

Parliamentary Party Groups in European Democracies

Political parties behind
closed doors

Edited by

Knut Heidar and Ruud Koole

Routledge/ECPR Studies in European Political Science



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Parliamentary Party Groups in European Democracies

Parliamentary party groups are central actors in most European democracies. This volume analyses the manifestations and operations of these actors across thirteen different countries and in the European parliament.

The partisan groups in parliament form the link between mass suffrage, parties and parliaments, and are generally accepted today as necessary instruments of parliamentary business. The study of parliamentary party groups (PPGs) is connected with our understanding of liberal, representative democracy. Moreover, debates about the contempt and apathy towards contemporary politics and politicians, in which the alleged gap between voters and representatives, a decline in trust in the political elite, and complaints about partitocrazia prominently figure, have put PPGs in the limelight. How do MPs deal with the tension between being a representative of the people and a member of a political party? And how do they fulfil their task to control government when fellow partisans are participating in that government?

This book reveals that PPGs have increasing importance. The 'parliamentary party complexes', resulting from the growing generosity of the state, and the constant stream of changing policy issues in modern politics, put the PPG more and more in a position to dominate the external party organisation.

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Series editor's preface

It goes almost without saying that political parties are at the core of the process in any liberal democracy. In parliamentary democracies, in particular, parties can be considered as the pivotal actors as regards the relationship between the electorate, on the one hand, and government, on the other hand, with respect to decision-making and policy-making. It comes then as no surprise that political parties are widely studied and extensively documented. What is surprising, though, is the fact that those who represent the parties in parliament and who are considered to act together as a group for a party in the name of (a part of) the electorate have been hardly subject to analysis by political scientists. This gap in the literature on parliamentary parties in or out of government has been—at least in part—filled by this collection of studies of Parliamentary Party Groups in twelve European democracies, and in the European parliament.

The editors of this volume define a Parliamentary Party Group as an organised group of persons of a representative body who were elected either under the same party label or under the label of different parties that do not compete against each other in elections. This wide and enumerative definition shows that this phenomenon is apparently a multifaceted animal that is easy to trace but difficult to study systematically. In my view this has less to do with the many comparative dissimilarities between Parliamentary Party Groups, but is more the consequence of the multifunctional nature of political parties *per se*. Parties are in general characterised by four distinctive elements: one, they are by definition vote-seeking organisations; second, they are in effect office-seekers, i.e. parties wish to acquire as many political offices (e.g. seats in parliament, participation in government, etc.) as possible; third, they identify themselves by means of an ideology, or at least by party manifestos that direct their policy-seeking behaviour; four, all parties have in varying degrees an organisation of their own. These four elements are, however, almost always analysed separately, but this is often erroneous and misleading. For all these characteristics are part of the same and—given the working of any liberal democracy—are intertwined and interdependent. No political scientist will dispute this (conventional) wisdom, but nevertheless one of the crucial actors within a party-as-a-whole appears to have been by and large neglected in comparative politics.

Parliamentary Party Groups, as Heidar and Koole argue, are in fact the lynchpin of the day-to-day practice of parliamentary democracy. The way these groups are organised varies considerably across democracies due to, for instance, the constitutional design of the state which directs the type of electoral system, the formal status of parties, the prerogatives and rights of Members of Parliament. In short, the role of a Parliamentary Party Group is, at least partially, shaped by the institutionalisation of the parliamentary regime. In addition, in most European democracies, Members of Parliament are by now professionals and fully paid by the state and more often than not Parliamentary Party Groups are officially recognised organisations with a right to facilities to do their parliamentary work. Again these provisions vary across nations and over time, which not only makes Parliamentary Party Groups different in their organisational make-up, but also in their room for manoeuvre as regards their role in parliament. Yet, it is not only the formal rules and organisational facilities that shape their behaviour as a political actor. Perhaps even more important in this respect are the type of party that they represent, the socioeconomic and cultural features of their electorate (and with it, their Members of Parliament), as well as the historical origins of the party concerned in terms of 'ideology' and 'age'. All this makes a difference in how Party Parliamentary Groups can and will behave and act in reality. A final dimension of the complex nature of Party Parliamentary Groups is, of course, their relationship with the party-as-a-whole, or, more precisely, the external party organisation. As the separate chapters of this volume highlight, it makes quite a difference to what extent and in which order these relations are organised. In some cases the party *per se* is dominant, in others the parliamentary group, and sometimes it concerns an elite or the ministers in government. In summary, there appears to be a bewildering number of features and dimensions that direct and shape the behaviour and collective actions of politicians in parties.

The great merit of this volume therefore is that it sheds light on all these characteristics of party organisation and related behaviour from the unique perspective of Parliamentary Party Groups. In doing so, the editors of this volume have made a seminal contribution to the study of political parties in European democracies. In addition, they have made a successful attempt to organise the case studies of the separate national systems into a comparative volume. Not only are these case studies helpful in understanding the various systems under review as such, but these studies are to a large extent also made comparable. In the concluding chapter, the case studies are compared and systematically presented along two dimensions: the internal organisation and working of Parliamentary Party Groups, on the one hand, and the relationships with the external party and with government, on the other hand. From this exercise it becomes apparent that there are indeed similarities in Parliamentary Party Groups that will enable (other) students of political parties to enrich and refine the analysis of political parties; in particular, the ways they act and their constraints for action.

Taken in this sense, this volume will be a great asset to European political science. Not the least because the book shows that the development of Parliamentary Party Groups tends towards a growing independence from the party-as-a-whole. A concurrent tendency appears to be that they become an autonomous body in liberal democracy which may well be conducive to a better understanding of why so many people outside the parliamentary arena and party politics are increasingly worried about the quality of liberal democracy at present. The growing complexity of political decision-making and the apparent closure of parliamentary labour for 'outsiders' (even if they are party members) may well have contributed to the widely held idea about the existing of the 'democratic deficit' of the parliamentary process. Perhaps this study will help us to understand to which such a deficit is real and may contribute to a remedy in the future.

Hans Keman
Series Editor
Molkwerum, August 1999

Introduction

Representative democracy and parliamentary party groups

Knut Heidar and Ruud Koole

Recent debates on the legitimacy of representative democracy have drawn attention again to the trinity of parliaments, parties and mass suffrage that has transformed politics during the last 150 years. In many parts of the world, the three constituted the basic structural building blocks for reconstructing national polities into twentieth-century liberal democracies. In public debate as well as political science literature, the institutional structures favourable or detrimental to democracy—in practice the ‘rise’ or ‘decline’ debates—are still central to concerns such as equality, efficiency and stability. Most resistance to mass suffrage, however, died with the reform itself, although those of an elitist inclination still vegetate intellectually on the works of Pareto, Mosca and Michels. The Russian turn-of-the-century liberal, Moisei Ostrogorski, wrote the bible of the ‘blame-it-on-the-parties movement’, claiming that permanent external party organisations perverted the free deliberation of parliaments. The illiberal power of the parties was not subject to control by parliament. Hence, Ostrogorski pleaded for temporary or *ad hoc* parties in order to save the primacy of parliament. In the early 1920s, however, Lord Bryce (reluctantly) accepted the impact of parties and general suffrage: ‘The spirit of democratic equality has made the masses of the people less deferential.... This is in some respects a gain, for it enables popular wishes to be better expressed, but it makes a difference to Parliamentary habits’ (cited in: Norton 1990:50).

The partisan groups in parliament, in this volume referred to as *parliamentary party groups* (PPGs), make up the linkage between mass suffrage, parties and parliaments, and are today generally accepted as necessary instruments of parliamentary business. Bryce for one made the point that without party voting, ‘parliamentary government of the English type could not go on. Ministers would not know from hour to hour whether they could count on carrying some provision of a Bill which might in appearance be trifling, but would destroy its coherence. In every governing body there must be some responsibility’ (cited in: Lawson 1976:164). This view of parties as a stabilising force within parliament has recently been rediscovered—in a gametheoretical application to democratic procedures in the US—as the impact of structural constraints on the otherwise limitless opportunities for legislative instability (Cox and McCubbins 1994). Post-Ostrogorski analysts generally accept the existence of permanent party

organisations, but differ in their evaluation of the relationship between the parliamentary party groups and the extra-parliamentary party organisation (EPO).

Lord Bryce was no doubt right in his claim that the spirit of democratic equality would change the masses. Trends in voting habits since the 1970s have made it clear that the masses have grown less deferential towards the parties which once played such an important role in their political emancipation. Partly as a consequence of this, the coherence and stability provided by the ‘mass party’, with its close union between the PPG and EPO, can no longer be taken for granted—either in empirical or in normative terms. However, if this union has become less evident, then the understanding of the functioning of PPGs has become even more important. Hence, the main objective of this volume is to provide more insight into the PPGs: what they are, how they operate, and what measure of democratic potential is embedded in them as well as which dangers. Since the Second World War, most research has been directed at the EPOs. Klaus von Beyme—and he does not need to be revised sixteen years later—is surprised to find that ‘in the analysis of party systems as well as in parliamentary studies, the parliamentary group has been neglected as a unit of research’ (von Beyme 1983:341).

From the perspective of representative democracy, the need to study PPGs has only gained importance. Debates on contempt and apathy towards politics and politicians (*Politikverdrossenheit* in German), in which an alleged ‘gap’ between voters and representatives, a supposed decline of trust in the political elite, and complaints about *partitocrazia* figure prominently, have put PPGs in the limelight. How do MPs deal with the tension between being a representative of the people and a member of a political party? How do they fulfil their task to control government when fellow partisans are participating in that government? The study of PPGs, therefore, is closely linked to our understanding of liberal, representative democracy.¹ By focusing on both ‘parliamentary democracy’ and on ‘party democracy’ it brings together two branches of the debate on representative democracy. The underlying theoretical question that needs to be answered is how PPGs as such are seen to be instrumental—or detrimental—to the building of democracy. This volume is not conceived as an effort in theory construction in the sense of testing the impact of particular variables or considering how much sense a pre-fixed framework can make of ‘the cases’. It is rather undertaken in an inductive spirit of trying out concepts, typologies and causalities by focusing on the structural properties of the relationships between parliamentary groups, governments and external parties. In this sense this volume is an introduction to a subject that within the political science literature is—rather surprisingly—a neglected centre of power in parliamentary, democratic polities.

The selection of countries has been made to include various major European countries (France, Germany and the United Kingdom), plus at least one country from regions containing smaller European countries: Scandinavia, the Benelux area, and Central/Eastern Europe. We are well aware that not all European democracies are included, and that interesting cases outside Europe (for example, Japan and the United States) are beyond the scope of this book. But we

wanted explicitly to avoid the danger that smaller democracies only appear as an appendix to the study of bigger countries, and therefore the former constitute a central part in this volume, both in space and in conceptualisations. Furthermore, we have excluded non-European cases, although perhaps no parliament in the world had been studied in such a sophisticated manner as the United States Congress (e.g. Aldrich 1994, 1995; Cox and McCubbins 1993; Douglas 1990; Fiorina 1989; Rohde 1991; Shepsle and Weingast 1987, 1995; Weisberg 1978), while the Japanese Diet has equally been subject to considerable research. This exclusion of non-European countries is undertaken for two main reasons. First, a ‘most similar system design’ asks for a reduction of too great a variety, and second because PPGs in the European context are rather understudied. And within Europe enough variation is present between smaller and bigger countries, between old and new democracies, and between different regions to allow for interesting comparisons. Finally, we have included a real European contrast, in that we have included a chapter on the PPGs of the European Parliament, where one would expect the context to create somewhat different PPGs from those in national parliaments.

The selected cases will be presented in Chapters 2–14. We do regret, however, that this volume does not include more Mediterranean countries. Only France is (partly) Mediterranean, but the inclusion of, for example, Italy or Spain, would have enriched the volume. Efforts by the editors in this direction failed to produce a chapter in time. Nevertheless, we think that we have produced a fair sample of European democracies that allows us to observe trends and to draw explorative comparative conclusions that could serve as a basis for further research. This will be done in the last chapter of this volume. This volume is intended to be a basic introduction into a relatively new field of research, providing country-specific facts and analyses within a common framework. The first versions of the common framework (Chapter 1) and most of the specific country chapters were presented at a workshop held in Oslo at the 1996 Plenary Sessions of the European Consortium of Political Research (ECPR). We wish to thank all participants for their contributions and comments. Most country chapters were finalised late in the autumn of 1997 or in January 1998. Later up-dates were not deemed advisable in order not to make the editing a never-ending process. We very much appreciated the constructive criticism of an anonymous referee on a first draft of this volume. We are also grateful for the support given by the Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study in the Humanities and Social Sciences (NIAS), and by the Universities of Oslo and Leiden. Mrs Carol Eckmann helped the editors who do not have English as a first language with the language editing.

Note

- 1 Or just ‘democracy’. To the authors both ‘liberal’ and ‘representative’ are terms to be included in a definition of democracy.

1 Approaches to the study of parliamentary party groups

Knut Heidar and Ruud Koole

The importance of studying parliamentary party groups (PPGs)—already indicated in the introduction—can be stressed by five additional arguments. Each argument also raises questions that have to be considered when studying PPGs.

