assumed as the only and one best way to make decisions - while the task of erecting administrative structures capable of accommodating alternative rationalities has frequently been neglected, though to varying degrees in different political systems. The consequences of this situation have been described: ritualism, rule - following, formalism, premature planning, all leading to the conclusion that "a bureaucratic organization cannot correct its behaviour by learning from its errors" (Crozier, <sup>1963;</sup> 187). An organization, in other words, not only ineffective, but unresponsive as well, for the relevant knowledge to run it has become a monopoly of its participants, less and less controllable by its alleged political masters.



The argument developed in this essay, and particularly in section 5, is that the task domain of the modern state has caused accepted notions of bureaucratic responsiveness and policy performance (derived from the 19th century conceptions of neutrality and instrumentality) to become obsolete; and that they can be rendered adequate to the complex task domains of our times by incorporating and appropriately structuring the forms of rationality outlined in our decision matrix. The main hypothesis here is that to the extent that an administrative structure is capable of incorporating the "modern" rationalities, the probability will increase that the basic conditions of party government be approximated.

How could one propose to test this hypothesis? By starting from the observation that the structural features of the bureaucracies of different political systems are different and by investigating which structural features are more likely either to incorporate those forms of administrative rationality that are associated with an effective policy performance, or to facilitate those processes of socialization that are associated with bureaucratic responsiveness.

As was noted previously, responsiveness and effectiveness, though they are closely linked, are not in a unilinear relationship: neither could be predicted from the other. Responsiveness is, to a sometimes large extent, a function of attitudes and sociological factors which antecede processes of institutional socialization, whereas effectiveness is mostly a function of structural variables and organizational

socialization. Thus, responsiveness ought to be gauged with indicators sensitive not only to structural variables, but to attitudinal and exo-organizational variables as well.

On the basis, then, of the argument developed so far, a framework for comparative classification and analysis can be constructed. Its aim is the assessment of the extent to which two dependent variables (the conditions of realizability of the party government model) are affected by a set of independent variables. The two dependent variables are: effectiveness of policy performance (or problem solving capacity) and bureaucratic responsiveness (which obtains when the bureaucracy exerts a power which is neither independent from nor uncontrolled by elected officials).<sup>(6)</sup>

A tentative checklist of independent variables is presented here. Some are of a structural nature, and some are attitudinal. They are displayed as continua. The hypothesis formulated here is that the trends implicit in the captions itemized in the left hand column are associated with both low effectiveness and low responsiveness, pointing to modes of decision of oligarchic legal-rational bureaucracies, whereas the captions that can be read in the right hand column indicate trends associated with high effectiveness (the first four) and high responsiveness (the last three), pointing to modes of decision that incorporate the "modern" rationalities.

- PARTY GOVERNMENT +

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1. Hierarchic centralization                            | Decentralization                           |
| 2. Structural diffuseness                               | Differentiation                            |
| 3. Generalism   | Functional specificity                     |
| 4. Monopoly of knowledge ( <u>e.g.</u> , adm. law)      | Pluralistic knowledge                      |
| 5. Bureaucratic ethos (localism)                        | Outside reference groups (cosmopolitanism) |
| 6. Socio-political particularism                        | Representativeness                         |
| 7. Attitudes incongruent with political system's values | Congruent                                  |

STATEMENT OF WORK

1. Project Name

2. Project Objectives

3. Scope of Work

4. Deliverables

5. Timeline

6. Budget

7. Roles and Responsibilities

8. Risk Management

A few conclusive comments will hopefully clarify the implications of this framework for comparative analysis. Hierarchic centralization typifies those administrations where nearly all decisions, both substantive and instrumental, are made by small and highly cohesive groups of officials, with no leeway left to intermediate executives. Here the possibility of experimental and pragmatic feedbacks is minimal, and self-corrections are slow and rarely resorted to, as in the French case (Crozier, 1963) and, as was pointed <sup>out</sup> by the Fulton Report, in the British case as well. In such situations, moreover, the probability is high that an unsatisfactory distinction be made between policy-making and policy-execution, with negative consequences both on efficiency and on the ability of cabinet ministers to effectively control administrative action. Both the American situation, where one sees ample decisional powers granted to the men on the spot (Corson and Paul), and the West German experience (Mayntz and Scharpf. Mayntz), where the Lander do over 90 per cent of the administrative work, with the central government departments engaged with the larger questions of policy, illustrate the opposite trend.

The notions of structural diffusion and generalism (as contrasted with structural differentiation and functional specificity) were discussed in detail in Section 3: among the largest Western political systems, Italy and Britain seem to score lowest on these dimensions with, however, an important difference: Italian officials, being nearly all trained in the law, exasperate ritualism and premature programming, while the members of the administrative class are much more flexible and adaptable, moving frequently, as they do, among the great departments and having been chosen for qualities of intellect that enable them to understand policy (Fry). The

American and the French case exemplify, even though in different ways, the opposite tendency: in both systems, administrative leaders are the carriers of diversified types of relevant talents. They are professional specialists and thus are capable of bringing different and necessary perspectives to bear upon decision-making (Corson and Paul. Suleiman, 1978).