The first argument is that fairly coherent PPGs are a necessary condition for *electoral accountability*. Or, in its stronger version, representative democracy in parliamentary systems is party government (Katz 1987:2). A crucial element in Katz's 'party-ness of government' variable is the degree to which parties act cohesively to enact party policies (Katz 1987:7). This 'mandate theory' originated with the Westminster type of party government: a party elected on the basis of a programme, with a majority in parliament, has a mandate from the people to make its programme the official policy of the government (Ware 1987: ch. 7). In the next election the voters will judge the parties on their merits. How well have they followed up their election pledges, and how united was the party-in-government? What is the balance of elitism v. populism (or top-down v. bottom-up) in the representative 'mode of operation' of its party (Epstein 1967:316, 292)? The contribution of parties to democracy according to this argument is to serve as a channel of communication by connecting demands from the people to the government (LaPalombara and Weiner 1966), or—in another version—to organise a 'linkage' between electorate and government (Lawson 1980). The question for research on the PPGs is whether and how PPGs perform this 'transmission-belt' job between electorate and government. Do we need the PPGs at all for this task? Other kinds of democracy (with referenda, personal candidates, presidents) may of course also be 'accountable'.

The second argument addresses the way PPGs participate in *the formation and policy-making of governments*. Schattschneider favoured parties as political agents because they could govern without destroying liberty (1942:209). They are, in other words, at the head of the state without becoming part of it. If parties remain by and large institutions of civil society (Ware 1987; but see: Katz and Mair 1995; Koole 1996), this would also explain why the role of parties—despite their importance—is seldom extensively codified within constitutions (Bracher 1964; Heidar 1991). In mapping real party functions, however, King

included the 'organisation of government' as a central party task (King 1969). But is it the 'internal' or the 'external' party, the PPG or the EPO (extra-parliamentary party organisation) that is the efficient locus of power when governments are formed? And when policies are adopted, is it the EPO, the PPG or the party-in-government (PiG—i.e. the ministers belonging to the same party) that is predominant in decision-making? In what ought to be a 'triangular' debate on 'Do parties matter?' for instance, the PPGs are generally overlooked (Castles 1982; Budge and Keman 1990).

Third, following the theoretical trail from voters through parliamentary party groups to governments, the argument about *system effects* is essential: PPGs should provide system legitimacy through their linkage functions, stability through their operation as a coherent parliamentary base for governments, and efficiency through their internal policy co-ordination. These propositions raise the broad question of 'functions'. However, the trouble with the function-finding bonanza is—according to Daalder—that it is 'shot through with *a priori* assumptions about what a "good" party system should do' (Daalder 1983:27). Perhaps the task should instead be to look into the consequences of PPGs specifically according to the three alternative normative standards suggested by Daalder: the traditional concerns of the particular system, the functional prerequisites of systems theories and a selection of general democratic values.

Fourth, an explicitly liberal argument linking PPGs to democracy is that all efficient mechanisms of the political process ought to be *open for public scrutiny*. The PPGs as exclusive, secret arenas should be presented to the voters. The constitutions of representative democracies also mediate 'a conspiracy of silence' on the PPGs (Lowenstein in: Bracher 1964:346), and that we have learnt from von Beyme also holds true for political research. Journalists and party administrators often dismiss the complaint about the 'lack of openness' by arguing that the party groups in fact 'leak information', and that most items of importance usually reach the public in some way or another (Heidar 1995). This may well be true, but it still leaves the systematic study of PPGs at a disadvantage, and does not generate the material to place the groups within a wider context with any degree of precision. What is left on the basis of such leakage is the anecdotal or the impressionistic approach.

Finally, to *understand the democratic process* we need to know more about what parties do to parliament (Ostrogorski) and what parliament does to parties (Michels). The debate on the 'decline of parliament' could benefit from a closer look at the party groups: has the decline scenario been based on appearances rather than realities because the effective machinery of parliamentary decision-making has been conducted behind closed doors? Is there a trend towards the rise of a 'parliamentary party complex' (Koole 1994)? Or, turning to the 'decline of parties' debate, could it not be argued that the 'decline' is more of a 'change'—perhaps the PPGs have strengthened their position relative to some EPO features, like party membership? If so, 'parties' would have changed in the sense that the PPGs have increased their power at the expense of the EPOs, but without necessarily affecting the strength of the 'party-as-a-whole'.

What is a ‘parliamentary party group’?

Even if the need to study PPGs is clear, we first must try to answer the question about what exactly we mean when we speak of PPGs. The precise boundaries of what can be considered to be a parliamentary party group are difficult to draw, however. At first sight the following general description of a PPG seems quite appropriate to use as a definition: ‘an organised group of members of a representative body who belong to the same (extraparliamentary) political party organisation’. But if we examine this more closely, we find that this general description does not apply to all groups or all periods of time.

Is official recognition a prerequisite to speak about PPGs? If so, what is a group of like-minded MPs to be called, if it does not meet the formal criteria (of a minimum number of members, for instance)? Second, can people not belonging to the same political party form a PPG? This is not only important when analysing the PPGs in the European Parliament, but also for coping with the phenomenon of so-called ‘technical’ PPGs: PPGs that are constituted for the sole reason of obtaining a certain kind of facility and/or rights that are only available for PPGs (administrative support, speaking time, etc.). Third, is a certain degree of voting discipline needed to be able to speak of a PPG? In the past, members of parliament often got together informally in a club of generally like-minded representatives, without accepting any formal say of the club on how they should vote. However, without a certain degree of voting discipline, or at least some co-ordination of voting behaviour of its members, a PPG seems hardly to be worth its name. Finally, can a PPG exist when an extra-parliamentary (party) organisation (EPO) is absent at the same level as the representative body in which the PPG manifests itself? For example: is a group of MPs put forward by an amalgamation of parties that individually only participate in local or regional elections a PPG? Or, more important still: how should we conceive of the group of MPs that exists before national party organisations come to the fore?

Labels

The last question touches upon the debate about the saliency of the origin of parties. As stated above, the first groups of MPs were often called clubs, like the French groupings in the National Assembly at the time of the French Revolution (the Jacobin club, for example). In earlier days, the term ‘club’ was used in countries like Germany (*politische Klub*) and the Netherlands (*Kamerclub*) to designate the ascending PPGs, before they were termed *Fraktionen* in Germany and *fracties* in the Netherlands. In Austria PPGs are still called *parlamentarische Klubs*. Today, a broad variety of terms that designate PPGs exist. Next to the *fracties* and *Klubs* we can observe ‘groups’ (*Folketingsgruppe* in Denmark,

partigrupp in Sweden, *groupe politique* in France), ‘parties’ (parliamentary parties in the United Kingdom, congressional parties in the United States), etc.

These different names may illustrate the distinctive paths PPGs have followed since they first began to manifest themselves, or they may point to different types of PPGs. But even when the same label is used, the nature of the PPGs varies considerably. The *fracties* in the Netherlands and Belgium, for instance, are almost at opposite poles with respect to their significance in their respective political systems: while the Belgian *fracties* are subordinated to the executive of the EPO (Deschouwer 1994:95), the Dutch parliamentary system was once described as a ‘fractiocratie’ (Jurgens 1991). And the internal organisation of the French *groupes politiques* does—in general—seem to be both less strict and less staffed than the Danish *Folketinggruppe* (Camby and Servent 1994:28–33; Bille 1994a:148–52). And, of course, the Austrian *Klubs* of today are different from their nineteenth-century predecessors (Kretschmer 1984:29–31).

Minimum number of MPs

Thus, labels do not really help to define a PPG. Moreover, they sometimes differ from the terms used in the formal recognition of PPGs. In general, a trend towards institutionalising the once informal groupings in representative bodies can be observed. The development from a parliamentary democracy to a party democracy in many countries in the first half of the twentieth century was reflected in the formal acceptance of PPGs in the standing orders of parliaments. Official embracing of the principle of the ‘free mandate’ notwithstanding, PPGs were accepted as formal actors in the parliamentary process. Some parliaments demanded a minimum number of MPs for a PPG to be formally recognised. Germany has now—both in absolute and in relative terms—the highest numerical requirements for a PPG (5 per cent of the parliamentary seats) of the countries considered. PPGs in Italy, France and Ireland must hold more than 3 per cent of the total of seats. France deliberately chose to lower the threshold in 1988 from thirty to twenty MPs in order to be able to grant the status of a group to the communists, who had seen their number of seats shrink to only twenty-six. Many countries, however, maintain the lowest possible threshold of one MP, which in all cases is less than 1 per cent of the total number of seats (Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, the UK, for example).

As long as no special facilities are allotted to PPGs (time, money, senior positions in committees), the minimum number of MPs has no importance. But, generally, the minimum requirement is indeed an important formal stipulation for the functioning of PPGs. This also makes the group definition politically important. In 1995, for example, four dissenters from the Norwegian Progress Party were in fact denied group status (and support) in the Storting, because they did not qualify according to the group definition in the standing orders: ‘an MP or MPs elected from a registered party presenting candidates at the elections in

at least one third of the constituencies'. But for comparative purposes the diversity in formal (minimum) requirements prevents us from using a minimum number of MPs as an element in the definition of a PPG.

PPGs: a working definition

Since, then, this brief overview does not lead to an undisputed definition of a PPG, we propose to use the above-mentioned general description as a 'working definition' of a PPG, with one amendment. In order to be able to include PPGs consisting of MPs who have chosen to use the same party label when a genuine EPO does not (yet) exist—as was the case in the early party history in Western Europe, and is re-occurring today in the recent democracies in Central and Eastern Europe—the term 'extra-parliamentary organisation' is erased from the definition. The *working definition* of a PPG thus reads: '*an organised group of members of a representative body who belong to the same political party*'. Hence, we propose to exclude 'technical PPGs' from the analysis, because of their merely administrative character. The PPG as a joint venture of parties that are only organised at the local or regional level can also be excluded from a comparative analysis, but only in so far as the parties do not agree on an overarching political platform. This, however, can only be decided after a discussion of the particular group in question. At any rate, such groups are almost non-existent in practice. The degree of voting discipline has also been excluded from the working definition, which enables us to use this factor as a dependent variable: why do some PPGs have a high degree of voting discipline and why do others allow for more dissidence? The same applies to official recognition of PPGs: why are PPGs formally accepted as such in some countries and not in others?

The groups in the European Parliament (EPGs), however, are of a different order. We do not want to exclude EPGs from the analysis, but propose to treat them as *sui generis* organisations. A comparison of PPGs and EPGs may enable us to improve our understanding of both. Applying the same working definition to them would reduce rather than enhance our understanding of both phenomena.

What types of PPGs do exist?

Parliamentary party groups differ, but the particular dimension or perspective in focus generates the relevant differences. In this section we will try to develop ways to classify PPGs in order to provide a common language for the country-based analyses in the subsequent chapters. Three perspectives are adopted to consider the specific position of the PPG. First, we look at the PPG alone, considering, for example, the degree of group cohesion, the resources and the

organisational structure of a PPG. Second, we consider the PPG from the perspective of the party-as-a-whole, i.e. the position of the PPG in relation to the EPO and ultimately the ministers who belong to the same party (PiG). Third, we will approach the PPG from the perspective of the parliament-as-a-whole; i.e. the groups in parliament will be viewed in connection with the functioning of parliament itself.

The PPG alone

When comparing the internal operation of the PPGs, at least two dimensions must be taken into consideration: the way the PPG is organised and its political coherence. The organisational dimension has many features. An important one, of course, is the size of the group. The smaller the PPG, the less differentiated its structure will be. A PPG of more than one MP will choose its chairman, but any further articulation of the organisational structure obviously depends on the number of MPs. However, size is not enough to determine variance in organisational structure. Even PPGs of the same size can vary considerably. The nineteenth-century parliamentary club, being a loosely and horizontally organised gathering of individual MPs who shared a certain common *Weltanschauung*, had a rather flat organisation, regardless of the number of member MPs. With the advent of the mass party, the character of the PPGs changed. The internal structure of PPGs linked with mass parties was more rigid and hierarchical than the original club. But care should be taken to avoid a teleological approach, in assuming that all PPGs adopted a rigid, hierarchical structure after the introduction of mass parties. On the scale from loosely and horizontally organised clubs to rigid and vertically structured PPGs, many intermediary positions were possible, depending—among other things—on the degree of cohesion with respect to policy formulation, as a result of (imposed) party discipline. The PPG of the Dutch Protestant CHU, to give an example, maintained much of its club character until its merger into the new CDA in 1980, while the PPGs of other Dutch parties like the Protestant ARP or the social-democrat PvdA, had always had a more rigid structure.

Therefore, neither the age nor the generation of PPGs seems to be an important criterion in assessing differences between the organisational structure of PPGs. New parties are not necessarily more rigid than old ones, and vice versa. The German Greens introduced a rather flat organisational type of PPG (including rotation of MPs), without at all resembling the nineteenth-century club type. Even when they were forced to alter the structure of the PPG somewhat after the initial years, the PPG of the Greens continued to be influenced by the ideal of participatory democracy, including with respect to its internal structure, which remained relatively flat. The same ideal, however, demanded a rather high degree of voting discipline. This led to a contradiction, which is also observable in other parties that have become

influenced by ideals of participatory democracy. On the one hand, the autonomy of the individual party member, including the individual MP, is cherished, while on the other hand direct democracy asks for a high degree of internal accountability that can only be reached by a PPG that acts cohesively. Free mandate and participatory democracy are not easily combined. Again, the degree of voting discipline seems to be an important element for discriminating between PPGs.

Yet there is one organisational element that also allows for a major distinction between various types of PPGs: its organisational resources. Most prominently, since the 1960s state subventions have been allotted to individual MPs and to PPGs. In most (West) European countries these have altered the way PPGs operate. Parliamentary politics became more professionalised, in that MPs and PPGs were able to hire staff. This could influence the power balance between the individual MPs and the PPGs, but also between the PPG and the extra-parliamentary party organisations, depending on the type of state subvention. Subsidy given to the individual MP may strengthen his or her position *vis-à-vis* both the PPG and the EPO (but not necessarily so, see below), while state money that is given to (or channelled via) the PPG as an entity gives the latter an important extra organisational resource. In any case, the result of state funding is very probably a group of people living for and from politics centred in and around the PPG and/or the individual MPs. Although we assume that state subvention is the most important external resource available to PPGs today, we cannot exclude the possibility that other considerable (organisational) resources are at the disposal of some PPGs, or have been in the past. For example: trade unions, firms or individual big spenders may play or may have played a supportive role that is comparable to subvention by the state. Therefore, it is better to speak in general terms about the level of external organisational resources available to PPGs (i.e. external to the party-as-a-whole), rather to limit ourselves to state subvention only.

When we take *the degree of group discipline* and *the level of external organisational resources to the PPG* as the two most important elements for discriminating between various types of PPGs, we can roughly distinguish four types, as Figure 1.1 shows.

In the ‘club’ the principle of the free mandate is upheld to such a degree that voting discipline is absent.¹ MPs meet each other, often on an irregular basis, to exchange views, not to decide on a common stance on policy issues. A spontaneous consensus between the members of the ‘club’ may of course occur. The nineteenth-century liberal PPGs in Europe are examples of this type of PPG. But by ‘group discipline’ we mean enforced group cohesion, and that was not a general feature of those liberal parties.

On the other hand, we propose to call cases where group cohesion is high, either imposed by the external (mass) party organisation or by the internal leader of the PPG, while external funding of the PPG and/or the individual MP is negligible, a ‘fraction’. This type of PPG is associated with the (traditional) mass party and most post-war, pre-state-funding social-democratic parties of

		Level of external organisational resources	
		Low	High
Degree of group discipline	Low	Club	Personal kingdoms
	High	Fraction	Parliamentary party complex

Figure 1.1 A classification of the internal organisation of parliamentary party groups (PPGs).

Northern Europe (but not only these) would qualify. A ‘fraction’ is hardly conceivable without some pressure from outside the PPG itself (for example: the EPO controlling re-election of MPs), even if in practice it is the leadership of the PPG who puts pressure on the individual MP to vote in a certain way. Thus, the power of the Chief Whip, to use the British term, depends on the disciplinary power of the party-as-a-whole.

The causality implied in the classification is that state subsidies (or other forms of considerable external funding) will change the PPGs. Party systems with a low degree of group discipline within PPGs will be transformed into a sort of parliamentary medievalism, with a series of ‘personal kingdoms’ around the individual representatives—formally constituting the common ‘empire’ of a PPG, which (like the Holy Roman Empire) does not have much practical meaning. The result is a scattered form of bureaucratisation and professionalisation of the work of parliaments. The views of the party or the PPG play a secondary role in determining the voting behaviour of the individual MPs. Regional or other interests are more important. The Congress in the United States is generally seen as an example of this type of PPG.

When a relatively high degree of group discipline coincides with substantial aid from the state (or from elsewhere) to hire staff, the PPG turns itself into a ‘parliamentary party complex’, consisting of the group of full-time MPs and the subordinated staff (Koole 1992, 1994). This complex operates very distinctively, professionally and rather bureaucratically. The major Dutch parties, for example, are moving in this direction. Even when formal rules stipulate that the flow of money from the state goes (partially) to the individual MPs and not (completely) to the PPG, the tradition of group discipline helps to prevent the unity of the PPG from falling apart.

The PPGs in the party-as-a-whole

When we look at the PPG from a broader angle, its relationship to the extraparlimentary party organisation (EPO) stands out as a very important one. Both the PPG and the EPO belong to the same ‘party-as-a-whole’, by which we

mean the combination of the extra-parliamentary party organisation, the party groups at all levels (national, regional, local) and the party members active as politicians in the local, regional or national executives. Here we will concentrate on the party-as-a-whole at the national level.

PPGs that have like-minded ministers in government (PiG) are confronted with the problem of how to manage the relationship with their fellow party members in the executive branch. Starting with this parliamentary connection a first distinction can be made between political systems in which ministers remain MPs and systems that do not allow such a cumulation of functions. The separation of powers according to the theorem of the *trias politica* is in some countries interpreted as a division between powers only (the UK for instance), and in others as a division between persons as well (the Netherlands). This means that PPGs sometimes consist of both ministers and non-ministers ('frontbenchers' and 'backbenchers') and in other cases of non-ministers only.

A second distinction is not based on formal rules, but on practice. Even within systems with a personalised separation of powers, the PPG and the ministers in government can be in close contact with each other. Also the opposite is possible: frontbenchers and backbenchers can operate quite independently of one another even though they formally belong to the same PPG. For the purpose of generating some ideal types, we prefer to concentrate on the division of power, as it occurs in reality. On the basis of two possible divisions within the party-as-a-whole (between the EPO and the PPG on the one hand, and between the PPG and the PiG on the other) the following classification is proposed (see Figure 1.2).

The internal structure of an 'autonomous' PPG (independent of both the EPO and the PiG) is probably very loose because no external incentives exist to centralise decision-making (cf. the nineteenth-century club). But it is also possible to imagine a PPG consisting of a clique of MPs centred on a charismatic leader. This is probably the case with plebiscitarian parties that only function as a device to get certain people elected around a specific leader, where the EPOs have hardly any impact on the internal functioning of the PPG.

		Division between PPG and EPO	
		Strong	Weak
Division between PPG and government	Strong	Autonomous	Party-oriented (dominant or dominated)
	Weak	Government-oriented (dominant or dominated)	Integrated (see Figure 1.3)

Figure 1.2 A classification of the PPGs as part of the 'party-as-a-whole'.

If the division between the party-in-government (PiG) and the PPG is strong and the separation between the PPG and the EPO is weak, the PPG would be 'party-oriented'. This orientation towards the party can take two forms, depending on the direction of influence between the PPG and the EPO. If it is the PPG that controls the party, it is a 'dominant, party-oriented' PPG; if it is the extra-parliamentary party organisation that controls the PPG, the PPG is a 'dominated, party-oriented' PPG.

A similar subdivision can be made with respect to the PPGs that have close connections with the government and weak connections with the EPO. This 'government-oriented' PPG can be dominated by or be dominant over the ministers in government. Parties with government potential (*regierungsfähig* in German), but that are in opposition can still be 'government-oriented'. Permanent opposition parties naturally tend to be more 'party-oriented'.

At this point, we explicitly refrain from listing all possible empirical indicators for 'dominance' of one actor over another (but see for some indicators: Gibson and Harmel 1998:216–17). The formal power of the EPO to select candidates for public office may sometimes enable the EPO to be dominant over the PPG, but it may also be merely formal, in that the EPO just rubber-stamps decisions taken within the leadership of the PPG or among the ministers in government, or both. The organisational resources of the PPG may have increased due to state subvention, but direct public subvention of the EPO may have grown faster, resulting in increased dominance of the EPO over the PPG, for example in terms of agenda-setting. On the other hand, the reduction in the number of party members may have led to a weaker reputation for the EPO, i.e. its legitimacy within the party-as-a-whole is challenged: MPs and PPGs can claim to represent 'the voters' while the EPO is no longer a mass organisation. These and other indicators are very difficult to combine into one set of yardsticks to measure 'dominance' that does justice to different political systems. What is important is the perceived centre of power within the party-as-a-whole: is it the same for all parties in one country, or does it differ among parties within the same polity, and why? Specific country studies, like the ones that follow, are needed to answer these questions. What is explored in this chapter is a set of heuristic tools, a potential 'language' for discussing these questions, rather than what we would regard as a prematurely 'closed' set of concepts and propositions about causal relationships to be 'tested' in a series of 'country experiments'.

The last category is the PPG that has intrinsic relationships with both the government and the EPO. The PPG is completely integrated within the party-as-a-whole: hence, the 'integrated PPG'. Depending on the stipulations of 'anti-accumulation' of positions in the law and the party rules, this integration can manifest itself in personal unions (for instance where the party chairman is the same person as the chairman of the PPG) and/or in semi-permanent, but informal gatherings of the leaders of the EPO, the PPG and the ministers in government (weekly lunches, etc.).

Because of the strong links with both the EPO and the government, the subdivision of the ‘integrated PPG’ according to the direction of influence is rather complex. Again we can illustrate this in a matrix with four cases (see Figure 1.3). If the PPG is dominant over both the EPO and the (ministers in) government, we can truly speak of a ‘ruling’ PPG. If, on the other hand the PPG is closely related to the EPO and the government, but exercises no influence on either of them, while being dominated by both, the (integrated) PPG is merely a ‘voting machine’. In between these two subtypes are the (integrated) PPGs as instruments in the hands of the EPO or the government. The location of the ‘political leader’ of the party-as-a-whole is important in this respect. If, however, internal interlocking directorates exist (for example, the chairman of the EPO, the chairman of the PPG and/or the Prime Minister are the same person), it becomes less easy to disentangle the types of PPGs. An integrated PPG then becomes ultra-integrated!

One can suspect a causal relationship between the types in Figure 1.1 and the types in Figures 1.2 and 1.3. Without pretending to outline a genuine ‘theory’ of PPGs, we suggest some elective affinities that might serve as starting points for causal hypothesising. For example, it is unlikely that the loosely organised ‘club’ in Figure 1.1 acts as the ‘voting machine’ of Figure 1.3. In general, a structural affinity is likely to exist between a low degree of group discipline and a more ‘autonomous’ PPG within the party-as-a-whole. Integrated PPGs, and dominant party-oriented or government-oriented PPGs can hardly be imagined without a certain degree of group discipline. Thus, the ‘club’ or the ‘personal kingdom’ types of internal PPG organisation are most likely to provide ‘autonomy’ for the PPG *vis-à-vis* the government and the EPO. Conversely, a high degree of discipline within a PPG is unlikely to exist without external pressure, either from the external party organisation or from the ministers in government.

One can also suspect a causal linkage between a possible tendency towards ‘parliamentary party complexes’ and a trend towards ‘integrated PPGs’. The latter are characterised by strong links with both the EPO and the PiG. These strong links can very well be maintained by people whose professional life totally depends on (party) politics. This is true for the leadership of the EPO, the ministers in government and the MPs in the PPG. Personal unions and/or personal crossovers between these three facets of party life (EPO, PPG and PiG) have always existed to a certain degree. But the increase in staff, especially the

	Dominant over government	Dominated by government
Dominant over EPO	Ruling	Instrument of government (PiG)
Dominated by EPO	Instrument of party (EPO)	Voting machine

Figure 1.3 Subtypes of the ‘integrated parliamentary party group’.

staff for PPGs, has created a pool of political professionals whose services may not only be available to the MPs, but also to the party-as-a-whole. With a shrinking number of party members, the availability of volunteers who spend time on party activities also decreases. In this situation the staff of the PPG may be used to fulfil organisational tasks (organising a meeting, maintaining contacts with local party branches, etc.) that hitherto had been taken care of by non-professional party activists. The growing staff of the PPG, then, constitutes a body of non-elected political professionals, who are trained to perceive the party as one political machine geared to handle the day-to-day politics of the political centre, namely parliament (and government). From their perspective, a strong division between the EPO and the PPG is outdated and counterproductive, and—unlike the former non-professional party activists—these political professionals do not have privileged links with local sections of the EPO to counterbalance this perception. This idea can be taken one step further: a possible growing importance of the staff of PPGs may increase the dominance of the PPG over the EPO. ‘Parliamentary party complexes’, therefore, are likely to coincide with either the ‘ruling PPG’ or the ‘PPG as instrument of government’ as shown in Figure 1.3.

The PPG in the parliament-as-a-whole

Looking at the PPG from the perspective of the parliament fuels additional questions, although not necessarily to additional types of PPGs. Most classifications of legislatures do not offer other insights or concepts (than the ones already proposed) that can easily be applied to the specific study of PPGs. The emphasis on the degree of centralisation in the management of the PPG, central to Polsby’s classification, is already comprised in the concept of group discipline, as discussed above. And according to Mezey’s classification, most West European legislatures belong to the same category. Therefore, this typology does not help to distinguish between PPGs.