The next two variables (monopoly of knowledge vs. pluralistic knowledge, and bureaucratic ethos vs. outside reference groups) illustrate mutually reinforcing dimensions. The potential of a monopolistic control over the relevant knowledge to run the bureaucracy is typical - as Weber observed - of legal-rational administration. In the Italian case and, to a somewhat lesser extent, in the German case, higher civil servants are the stern custodians and the formalistic interpreters of legal rules used as standards for decision and evaluation, practically reducing to nil the possibility of intelligent scrutiny by outsiders. The opposite applies where different technical and professional outlooks are observed: there, as in the American case (Aberbach et al.) and, to a less intense degree, in France (Suleiman, 1974), one looks at a veritable market place of options and counteroptions, where decisions are reached via confrontation of alternative policy solutions. In turn, where a monopoly of knowledge obtains, we tend to observe also the particular form of secrecy and social cohesion referred to as bureaucratic ethos, characterized by localism, or unilateral identification with the traditional values of the institution (Merton. Gouldner). Where, on the contrary, civil servants are prevalently guided by professional values, active not only in bureaucracy, but also in the societal environment; where, in other words, we have cosmopolitans (Merton. Gouldner) whose reference groups operate

outside the bureaucracy, the probability will be higher that effective controls be exercised and access to the administration be granted more easily to concerned individuals and interest groups.

The last two variables (socio,-political particularism vs. representativeness, and attitudes incongruent vs. congruent with the political system's values) are those which have constituted, so far, the main concern of behavioral studies investigating the motivational factors of administrative action. Where the bureaucracy as a social group is incapable of representing either society or the political class - the notable case here is France (Suleiman 1978) and, to a lesser degree Italy (Aberbach et al. Putnam) - the likelihood is great that the higher civil service is a semiautonomous and unresponsive (to party government) political agency (Suleiman, 1974), whereas the opposite is true where a good fit exists between administrators and politicians, as in Britain (Kingsley) or between bureaucracy and society as in the United States (Bendix. Aberbach et al.). (7)

In conclusion, the dimensions listed on the left hand column constitute the main headings of an ideal type of bureaucracy which is both incapable of tackling the task domains of contemporary political systems, and undermines the possibility of effective party government. By contrast, those dimensions that are listed in the right hand column illustrate a totally alternative ideal type. Mutatis mutandis, an administration thus characterized would recreate the conditions that we have seen to have obtained in 19th Century Europe: the bureaucracy would act largely like an automatic servo-mechanism, like a gyroscope entirely identified with both its

task domains and the values prevailing in the political environment. Party government would be in effective, not nominal, control and, in the context of this updated version of the policy-administration dichotomy, could count on an instrument capable of producing acceptable solutions to policy problems.



## NOTES

(1) Aaron Wildavsky (1972), in discussing some organizational trends recently surfaced in several Western political systems, has also suggested that we might be moving toward a rehabilitation of the policy-administration dichotomy.

(2) This essay is not concerned with a discussion and an evaluation of the problems encountered when defining and analyzing the concept of political performance, but only with a particular moment or dimension of it, and namely policy performance which, in the structural approach adopted here, is relatively simple to isolate. For a discussion of the multifaceted problems and dimensions one encounters in defining political performance, cf. Eckstein (1972).

(3) For a more articulated and detailed discussion cf. Freddi (1982).

(4) For the arguments developed in this section I am much indebted to Martin Landau: not only to his published work, but also to the many stimulations I have received discussing with him. However, I do apply or develop some of his concepts to situations and according to criteria that are quite different from those encountered in his work, and that he might not approve of. Thus, the responsibility for such applications and developments is solely mine.

(5) Probably, it is not a coincidence that in the technical jargon of Continental jurists, legal doctrine is sometimes referred to as "dogmatics".

(6) Placing these two concepts (legal rationality and the rationality of efficiency) under the same label might cause some surprise in view of their largely separate histories in the literature. The impression, though, is likely to vanish if we concentrate our attention on the organizational properties which are associated with the types of rationality being discussed. For pioneering remarks about the close relationship

between Weberian legal rationality and the underpinnings of the Scientific Management school, cf. March, Simon, and Guetzkow.

(7) This framework is partially grounded on a conceptualization presented in my earlier work (Freddi, 1968) developed, however, solely on the basis of an analysis of structural traits of bureaucratic institutions, and not of historically explained organizational properties.

(8) The comments briefly developed here are impressionistic and merely

pretend to exemplify possible lines of research. Neither the empirical referents that have been mentioned nor the literature that has been cited could be described as even remotely comprehensive.

Continuing in the same tentative and sketchy vein, a classification of the bureaucracies operating in the largest Western political systems might look as follows: the Italian bureaucracy would score low (or lowest) on all seven variables, whereas American administration would be located at the opposite end. The French system would score low on variables 1, 5, 6 and 7 and rather high on the others. The German system would score high on 1, 2, 6 and 7, low on 3, 4 and 5. The British system would score low on 1 and 3, somewhere at the middle on 4 and 5, and high on the others.

In conclusion, the American bureaucracy would come out as the one most approximating the conditions of control by elected officials and of acceptable problem solution capacity. It is the most fragile bureaucracy in terms of its probability of enjoying autonomous power and, at the same time, the most flexible and adaptable from an institutional point of view, having been capable of incorporating the professional talents and technical properties that continuously emerge in societal and organizational developments.

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