King’s distinction between several ‘modes’ of executive-legislative relations seems more fruitful (King, 1976/1990). In three of the ‘modes’ the PPG plays a specific role. In the intra-party mode, the government backbenchers exert some influence on the government across the major demarcation line between parliament and government. Or, to translate it to systems with a personalised separation of powers, the PPG or the individual MP exercises influence on ministers belonging to their own party. In the opposition mode the main demarcation line is not between parliament and government, but between government and opposition. In the British case this means that parliament turns into one of the arenas in which the party battles are fought. But if governments consist of more than one party the situation grows more complicated. Thus, King introduces the inter-party mode, to deal with coalition governments, as in Germany. In the ‘inter-party mode’ the most important demarcation lines are those between the parties-as-a-whole: i.e. a PPG and ministers of the same party

on the one hand, as opposed to the other PPGs and their respective ministers or the oppositional PPGs on the other. In fact, the ‘inter-party mode’ is an extension of the ‘opposition mode’. The relationship between a PPG and ‘its’ ministers has been dealt with above (see Figures 1.2 and 1.3). If the ‘intra-party mode’ is at work, we see a ‘dominant government-oriented’ PPG or a ‘ruling (integrated)’ PPG. If the inter-party mode is prominent, the most probable type is the ‘integrated’ PPG, either ‘dominant’ or ‘dominated’.

King’s non-party mode is the one that corresponds to the formal separation of powers: parliament and governments are separate institutions and act as such. EPOs and PPGs do not play a significant role in the executive-legislative relation. The same can be said of the cross-party mode, in which MPs (and ministers) are representatives of special interests in the first place. The partisan background is less important than the interests of a certain sector in parliamentary decision-making. Consequently, the group discipline in the PPG is very low. The PPG acts like a club or as a congregation of ‘personal kingdoms’.

The classifications presented in Figures 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3 produce ‘ideal types’. Most PPGs, however, are not pure constructions. Moreover, it is interesting to investigate whether a PPG changes over time by adopting a specific mode or type at one point and another type at another. For example: PPGs can act as a ‘fraction’ or a ‘parliamentary party complex’ when group cohesion is needed to keep the government in power, while acting as a club or congregation of personal kingdoms when less controversial issues are at stake. Or, in periods of candidate selection within the party organisation, the PPG may become more party-oriented than in periods immediately following the elections. Over a period of time a PPG may therefore operate according to different types. What needs to be determined, then, is what causes these transitions and what type is dominant during a specific period.

Explaining PPG variation

Explanations of party types in general are legion within the general party literature: historical, institutional, organisational, etc., perspectives abound, even though few consider theories of parties to be an easy task. If we turn to the subspecies of PPGs, however, theoretical approaches do not abound. As evident from the previous section, PPGs vary in numerous ways in terms of performance and structure. To explain why, we uphold our dual strategy, and claim that relevant explanatory variables can be found both in parliament and in the party, next to the possible elective affinities between various (sub)types, as suggested in the previous section. This argument again brings to mind Duverger’s distinction between internally and externally generated parties (Duverger 1964). One difference, however, is that we are opening up the possibility of combined causal effects and do not employ these labels as genetic alternatives. For example, not all socialist PPGs behave in similar ways in all parliaments, as

parliaments differ. Conversely, not all Bundestag PPGs behave in the same manner, as parties are different.

Macro explanations

Macro explanations of PPG variation take the national political system as the unit of analysis. Three macro factors are central: *the constitution* which includes the role and organisation of parliament; *the party system* with cleavage lines, parties of parliamentary relevance and the struggle between government and opposition; and, third, *political culture*—always important in theory but generally troublesome in operationalised practice.

The rise of parties is generally associated with the rise of the modern liberal and democratic polities (e.g. Judge 1993:70ff). Polity designs vary, however, and they differ in ways which affect PPGs. The most important constitutional variables—in a broad conception of ‘constitutional’—seem to be the division of power in the system, the electoral rules and the internal organisation of parliaments. According to Epstein, the first differentiates between the parliamentary systems of Western Europe and the US. The latter lack ‘the incentive for party cohesion’, while the parliamentary party ‘becomes the agency for executive stability’ (Epstein 1967:316–17). Lipset similarly argues that presidential systems make for weak parties in general (Lipset 1992:208). Von Beyme broadens this argument by stressing the overall importance of constitutional context. In Germany, for example, the impact is particularly strong due to the centrality of the ‘Basic Law’, the country’s legalistic tradition, the legacy of the Nazi regime and the position of the constitutional court (von Beyme 1986:154–5; also Poguntke 1994).

The German polity also brings out the importance of electoral laws. Proportional representation was intended to strengthen the role of parties, giving the parties rather than the parliamentarians a ‘mandate’ to rule. Article 21 in the ‘Basic Law’ established the ‘hegemonic position’ of parties in the process of decision-making (von Beyme 1986:155). The electoral system also influences a (prospective) MP’s chances of (re-) election as well as his/her relationship to the constituency, and is no doubt of crucial importance in shaping the balance of power between individual parliamentarians and their PPGs.

Parliamentary standing orders are more detailed prescriptions of how to carry out the affairs of the ‘house’ and are generally formulated outside the constitution proper. Nevertheless, they clearly remain part of the body of rules shaping polities, parliaments, and thereby the PPGs. These kinds of rules establish the group rights inside parliament, and standing orders are more prone to accept the ‘reality of parties’ than are constitutions. Changing procedures could have a strong impact on the operation and power of PPGs. For example, in the Italian parliament, the power of the PPGs was strengthened in the early 1970s, when certain powers of the Speaker over the agenda were transferred to a conference of the leaders of the PPGs (von Beyme 1983:357).

The rights of PPGs extend from the distribution of internal parliamentary positions such as that of the Speaker and membership on favoured committees, to access to the rostrum and to practical matters like finance, secretaries and working offices. Positions and working conditions in parliament affect the abilities of PPGs to pursue policies, to raise debates and to make their party visible to the voters. Standing orders also influence the balance between MPs as 'free representatives' of their constituencies and the PPGs that have an 'electoral mandate' from the voters at large. The stronger the group rights, the more disciplinary potential is at the disposal of the PPG and its leadership. When the Norwegian Progress Party group split in 1995, the old party zealously made sure that the new 'group' did not receive any official recognition and thus gained no normal 'group rights'.

In relation to the EPO, the internal parliamentary rules are clearly also important. The British parliament can punish external organisations attempting to 'instruct' individual MPs on how to vote. 'Free mandate' precludes any instructions from the outside, even though the dividing line between instructions and advice is often extremely unclear in practice. In the same vein, state subvention can have an important impact. In the Netherlands after 1968, the rise of full-time MPs with increased salaries and augmented numbers of administrative personnel resulted in a shift in the balance of power between the EPO and its MPs to the advantage of the latter (Koole 1994:291).

The second and perhaps less broad-ranging macro factor relates to the party system and the cleavages sustaining it. Two issues are central. First, ideological distance. For example, political warfare as perceived by the early socialist parties encouraged military-like group discipline and top-down decision-making. In an extreme case, there would even be no need to take up a seat in parliament, as this would legitimise the hegemonic rule of the enemy. With minimal ideological distance between the parties, however, the need for tight group organisation may be considered less necessary. Defections from the group could then be seen as easier for the MP and more 'acceptable' to the public and the voters. But from the PPG's and EPO's points of view, a narrowing ideological gap might just increase the need for organisational instruments to keep the MPs together.

Another party systems factor is the pattern of co-operation and conflict in government as well as in opposition. Panebianco presents the hypothesis that 'the greater the number of possible parliamentary alliances, the greater the choice of style of opposition...and the greater the party's internal tension' (Panebianco 1988:215). Generally, the distinction between parties in government and those in opposition seems to be crucial for the operation of the PPGs. For parties in government, the external impact of ministers is obviously important. The type of government can also be central. According to Norwegian historians the power centre of the Norwegian Labour Party after the Second World War was definitely the Labour majority government—not the PPG or the EPO (Seip 1963; Bergh 1987). The interesting feature of the government/opposition variable is that the PPGs—or at least some of them—'commute'

quite regularly between these two positions. Oppositional PPGs, therefore, would have to be prepared for government and vice versa. In historic terms, the growing importance of office and policy-seeking motives for PPGs as well as MPs will obviously contribute to changing the PPGs.

The third macro systems factor points to the impact of national political culture on the operation of PPGs. This would imply a uniform impact affecting all groups in the parliament sharing this culture. Epstein presents the argument when discussing alternatives to the institutional explanations of the European-US difference in party cohesion: 'Small size and great homogeneity in a nation might...facilitate cohesion' (1967:317). Similarly the impact of 'consociational democracy' has been proposed as a factor strengthening PPGs in Switzerland (von Beyme 1983:359). Both arguments, however, are mixed in the sense that culture as such is combined with other factors. The main difficulty with the 'pure' cultural argument is pinning it down empirically, even though it would not be difficult to find illustrative accounts of how British parliamentary culture deviates greatly from the culture found in the Norwegian parliament (Brand 1992, Hansen 1984).

Micro explanations

Micro explanations direct attention to the parties-as-a-whole. According to general organisational theories, central variables such as *size* and *age* can be employed to explain organisational complexity and top-down decision-making (e.g. Selznick 1957). In parliaments size is obviously the hard currency: large groups generally cash in on power, positions and resources. Panebianco argues that size, environment and technology are the most important factors for explaining organisational change in parties. Size is particularly important in explaining internal cohesion, participation and bureaucratisation (Panebianco 1988:186–90). Small size enhances, but certainly does not guarantee, cohesion. Small political 'sects' are often quite divisive, as the story of the socialist left makes evident. The sect-church dichotomy adds, however, an element of ideology to the pure analysis of numbers. Furthermore, the cement of larger, 'broad church' party groups is usually more varied and therefore more solid than pure ideology, as shown by the Nordic catch-all social-democratic parties.

As for party age, this in general will increase the political experience of the party elites, create 'political generations' and nurture vested career interests. When the Swedish right-wing populists New Democracy entered the Riksdag with twenty-five MPs in 1991, one year after the co-founders had met at an airport terminal (and started to complain about politics and politicians), it was an inexperienced group and fission was immanent. New Democracy split before the next election and none of its members were re-elected to the 1994 Riksdag. A similar phenomenon is the Party of the Elderly (AOV) in the Netherlands. This party entered parliament with six seats in 1994, but was divided into three groups one year later!

According to Duverger parties are ‘profoundly’ influenced by their *origin* (1964:xxiii). Few would argue about the influence; the debate is rather about ‘profoundness’ relative to other factors like ideology, electoral strategies, etc. Perhaps the most interesting question is ‘How long does the impact of origin last?’ Duverger expected the mass party with its external power base to become in time the general party norm. Panebianco does not follow this line of argument, but nonetheless states that ‘a party’s organisational characteristics depend more upon its history...than upon any other factor’ (Panebianco 1988:50). Von Beyme, on the other hand, argued in the 1980s that the dominant trend was for parties at all levels to be strengthened at the expense of the ‘individual autonomy of the deputies and the parliament as a whole’ (von Beyme 1983:362). Possibly one could see this somewhat differently from the vantage point of the 1990s—the age of media politics and volatile voters. An eventual decline of ideology, however, could work both ways: the pressure from the outside working in favour of an increasingly divisive PPG could well be balanced inside a PPG with stricter measures to keep the group together. ‘One-factor-analysis’ is nearly always risky!

Still, there is no doubt that origin is important. Norwegian party history tells of the initially dominant position of the parliamentary branch of the Conservative Party, and the dominance of the EPO branch in Labour. And although historians are inclined to stress that this balance of power changed over the years in both parties, there are still differences between the parties more than 100 years later that correspond to their internal/external origins. For example, the Labour PPG today has a stricter and more institutionalised organisational regulation of group activities than the Conservative PPG. In fact, the trade union movement (LO) still has a statutory right to be present at Labour’s group meetings (Heidar 1995). And Conservative MPs to this day undoubtedly have a stronger position in the making of the electoral programme than have MPs of the Norwegian Labour Party (Heidar 1988, Stolt-Nielsen 1996). But this is certainly not due to origins alone.

Ideology has to be included in an analysis of PPG variance. One could debate to what extent parties today still stick to ideologies. But these intricacies aside, it would be surprising if the ideals, values and policies pursued by parties did not have an impact on the operation of PPGs, especially as one would expect these ‘world views’ to include conceptions of parliamentary democracy and representation. It could, of course, be argued in the Downsian way that parties adopt policies to win elections (and positions) and do not seek positions to implement policies. To us, however, it is evident that ideology and policies matter to the MPs, and we would expect this to impinge on the structure and behaviour of party groups (cf. Strøm 1990). The Communist inter-war parties of the Comintern era, to give a clear example, had to abide by the rule that the PPG should be subordinated to the board of the EPO. It was ‘required that every MP in all his work is at the service of real revolutionary agitation and propaganda’ (Langfeldt 1961:114). This left hardly any room for autonomous PPG action. We should remember, however, that to the socialist and communist parties of the

early period, parliament was not the centre stage of the ongoing class war. Embedded in the ideologies of left and right parties, the legacy of where to find the centre stage of politics is still present in different conceptions of representation and parliamentary work. The Burkean representative ideal held (and still holds) a more revered place among conservative and liberal parties than among social democrats and socialists of varying calibre. Obviously the party whip is active in all parties, but the actual 'whip practice' could well vary significantly due to different conceptions of what parliamentary work is all about. This also goes for the kind of procedures adopted to reach a decision in controversial issues as well as for the kind of issues where dissent is acceptable.

Finally, a comment on the impact of *external organisations* on PPGs, by which we mean organisations 'external' to 'the party-as-a-whole', like trade unions, business organisations, 'new' social movements (ecology, women), etc. The trade union link to the social democrats has already been touched upon in the Norwegian context. In Britain, where the Labour Party was actually started to represent the trade unions in parliament, the unions 'sponsored' a significant number (34–40 per cent) of Labour MPs as late as the 1970s (von Beyme 1983:361; May 1975). The impact of business organisations on Conservative MPs may have been of less direct importance, as these are possibly shielded somewhat by their Burkean ideals, without suggesting that they are all immune to entrepreneurial 'big spenders'. Relations with new social movements are equally interesting for the study of PPGs, especially—but not uniquely—with respect to Green parties.

Outlook

Parliamentary party groups are at the heart of the functioning of parliamentary democracies. Complaints about the way parliamentary democracies operate and expressions of anti-political sentiment thus touch upon the performance of the PPGs. If there is a 'rise' or 'decline' of parliament, what is the role of PPGs in it? And if there is a 'rise' or 'decline' of parties, does this mean that PPGs are equally in decline or is it rather a decline of the extraparliamentary party organisations (EPOs) to the advantage of the PPGs? If EPOs do not provide the necessary linkage between citizens and the state any more, can (and ought) the PPGs to do the job?

It is our contention that debates about a decline of parliaments or parties must include the functioning of PPGs. Discussions about this also touch upon the principle of a free mandate which—arguably—is still a major structuring idea in the normative foundation of parliamentary democracy. But although PPGs have become formally accepted today in many countries, giving recognition to the transition to party democracy, they can hardly be said to have led to a thorough reappraisal of normative representative theory. Moreover, the discussion about a possible trend towards new types of parties—from mass integration parties to catch-all, electoral-professional or cartel parties, for instance (Kirchheimer

1966; Panebianco 1988; Katz and Mair 1995)—can gain from dealing explicitly with the *modus operandi* of PPGs.

In order to be able to assess the structural position and the operation of PPGs, we consider PPGs to be the internal linkage mechanism for transforming the electoral mandate—given by the voters to their representatives—into public policies. In a ‘working definition’ we have described them as ‘an organised group of members of a representative body who belong to the same political party’. But PPGs differ along several dimensions. The proposed typologies may help to get a grasp of the various profiles PPGs adopt. Although our impression is that many PPGs are developing in the direction of ‘parliamentary party complexes’, we purposely leave open the possibility that several types of PPGs co-exist and that the same PPG may operate according to one type at a specific moment and another type at another. An obvious time for a changing mode is when PPGs are crossing the line from government to opposition or vice versa.

In our discussion about what shapes the PPGs, our view is that the parties themselves are in fact the prime agents in constructing the causal framework: constitutions proper, electoral rules, standing orders, financial resources, etc. The variation in PPGs, therefore, is very much the product of past political battles. But to avoid potential misunderstanding, while PPGs may be influential in creating their own destiny, they are nevertheless constrained by elements that characterise a national political system, like the media, general cultural norms, interest groups, etc., that are outside their immediate reach. The study of PPGs, therefore, may also contribute to the debate on neo-institutionalism. To what extent do actors shape rules/institutions? Parties or PPGs, as actors, are to some degree constrained by rules that they themselves shape. So what shapes what?

Our main goal, however, is to evaluate the functioning of PPGs from the perspective of the operation of parliamentary democracy in general. What differences are there between parties and countries and over time? To what extent are PPGs in new democracies similar to PPGs in long-standing democracies? Is their role in transitory regimes even more prominent? Moreover, how has financial support from the state changed the position of PPGs with respect to governments on the one hand and civil society on the other? In the chapters on the thirteen case studies to follow and in the comparative chapter at the end, we aim to contribute to a discussion on these issues.

Note

- 1 We do not here propose operational criteria for our ‘high’ or ‘low’ categories, as the four types are conceived as ideal rather than empirical cases. The same goes for Figures 1.2 and 1.3 later.

2 Bureaucratisation, coordination and competition

Parliamentary party groups in the German Bundestag

Thomas Saalfeld

The parliamentary party groups (*Fractionen*) dominate parliamentary business in the German Bundestag to such an extent that one observer characterised them as ‘the rulers over the parliamentary process in almost every respect’ (Schüttemeyer 1994:36). The first German parliamentary party groups at the national level developed in the Frankfurt National Assembly of 1848/49. They were purely parliamentary creations based on regional or ideological affinity and corresponded quite closely to the ideal type of ‘club’ as defined in Heidar and Koole’s introductory chapter (Boldt 1971:18–53; Kretschmer 1984:17–19). It was not before the formation of the German Empire in 1870/71 that parliamentary party groups could develop at the national level and, due to the extension of the suffrage,

became closely related to the electoral organizations which were growing in the country to appeal to the new, large, national electorate on the basis of programs containing general political and philosophical principles. The parliamentary caucuses, first inspired by parliamentary tactical considerations, were now attached to extraparliamentary organizations and inspired by electoral considerations.

(Loewenberg 1967:11–12)

The ‘legal incorporation’ of parliamentary party groups began in 1922, when the Reichstag of the Weimar Republic (1919–33) formally recognised their role in its rules of procedure. After twelve years of National Socialist dictatorship (1933–45) and the occupation and division of Germany (1945–49), the first national elections in the Federal Republic of Germany (1949) reproduced a relatively polarised multi-party system, similar to the one characteristic of the early Weimar Republic. Yet within little more than a decade the number of parliamentary party groups in the Bundestag was reduced from eight to three. This first phase of concentration (1949–61) was followed by a second phase (1961–83) characterised by a stable parliamentary three-party system consisting of Christian Democrats (CDU/CSU), Social Democrats (SPD) and Liberals (FDP). A third phase, witnessing a moderate re-fractionalisation,

Table 2.1 Parliamentary party groups and their strength (in seats, at the beginning of the legislative term) in the German Bundestag, 1976–1998^a

<i>Bundestag</i>	<i>PDS</i>	<i>Greens</i>	<i>B'90</i>	<i>SPD</i>	<i>FDP</i>	<i>CDU/CSU</i>	<i>Total number of seats^b</i>
1976–80	C	C	C	214	39	243	496
1980–83	C	C	C	218	53	226	497
1983–87	C	27	C	193	34	244	498
1987–90	C	42	C	186	46	223	497 ^c
1991–94	17 ^d	C	8 ^d	239	79	319	662
1994–98	30 ^d	49		252	47	294	672
1998–	36	47		298	43	245	669

Sources: Schindler (1983:113, 234–51, 356–64; 1994:173, 371–5, 438–9; 1995:554) Kürschners Volkshandbuch (1999).

Notes

C, no seats.

PDS, Partei des Demokratischen Sozialismus (Party of Democratic Socialism).

B'90, Bündnis '90/Die Grünen (Alliance '90/Greens).

FDP, Freie Demokratische Partei (Free Democratic Party).

CDU, Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands (Christian-Democratic Union of Germany).

CSU, Christlich-Soziale Union in Bayern (Christian-Social Union in Bavaria).

a 1976–90: appointed members for Berlin excluded,

b Includes 'excess mandates' (*Überhangmandate*).

c Number of seats increased on 3 October 1990 after the accession of 144 *Volkshammer* members,

d Not formally recognised as parliamentary party group, granted 'group' status.

began in 1983, when the Green Party straddled the 5 per cent threshold for the first time (see Table 2.1).

Between 1983 and 1994 the number of parties and party groups represented in the Bundestag increased from three (1980) to five (1994, with a brief peak of seven after the accession of 144 eastern German parliamentarians in October 1990), mainly as a result of the rise of the Greens since the early 1980s and German unification in 1990 with the addition of the post-communist, largely East German Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS).

Legal status

One distinctive characteristic of the German Federal Republic's parliamentarism is the high degree of legal codification of party politics (Poguntke 1994). The most important legal sources determining the status of the parliamentary party groups (*Fraktionen*) are the constitution (*Grundgesetz*) and the Bundestag's rules of procedure (*Geschäftsordnung*). In addition, the individual parliamentary party groups' rules of procedure are of great importance. Finally, the members of Parliament Act (*Abgeordnetengesetz*), the Federal Elections Act (*Bundeswahlgesetz*), the Political Parties Act (*Parteiengesetz*) and two dozen or

so rulings of the Federal Constitutional Court (*Bundesverfassungsgericht*) also affect the organisation and working of parliamentary party groups and their relationships to their own extra-parliamentary organisations and other parliamentary party groups as well as individual members of Parliament.

Article 21 of the Basic Law formally recognises the crucial role of political parties in the policy process and grants them a privileged status. There is an unresolvable tension between Articles 21 and 38 of the Basic Law. The latter underscores the independence of individual members of the Bundestag by stipulating that they shall be representatives of the people as a whole, and not be bound by any orders and instructions but subject only to their own conscience. Nonetheless, the predominant view amongst constitutional lawyers is that parties are indispensable democratic transmission belts and parliamentary party groups legitimately represent them in parliament. Therefore, the parliamentary party groups are privileged as the main and most legitimate actors in the chamber. Article 38 of the Basic Law asserts the formal equality of all members of Parliament in the necessary and controversial debates *within* the parliamentary party groups. *After* a decision has been reached in the parliamentary party group, individual members are expected to respect the majority decision and toe the party line, although the formal independence of individual members enjoys equal constitutional status and serves as an important corrective against over-powerful parties. The tension between Articles 21 and 38 allows the Federal Constitutional Court to decide conflicts on a case-by-case basis (Arndt 1989:652–4).

According to the Bundestag's rules of procedure (Paragraph 10(1)), *Fraktionen* are organised groups of at least 5 per cent of the members of the Bundestag, who belong to the same party, or to several parties which do not compete against each other in any federal state. This definition has been in place since 1969 and is broadly consistent with the definition chosen by Heidar and Koole in the introductory chapter of the present volume. Yet, in one respect the Bundestag's rules of procedure relax the requirements in Heidar and Koole's definition: they allow different parties to form a common parliamentary party group inside the Bundestag, if they do not compete against each other at the state level. This passage was inserted into the rules of procedure after disputes over the recognition of the CDU/CSU as one parliamentary party group in 1961 and 1965 (Kretschmer 1984:21–2). Therefore the Christian Democratic Union (CDU), which fields candidates in all federal states save Bavaria, and the Christian Social Union (CSU), which competes *only* in Bavaria, may retain their independent extra-parliamentary organisations and programmatic distinctiveness, but are allowed to form a common parliamentary party group (*Fraktionsgemeinschaft*) under the Bundestag's rules.

The 5 per cent criterion, introduced in 1969, forms a relatively restrictive threshold for official recognition as a parliamentary party group. Yet this 'hurdle' has usually been unproblematic as it follows directly from the 'logic' of the Federal Elections Law (*Bundeswahlgesetz*). In Germany's (proportional) 'additional member system', a party is represented in the

Bundestag only if it gains at least 5 per cent of the national vote or, alternatively, three ‘direct constituency mandates’. In its present form, the system was first applied in 1953. An exception was made in the 1990 elections, when two separate 5 per cent thresholds were used in eastern and western Germany in order to give fairer conditions to some of the smaller eastern German parties, which did not have the massive support of a western German campaign machinery. Since unification (1990), the 5 per cent criterion has become more problematic as the eastern German Greens and the PDS have failed to clear the 5 per cent threshold nationally on several occasions, but qualified for representation as a result of two separate 5 per cent hurdles in 1990 and the PDS’s victory in four Berlin constituencies in 1994. Both the Alliance’90/ Greens (1990, 1991–94) and the PDS (1990, 1991–94, 1994–98) did not satisfy the 5 per cent criterion and hence did not enjoy the full privileges of a recognised parliamentary party group. Nevertheless, they were granted the status of a ‘group’ by the Bundestag’s majority and enjoyed most (if not all) of the parliamentary party groups’ rights in the plenary and committees (see below).¹

The parliamentary party groups in the Bundestag are vested with independent legal rights in the Federal Constitutional Court. They may bring a suit against the federal government or any other of the highest federal bodies if they allege that this body has acted unconstitutionally in a specific case. In addition, under the provisions on ‘abstract norm review’, the federal government, a state government or a group of at least one third of the members of the Bundestag (e.g. one of the major parliamentary party groups) may challenge the constitutionality of any federal or state law even if it does not involve a particular case arising from the implementation of a specific act (Goetz 1996:97–8).

The Bundestag’s rules of procedure reserve most rights of legislative initiative and parliamentary interpellation for the parliamentary party groups (for an exhaustive list see Arndt 1989:658–9). For example, individual members are practically barred from introducing legislation, unless they are supported by at least 5 per cent of the members of the Bundestag. The parliamentary party groups (or a number of MPs from several parties equivalent to the size of a *Fraktion*) also have the exclusive right to table the main instruments of parliamentary interpellation: *Große Anfragen*, *Kleine Anfragen* and *Aktuelle Stunden*.²

The composition of committees reflects the relative strength of the parliamentary party groups in the Bundestag. Committee chairpersons are appointed after negotiations between the party whips³ in the Bundestag’s steering committee, the ‘Senior Council’ (*Ältestenrat*). Principally, each parliamentary party group is allocated a number of committee chairs in proportion to its relative strength in the Bundestag. The parliamentary party groups select their representatives on committees and have the right to recall them. However, the Federal Constitutional Court ruled in 1989 that the previous practice of removing members from committees, when

their parliamentary party groups lost their official status as *Fraktion* (due to splits or defections), when they left their parliamentary party group or when they were expelled from it, was unconstitutional. According to the Court, individual members without membership of a parliamentary party group may remain on the committee, retain the right to make formal proposals and participate in committee deliberations, but may lose their right to vote.

Some of the individual members' rights, that are not restricted by the Bundestag's rules of procedure (such as the right to ask oral questions), are restricted by the parliamentary party groups' rules of procedure and practice. Motions, legislative proposals and questions, which have not been tabled as a result of an explicit decision of the parliamentary party group's caucus are expected to be cleared with the relevant party working groups, executive committees and whips' offices, although ultimately the parliamentary party group's leadership cannot prevent members from submitting questions if they insist (Arndt 1989:670–1). 'Even the basic right of parliamentary speech', as Suzanne Schüttemeyer (1994:37) claims, 'is determined by the *Fraktionen*, as their representatives in the Council of Elders [Senior Council] prestructure all debates, allocating time and length of speech'. In consequence, Schüttemeyer suggests, 'there is hardly any scope for spontaneous parliamentary action' by individual members of the Bundestag. This lack of 'spontaneity' has also been criticised by many senior members of the Bundestag. A reform of the Bundestag's rules of procedure in 1995, therefore, gave the Bundestag Speaker the right to extend 'attractive' debates in agreement with the parliamentary party groups.

According to Paragraph 10 (4) of the Bundestag's rules of procedure, a number of members, whose total number amounts to less than 5 per cent of the Bundestag's membership, may form a 'group' (*Gruppe*), if the Bundestag majority agrees. The rules of procedure do not prescribe any minimum number for recognition and do not automatically give 'groups' any of the rights accruing to the *Fraktionen*. Nevertheless, the majority may grant such rights, as was the case in the thirteenth Bundestag (1994–98), where the thirty members of the PDS enjoyed group status.

The Basic Law and the Bundestag's rules of procedure protect the rights of the parliamentary minority in different ways which cannot be described here in detail (see Arndt 1989). The vast majority of absolute minority rights, i.e. procedural rights which have to be respected and enforced even against the wishes of the parliamentary majority, can be exercised by a parliamentary party group or at least 5 per cent of the members of the Bundestag: the right to submit important instruments of parliamentary interpellation (*Große* and *Kleine Anfragen*) to the federal government and to request meetings of the Senior Council, recorded votes, debates on the government's answers to *Große Anfragen*, *Aktuelle Stunden* independent of question time or general debates on bills during the first, second or third reading (for an exhaustive list see Schindler 1994:995–1000).

Organisation and resources

The parliamentary party groups are *the* crucial elements of the Bundestag’s organisational structure. The two large parliamentary party groups, the Christian Democratic CDU/CSU and the Social Democratic SPD, have highly developed internal organisations whose main tasks are to formulate policy and monitor government activities in working groups, which run largely parallel to the government’s departments and Bundestag’s committees; to maintain a high degree of internal cohesion by negotiating compromises between intra-party groups; and coordinate the activities of different working groups and other sub-organisations. The most important formal and informal elements of the CDU/CSU’s parliamentary organisation are depicted in Figure 2.1. With a few adaptations, the organisational structure of the SPD looks very similar.

In each parliamentary party group the relationship between the different parts of the formal organisation are regulated by relatively detailed written rules of procedure. Formally, the parliamentary party group’s *caucus* (*Fraktionsversammlung*) is the highest decision-making body, and its decisions are binding for the elected officers. All members of the parliamentary party (including all ministers who are members of the Bundestag) have a right to attend and vote. When the Bundestag is in session, the caucus usually meets once a week. It elects the chairperson and deputy chairpersons, usually for the duration of an entire legislative term. The chairpersons are powerful players, especially when a party is in government. The chairpersons of governing parties

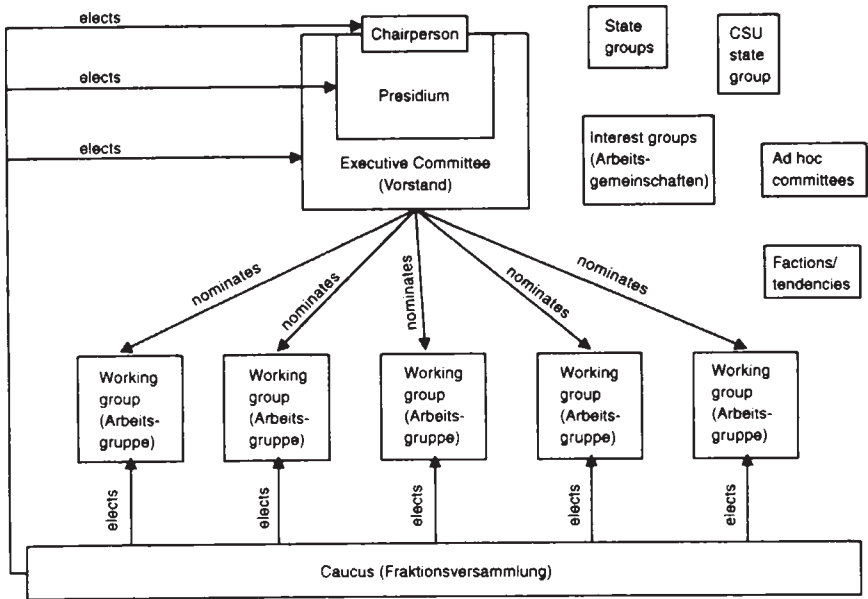


Figure 2.1 Formal and informal organisation of the CDU/CSU in the German Bundestag (informal lines of influence omitted).

are usually members of key coalition committees and coalition talks in which the major policy decisions are taken (Saalfeld 1997a:82–3). The decisions of the caucus are prepared by the *working groups* or *Arbeitsgruppen* (CDU/CSU: currently (1999) nineteen *Arbeitsgruppen*; SPD: twenty-three *Arbeitsgruppen*), which—in the two major parties—mirror most of the federal government's departments. This is not possible for the smaller parliamentary party groups. Therefore the Alliance'90/Greens have currently four, the FDP five and the PDS eight broad working groups (*Arbeitskreise*, or *Arbeitsgruppen* in the case of the PDS), each monitoring more than one government department (Kürschners Volkshandbuch 1999:281–90).

The working groups usually comprise the members and reserve members representing the parliamentary party groups in the respective Bundestag committees. They attempt to resolve conflicts within the parliamentary party group before issues are referred to the caucus. Their chairpersons are usually part of the core leadership of a parliamentary party group along with the parliamentary party groups' chairpersons, a number of backbenchers and the party whips (*Parlamentarische Geschäftsführer*). In the 1990–94 Bundestag, for example, the core leadership of the CDU/CSU consisted of thirty-five, the SPD's of fifteen and the FDP's of thirteen persons. The members of the parliamentary party groups' executive boards are elected by the caucus. In the CDU/CSU the first deputy chairperson is always a member of the CSU as is the first deputy Chief Whip. With the exception of the Greens, the chairpersons of parliamentary party groups are usually elected for an entire legislative term of four years.

The two major parties place formal and informal restrictions on workinggroup membership in order to avoid the clustering of senior members in a few key committees and groups. In the CDU/CSU, nomination to serve on a

Table 2.2 Number of core leadership positions^a in CDU/CSU, SPD, Green Party and FDP in selected Bundestag sessions (1949–1994): absolute number and share of parliamentary party group

<i>Bundestag term</i>	<i>CDU/CSU</i>	<i>SPD</i>	<i>Green Party</i>	<i>FDP</i>
1949–1953	4 (2.80%)	5 (3.70%)	C	– 5 (9.43%)
1965–1969	16 (6.37%)	16 (7.37%)	C	– 11 (22.00%)
1976–1980	19 (7.48%)	16 (7.14%)	C	– 11 (27.50%)
1983–1987	29 (11.37%)	14 (6.93%)	6 (22.22%)	11 (31.43%)
1987–1990	30 (12.82%)	13 (6.74%)	6 (14.29%)	11 (22.92%)
1991–1994	35 (10.97%)	15 (6.28%)	C	– 13 (16.46%)

Sources: Schindler (1986:322–7; 1988:251–3; 1994:342–3).

Notes

a The 'core leadership' consists of the chairperson, his or her deputies, the whips and the chairpersons of the working groups. The percentages in brackets indicate the percentage of members of a parliamentary party group occupying 'core leadership' positions.

C, no seats.

particular Bundestag committee automatically involves service in the parallel working group. Committee members are nominated by the parliamentary party group's executive committee and elected by its caucus, members who do not sit on the respective committee may be admitted to a working group if the parliamentary party group's executive committee approves their applications. In the SPD, the members of working groups are elected by the parliamentary party group's caucus after nomination by the executive committee. Despite some procedural differences, the appointment to committees and working groups can therefore be said to be similar in the CDU/CSU, SPD and FDP: the parliamentary party groups' executive committees consult widely with relevant groups within the party and prepare a package of proposals, which is laid before the caucus and usually accepted wholesale. The caucus has the final word. The main difference is between the CDU/CSU and the SPD on the one hand and the smaller parties on the other. In the latter, parliamentarians have a greater workload and specialisation is more limited (Schäfer 1982:112).

In addition to the 'departmental' working groups, the CDU/CSU maintains six groups representing the interests of local government, expellees and refugees, business, women, young people and trade unionists. In the case of the CDU/CSU, there is also the CSU state group, which plays a cohesive and crucial role within the common parliamentary party group of CDU and CSU and has its own working groups. The parliamentary party groups of CDU/CSU and SPD also have 'state groups' organising the members of the respective federal states and representing regional interests. They are particularly important in the distribution of parliamentary offices and leadership positions. Finally, there have always been organised ideological groups in both major parties, which have been closer to Richard Rose's (1974:319–35) model of 'factions' within the SPD (for example, the *'Kanalarbeiter'* and the *'Seeheimer Kreis'* of the 1970s and 1980s) and 'tendencies' within the CDU/CSU (for example, what was popularly known as the *'Stahlhelmfraktion'* during the 1980s).

The organisation of the smaller parties (Alliance'90/Greens, FDP and PDS) is necessarily 'flatter'. The Green Party 'initially avoided hierarchies and professional leadership' for ideological as well as practical reasons, yet it soon 'had to make some allowances for specialization, experience, and organization in order to survive in everyday parliamentary life' (Schüttemeyer 1994:41).

Since 1969 the Bundestag's parliamentary party groups have increasingly received financial assistance over the federal budget. In 1991, the total amount paid to the parliamentary party groups in one fiscal year exceeded DM 104 million (approximately US\$ 70 million; Schindler 1994:1279). The allocation is largely proportional to a party's share of seats in the Bundestag with a certain 'opposition allowance'. The parliamentary party groups have mainly used these funds to pay for staff. Up until 1965 the Social Democrats were the only party to employ staff working for the parliamentary party group. Since 1969 staff numbers have grown considerably in all parties. In the 1991–94 Bundestag the CDU/CSU parliamentary party group employed an average of 0.88 (full and part-time) staff for each member. The ratio was approximately 1.2:1 for the

Table 2.3 Number of full-time and part-time staff in the CDU/CSU, SPD, FDP, Green Party and PDS/LL in selected Bundestag sessions(1949–1994); (a) in absolute numbers (b) per member of the parliamentary party group

<i>Bundestag term</i>	<i>CDU/CSU</i>		<i>SPD</i>		<i>FDP</i>		<i>Green Party^a</i>		<i>PDS/LL</i>	
	(a)	(b)	(a)	(b)	(a)	(b)	(a)	(b)	(a)	(b)
1949–1953	0	0.00	1	0.01	0	0.00	C	C	C	C
1965–1969	33	0.13	67	0.31	15	0.30	C	C	C	C
1976–1980	n/a	n/a	141	0.63	50	1.25	C	C	C	C
1983–1987	192	0.75	190	0.94	51	1.46	75	2.78	C	C
1987–1990	227	0.97	252	1.31	54	1.12	86	2.05	C	C
1991–1994	280	0.88	290	1.21	87	1.10	28	3.50	42	2.47

Sources: Schindler (1983:289; 1988:299; 1994:404).

Notes

a In the 1991–94 Bundestag, the Green Party was not represented. The eastern German Alliance '90/Greens had 'group' status.

C, no seats.

SPD, 1.1:1 for the FDP, 3.5:1 for the Greens and 2.5:1 for the PDS (Table 2.3). To some extent, these variations are due to differences in salary levels and the share of full-time staff. These staff members work for the parliamentary party groups' core leaderships and are a considerable power resource. The advantage is mitigated to some extent through the publicly funded staff employed by *individual* members of the Bundestag. Between 1969 and 1991 the number of full—and part-time staff employed by individual members of the Bundestag has increased by a factor of nearly eight from 0.77 to 6.05 per member (Saalfeld 1997b: 37). The amendment to the Members of Parliament Act (*Abgeordnetengesetz*) of 1995 specifies and formalises the rights of the Federal Audit Office (*Bundesrechnungshof*) to scrutinise the accounts of parliamentary parties. This part of the Members of Parliament Act is also referred to as 'Fraktionsgesetz' (Parliamentary Party Group Act).

Parliamentary party groups and extra-parliamentary organisations

It would be misleading to interpret 'the' relationship between the German parliamentary party groups and 'their' extra-parliamentary organisations as a straightforward dominance of one over the other. Schüttemeyer (1994:48) is right to emphasise that the power structure of German parties cannot be described as 'one oligarchy at the top but many suboligarchies on the federal, state, and local levels'. The parliamentary party groups and their leaders play an important role in the extra-parliamentary party organisation. CDU/CSU, SPD and FDP members of the federal-state, national and European parliaments pay

substantial shares of their salaries to their extra-parliamentary party organisations. Yet the parliamentary party groups do not enjoy a monopoly of power, nor can they be said to be dominant. Policies are formulated in complex networks of different intra-party groups and organisations at different levels of the federal system. These networks usually include the parliamentary party groups' experts, the federal government (if the party is in government), representatives of state governments controlled by the respective parties, the parties' internal interest organisations and others (Schmid 1990; Lösche and Walter 1992). Peter Lösche (1993:184–9), therefore, characterises Germany's two main parties as 'loosely joined anarchies' (*lose verkoppelte Anarchien*). Leading representatives of the parliamentary party groups are among several other important players in a decentralised decision-making system. Their relative importance depends on the particular political circumstances, but it is fair to say that today's professionalised members of the Bundestag are frequently 'better informed' and 'closer to the subjects and procedures of decisions' (Schüttemeyer 1994:48) than other actors.

In government, the centre of decision-making tends to shift to more or less formalised coalition committees (*Koalitionsausschüsse*) and coalition talks (*Koalitionsgespräche*) with a flexible membership. They have usually comprised the federal chancellor, some cabinet ministers and representatives of the coalition parties' extra-parliamentary party leaderships (including state (prime) ministers) as well as the leadership and relevant policy experts of the parliamentary party groups. In opposition, much intra-party power in the major parties rests with state prime ministers, who command considerable administrative resources. It is no coincidence that since the elections of 1980, all opposition chancellor candidates except Hans Jochen Vogel (1983) have been ruling state prime ministers. This underscores that Germany is—as Winfried Steffani (1983) put it—a 'Republic of State Princes' (*Republik der Landesfürsten*) and that, especially (but not only) in opposition, the two major parliamentary party groups have to share power with influential state prime ministers of their own party. Leadership concentration has tended to be stronger in the CDU/CSU, although the combination of separate extraparliamentary party organisations of CDU and CSU and a common CDU/CSU parliamentary party group are one of its peculiarities. In government, CDU/CSU federal chancellors were not always chairpersons of the CDU when they were appointed, but usually became party chairpersons soon after their election (Konrad Adenauer, Ludwig Erhard and Kurt Georg Kiesinger). In opposition, Rainer Barzel (1972) and Helmut Kohl (1976) were the leaders of the CDU extra-parliamentary party organisation and the parliamentary party group as well as the candidate for chancellor challenging the incumbent SPD chancellor at elections. This pattern was only broken in 1980, when the Bavarian state prime minister and chairperson of the CSU, Franz Josef Strauß, was nominated a candidate for chancellor. Thus, in general, the linkage between parliamentary and extra-parliamentary leadership has always been strong in the CDU/CSU, with the independence of the CSU as a complicating factor.

In the SPD, by contrast, this was the case in the 1950s and early 1960s, when Kurt Schumacher (1949–52) and his successor Erich Ollenhauer (chairperson of the extra-parliamentary party organisation in 1952–64, candidate for chancellor in 1953 and 1957, leader of the parliamentary party group in 1952–64) were simultaneously leaders of the extra-parliamentary party organisation, chairpersons of the parliamentary party group and candidates for chancellor. This pattern was discontinued in 1964 when Willy Brandt became chairperson of the SPD's extra-parliamentary party organisation (as well as candidate for chancellor in the 1965 elections) and Fritz Erler leader of the parliamentary party group. Between 1974 and 1982 there was a *troika* of party chairperson Brandt, parliamentary party group leader Herbert Wehner and chancellor Helmut Schmidt. The disadvantage of this separation of extra-parliamentary party leadership and the chancellor's office became evident between 1980 and 1982, when Schmidt found it increasingly difficult to carry the support of his party outside the Bundestag *Fraktion*. Nevertheless, the SPD did not adopt a more unified leadership model until 1994. Rudolf Scharping's attempt to unite the leadership of the extra-parliamentary party organisation and the parliamentary party group in his own hands failed within a year, when he was toppled as party chairperson and replaced by Oskar Lafontaine. After Lafontaine's surprising resignation from his ministerial office, his parliamentary seat and the leadership of the extra-parliamentary party organisation in 1999, the role of party leader and head of government were united in the hands of Schröder. The leadership of the parliamentary party group remained separate, under Peter Struck, however.

Thus, the classifications in Figure 1.3 of Heidar and Koole's introduction would seem to require some amendment in order to fit the two major parties in Germany more closely. Only the FDP could be said to have developed into a 'ruling' parliamentary party group as the party's local and regional base has become weaker and weaker over the last two decades. Membership of the Bundestag and participation in government are its main organisational resources. Lösche and Walter (1996:168) have therefore called it a 'party of parliamentarians and ministers' (*Fraktions- und Ministerpartei*). In the Green Party, by contrast, the parliamentary party group in the Bundestag is—despite the party's gradual 'parliamentarisation'—weaker than in the other parties. The western German part has been strongly influenced by the extraparliamentary opposition of the late 1960s and the extra-parliamentary citizens' initiatives of the 1970s and 1980s, while the eastern German Greens are to a large degree an off-shoot of the oppositional citizens' movement of the German Democratic Republic. In Heidar and Koole's terminology the Greens' parliamentary party group could formally be called 'autonomous' until 1998 as it was never in a national government coalition between 1983 and 1998 (the Greens entered national government in 1998), and the division between parliamentary party group and extra-parliamentary organisation is strong. Attempts in the Green Party's leadership to abolish the incompatibility of party office and electoral office at the 1991 national conference failed to achieve the necessary two-thirds

majority for a change of the party constitution (Müller-Rommel and Poguntke 1992:343).

The parties' constitutions say little about the relationship between parliamentary party groups and extra-parliamentary party organisations. The party organisation has to conform to the democratic requirements set out in the Political Parties Act (*Parteiengesetz*) of 1967. This includes a 5 per cent limit on the number of parliamentarians who can be *ex officio* members of the parties' national and federal-state executive committees. The Federal Elections Act includes detailed regulations regarding the nomination of both list and constituency candidates. The process of candidate selection is strongly dominated by the local and regional party elites, 'and it is only in exceptional circumstances that Land or federal party leaderships can hope to impose candidates of their own choosing' (Poguntke 1994:189). According to the CDU's constitution, the national executive committee (*Bundesvorstand*) includes a number of members of the parliamentary party group *ex officio*. The federal chancellor (who is usually a member of the Bundestag), the president of the Bundestag and the Bundestag's vice presidents as well as the chairperson of the CDU/CSU parliamentary party group are members of the national executive committee, if they belong to the CDU. Similarly, the chairperson of the CSU state group in the Bundestag is always an *ex officio* member of the CSU state executive committee (*Landesvorstand*) and the chairperson of the FDP parliamentary party group in the Bundestag (or his representative) is an *ex officio* member of the FDP's national executive committee. The SPD's constitution does not contain any provisions stipulating the *ex officio* membership of leading Bundestag parliamentarians in the party's national executive committee. In practice, however, leading representatives of the SPD's parliamentary party group in the Bundestag have played a very important role since the late 1950s. In the Green Party, electoral office and party office are incompatible.

Party leaders and backbenchers

Despite some noticeable variations (Saalfeld 1995), all German parliamentary party groups have displayed a high degree of voting cohesion, especially since 1969. It would, however, be premature to explain this high level of voting cohesion exclusively as the result of control or pressure exercised by the party whips over backbenchers. Various surveys amongst parliamentarians do not support explanations based on coercion or discipline, despite anecdotal evidence to the contrary: Only 6 per cent of 329 members of the eleventh Bundestag (1987–90) complained that their party (including the parliamentary party group) exerted too much pressure on them (Herzog et al. 1990:97). In a survey amongst Bavarian state parliamentarians in the mid-1980s, it was found that 90 per cent rejected the suggestion that the party exerted too much pressure (Oberreuter 1986:94–5). A high degree of group cohesion is partly a

result of the role orientations of German MPs. In Herzog's survey, only 17 per cent of the Bundestag MPs considered themselves to be 'independent representatives' with a free mandate. This is not to say that a majority considered themselves to be representatives of their parties. The latter is only true for 15 per cent. Almost half of the members of the Bundestag see themselves as 'representatives of the people' (Herzog et al. 1990:61–4) or the 'common good', whose main function is legislating and scrutinising the government in a parliament characterised by specialisation and professionalisation (Patzelt 1997:64–9). German parliamentarism relies heavily on a parliamentary division of labour, in which experts become 'cue-givers' for their fellow members, and in which careful party management, internal 'give and take' and anticipatory 'appeasement' of backbench opposition are characteristic of decision-making. The highly differentiated organisation of parliamentary parties prevents a total domination of intra-party decision-making by the party leadership. In terms of efficient decision-making, the result of this is ambivalent as Gerhard Loewenberg (1967:172) pointed out for the CDU/ CSU's parliamentary party group:

The complex organization of the party provides the mechanism for maintaining cohesion, but not for exercising strong leadership. The hierarchy of the decision-making process assures the clearance of all policy proposals with the main interest groups within the party, and the formation of a consensus. It all but precludes decisions to which there is any substantial objection, producing stalemate more readily than the resolution of conflict.

Unification could have been expected to increase intra-party tensions between western and eastern German members and, therefore, reduce voting cohesion. However, first tentative empirical analyses indicate that this has not been the case (Saalfeld 1995:127–8). Eastern German members of the Bundestag have adapted swiftly to the prevailing institutional structure within their parliamentary party groups and within the Bundestag and have been integrated into the complex system of 'give and take' within the parties' working groups and parliamentary committees. They have not been willing or able to form a cohesive eastern German 'bloc' (inside their parliamentary parties or across party lines) *vis-à-vis* their party leaderships, which are dominated by western German politicians.

Parliamentary party groups and government formation

Although the Basic Law does not require the federal chancellor to be a member of the Bundestag, all chancellors save Kurt Georg Kiesinger (1966–9) were members at the time of their election. Kiesinger had served as prime minister of the state of Baden-Württemberg before he became chancellor. Nonetheless, he had considerable prior experience in the Bundestag. Kiesinger was not atypical

of leading German politicians, who have often gained administrative experience in a state government before returning as minister or chancellor to the federal capital. The share of cabinet ministers without a seat in the Bundestag was particularly high in the first Bundestag (1949–53, four out of fourteen: 29 per cent), which operated under special conditions of the post-war era, the fifth Bundestag (1965–69, 23 per cent) with a Grand Coalition between CDU/CSU and SPD and the ninth Bundestag (1980–83:24 per cent), which witnessed a change from a SPD-FDP to a CDU/CSU-FDP coalition. During the 1980s (1983–90) Chancellor Kohl appointed a relatively large number of cabinet ministers without a Bundestag seat (six out of thirty-six: 17 per cent), but these numbers have decreased since 1991. The vast majority of ministers without a Bundestag seat sought and gained a mandate in the subsequent Bundestag elections.

The federal chancellor is elected by the Bundestag after nomination by a parliamentary party group. The parliamentary party groups select, nominate and elect a candidate from their own ranks, sustain him in office and, if necessary, replace him. Unlike the British House of Commons, the offices of parliamentary party group chairperson, deputy chairperson or whip are not linked to government offices. Parliamentary private secretaries do not exist at all. After being appointed to government office the federal chancellor, ministers and parliamentary secretaries of state *de facto* cease to have a formal leadership role in the parliamentary party group. Needless to say, many of them remain extremely influential figures. Nevertheless, the parliamentary party groups elect their own officers and are more independent of government control than their British counterparts as the numerical weight of the ‘payroll vote’ is not nearly as strong as in the British House of Commons. Another difference is that federal chancellors do not necessarily go through a very long ‘apprenticeship’ in the Bundestag (and one of its parliamentary party groups) before they get elected. Helmut Kohl, for example, was elected federal chancellor in 1982, only six years after he was first elected to the Bundestag. Prior to 1976 he had risen within the CDU extra-parliamentary party organisation as a successful state prime minister. Similarly, his successor Gerhard Schröder was state premier of Lower Saxony when he successfully ran as the SPD candidate for chancellor in the election of 1998. His ‘apprenticeship’ in the Bundestag dates back to the period 1980–86.

Coalitions have been ‘the typical form of government’ (Schmidt 1996:72) in the Federal Republic of Germany. The formal role of the parliamentary party groups in the formative stages of coalition-building has usually been minimal. Most important policy decisions and the distribution of ministerial portfolios have been agreed upon between the lifetimes of two parliaments and have usually been dominated by the leaders of extra-parliamentary party organisations. Negotiating teams have, however, always included leading experts of the parliamentary party groups (of the newly elected parliament). Once a coalition has been formed, however, its steering has involved

considerably more influence from the parliamentary majority parties' leaderships and policy experts.

Summary observations

The parliamentary party groups are central actors in the German polity. Uwe Thaysen (1987) has, therefore, aptly called the German political system a 'state of the parliamentary party groups' (*Fraktionenstaat*). Their important role as 'parties in parliament' has been recognised legally in the Basic Law (Article 21), various federal laws and the Bundestag's rules of procedure. It has been recognised financially by the considerable financial assistance the parliamentary party groups receive over the federal budget.

The two major parliamentary party groups in the Bundestag, the CDU/CSU and SPD, are relatively complex organisations. Their formal structure is vertically and horizontally differentiated and decision-making is often bureaucratic. The extent of hierarchy and bureaucratisation at the expense of individual members' freedom of action and spontaneous debate in the plenary have been variously criticised. Yet elements of the parliamentary party groups' informal organisation and the Bundestag's placement within the wider political system of cooperative federalism mitigate the effects of the formal hierarchy.

The Bundestag's rules of procedure make the parliamentary party groups the main actors in the chamber. In practice, *they* exercise the Bundestag's main functions: they scrutinise or prepare legislation in their working groups, and their votes determine the fate of bills. The federal chancellor is often recruited from, and invariably elected by, the parliamentary party groups of the majority. Scrutiny and influence of government policies, too, is in practice a function of the parliamentary parties. The government cannot survive and act without the support of 'its' majority parties in parliament. Its dependence on the parliamentary majority makes it susceptible to parliamentary influence. Most opposition and minority rights to scrutinise government policies are legally constructed as rights of the parliamentary party groups. The competition and cooperation between government and opposition is organised by the parliamentary party groups. More generally, the Bundestag's work as a professional 'working parliament' (*Arbeitsparlament*) requires a high degree of specialisation, coordination and cohesion, which are made possible by the parliamentary party groups. A majority of these processes take place not in the Bundestag's plenary, but 'behind closed doors': in the parliamentary party groups' working groups and caucuses as well as parliamentary committees.⁴ It is here, where individual members or groups of deputies seek to influence the position of their parliamentary party groups before it comes to a vote in the plenary.

In Chapter 1 Heidar and Koole developed a classification of the internal organisation of parliamentary party groups. Both major parliamentary party

groups, the CDU/CSU and the SPD *Fraktionen* can be classified as 'parliamentary party complexes', while the FDP and the Greens have a lower level of external resources and may, therefore, still have some characteristics of 'fractions'. During the post-war period, the level of organisational resources has increased for all parties. With the exception of the SPD (which has always been very cohesive), the degree of group cohesion has also increased. The result has been a process of growing similarity in the parliamentary party groups' internal organisations and a steady development towards 'parliamentary party complexes'. Even the Green Party, with its strong commitment to grassroots democracy, has found it difficult to resist this trend entirely.

In terms of Heidar and Koole's classification of parliamentary party groups as parts of the party-as-a-whole, the two main parties have increasingly approximated the ideal type of 'integrated parliamentary party groups' which are characterised by weak divisions between parliamentary party group and government on the one hand and weak divisions between parliamentary party groups and their extra-parliamentary organisations on the other hand. The SPD's shift towards the political centre since the late 1950s and its participation in government between 1966 and 1982 weakened the division between the SPD's parliamentary party group and government. Simultaneously the loss of government power at the federal level (1969) and the establishment of modern extra-parliamentary party organisations in both the CDU and the CSU weakened the divisions between the Christian Democrats' parliamentary party group in the Bundestag and the extra-parliamentary party organisations.

Notes

- 1 In the 1998 Bundestag elections, the PDS managed to overcome the 5 per cent threshold nationally with 5.1 per cent of the vote.
- 2 For explanations see Saalfeld (1990).
- 3 In the German Bundestag, the party whips (*Parlamentarische Geschäftsführer*) are elected officers of the parliamentary party groups responsible for communication and coordination.
- 4 Committee meetings in private are still the norm. The parliamentary reforms of 1995 have at least opened up the *concluding* committee deliberations to the media and general public.

3 The United Kingdom

Exerting influence from within

Philip Norton

Party organisation is a long-established feature of the British House of Commons, pre-dating the emergence of mass political parties. Though the contemporary House of Commons is characterised by the opposition mode of executive-legislative relationships (King 1976) there is a less visible, but nonetheless significant, intra-party mode. Party organisation, facilitating communication between party leaders and supporters in the House of Commons, is central to that mode. The organisation has become more complex in the twentieth century and differs between the principal parties. On the Conservative side of the House, it allows Conservative Members of Parliament (MPs) some input into party policy-making and the power to determine the fate of the party leader and, on occasion, ministers in Conservative governments. On the Labour side of the House, party structures give Labour MPs less input into policy-making and the choice of party leader. High levels of organisation and cohesion characterise both main parties, but recent decades have seen MPs giving less attention to party activity and exercising a greater degree of voting independence in parliamentary votes.

Formal status

Parliamentary party groups (PPGs) in the House of Commons are properly titled 'parliamentary parties'. Each PPG comprises those MPs who are in receipt of that party's whip (a written document circulated each week to members of each PPG). The decision as to who is to receive the whip—and, if necessary, have the whip withdrawn—is a matter for each of the political parties. Whether the decision rests with the extra-parliamentary organisation (EPO), the PPG, the whips (that is, the MPs appointed to ensure communication and cohesion) or the party leader is a matter for the parties themselves. There are no statutory or parliamentary rules governing the formation or membership of PPGs.

In practice, candidates for election to parliament are selected by local party organisations and candidates are elected on the basis of the party label. Once elected to the House of Commons, they are automatically sent the whip of the party under whose label they have fought the election. During their time in the

House of Commons, they may (though this rarely happens) have the whip withdrawn by whichever body within the PPG is entitled to withdraw it—for example, for defying the party or engaging in unethical conduct—or may themselves resign the whip, typically in protest at some policy pursued by the party leadership. Once the whip is withdrawn or resigned, the MP may still ask for it be restored. An MP can sit in the House as a ‘whipless’ MP: there is no requirement to join another PPG, though an MP can do that if he or she so chooses. (If an MP moves from one PPG to another, this is known as ‘crossing the floor’.) An MP without the whip, but who has no intention of joining another PPG, will generally assume the title either of an independent or—depending on the PPG of which they have been a member—an ‘Independent Conservative’ or ‘Independent Labour’ MP. An MP who is without a whip does not necessarily cease to be a member of the EPO.

The absence of formal rules governing the formation of PPGs extends also to the number of MPs needed to form one. In practice, a single MP cannot form a PPG. However, two MPs elected under the same label normally exist as a PPG. All that forming a PPG entails is appointing one of the MPs as a whip. In a PPG with only two or three MPs, the work of a whip may appear almost superfluous but it has a purpose in that the whip may be consulted by government whips and business managers about procedures and the parliamentary timetable.

In the House of Commons elected in May 1997 there are effectively eight PPGs (see Table 3.1). Wherever two or more MPs have been elected under the same party label—as, for example, the two elected as Ulster Democratic Unionist members—they form a PPG. The exceptions (which is peculiar to the 1997 Parliament) are the two elected under the Sinn Fein label: the two MPs, because they refuse to take the oath of allegiance, have not taken their seats. As can be seen from Table 3.1, the two largest are the Labour and Conservative

Table 3.1 State of the parties in the House of Commons following the general election, 1 May 1997

Labour	418
Conservative	165
Liberal Democrats	46
Ulster Unionists	10
Scottish National Party	6
Plaid Cymru	4
Social Democratic and Labour Party	3
Ulster Democratic Unionist Party	2
Sinn Fein	2
United Kingdom Unionist	1
Independent	1
The Speaker	1
Total	659

PPGs. In the general election on 1 May, 418 MPs were elected under the Labour banner and 165 under the Conservative banner. The election was a disaster for the Conservative Party, the number of Conservative MPs elected being the lowest since 1906. The Labour Party achieved the best result it had ever had in its history.

The PPGs enjoy some degree of autonomy in relation to the EPO. This is especially so on the Conservative side of the House, where the development of some party organisation in parliament preceded the creation of the mass party organisation and where deference to party leaders is an established feature of party culture. It is less marked on the Labour side, where the same characteristics do not exist, but where nonetheless the party constitution imparts some degree of independence to the PPG. Though linked in each case to the EPO, both PPGs can be analysed as discrete entities.

The development of organised parties

Some form of party grouping existed within the House of Commons before the advent of a mass franchise in the nineteenth century. There were those Members of Parliament who supported the king's ministry and those who took a more detached, or oppositional, stance. However, party labels were worn loosely, if at all, and there was little formal organisation. What organisation there was took the form of party whips. Party whips, or 'whippers in' as they were known originally (the name derived from fox-hunting parlance), can be traced back to the eighteenth century (see Thomas 1971); their task was to make sure that supporters of the ministry turned up and voted. The supporters themselves were not brought together into any organised or regularly meeting body.

Demands for a political voice from the non-landed middle class and from artisans resulted in a widening of the franchise. The 1867 Reform Act prompted the two main political parties of the day—the Conservatives and the Liberals—to develop from cadre to mass membership parties in order to reach and attract the support of the new voters. A mass electorate had difficulty distinguishing between individual candidates and party soon became the basis on which electors made their choice. MPs elected on a party label voted for that party in parliament and party voting became a pronounced feature of parliamentary voting behaviour (see Lowell 1924:76–8). By the turn of the century party votes were the norm.

The development of organised parliamentary party groups has been a feature of the twentieth century. At the beginning of the century, the only organisation on the Conservative benches comprised the party whips, meetings of the party's leading figures, and an occasional meeting of the party's MPs called by the party leader. (The party leader—who was a member of either the House of Commons or the House of Lords—was leader of all the party, that is, the PPG as well as the EPO and—until 1965—became leader by a process of 'emergence'.) In the 1920s, some regular organisation came into being. A number of Conservative

MPs elected for the first time in 1922 got together in 1923 and formed the Conservative Private Members' 1922 Committee (better known since by the name of the '1922 Committee') in order to inform themselves about parliamentary business and matters coming before the House (see Rentoul 1940; Goodhart 1973). Membership of the 1922 Committee was gradually extended to all 'Private Members' in receipt of the Conservative whip: that is, all Conservative MPs except ministers when in government and all Conservative MPs except the leader when in opposition.

The '1922 Committee' was, in party as well as parliamentary terms, an unofficial body: that is, it was not set up by the party leader or by the EPO. 'The 1922' formed a few committees to discuss issues in particular sectors of public policy but these soon lapsed and were replaced by PPG committees set up by the party leader. These committees—covering different sectors of public policy (agriculture, foreign affairs and so on)—became very active in the late 1920s and during the 1930s and have remained so (Norton 1979, 1994a).

It was to be some time before a similar organisation was to be created by the other principal party in the House of Commons. During the 1920s, the Liberal Party was in decline and lacked the numbers necessary to generate a similar organisation to that developing on the Conservative benches. The Labour Party was emerging as the principal opposition party, but that emergence was slow, and during the 1930s the Conservatives enjoyed an overwhelming majority in the House of Commons. Labour MPs formed a PPG—the Parliamentary Labour Party (PLP)—and met once a week (Norton 1979:22). However, it was not until the parliament of 1945–50, when Labour was elected to power with a large parliamentary majority, that the PLP was able to form committees, or groups, similar to those already in existence on the Conservative benches.

By the middle of the century, the party organisation in the House of Commons was that which has remained in place for the rest of the century. All the parliamentary party groups have regular meetings and have one or more of their members, usually appointed by the party leader, serve as whips. The two main parliamentary party groups—Conservative and Labour—have a developed infrastructure, with a number of regularly meeting committees. In terms of behaviour, all the parties are characterised by high levels of voting cohesion.

Current organisation

The Conservative PPG, as we have seen, comprises all MPs in receipt of the Conservative whip. In terms of organisation it has three distinct elements. First, there is the front bench, a category which includes the whips. The 'front bench' comprises members of the cabinet¹ and other ministers when in government, and the members of the shadow cabinet plus shadow junior ministers when in opposition. Ministers and shadow ministers occupy the appropriate front bench in the House of Commons and hence are known as frontbenchers. In government, the leader of the party becomes Prime Minister and chooses who

will be ministers. In opposition, the leader holds the post of leader of the opposition and chooses who will sit on the opposition front bench. The leader, assisted by the front bench, will determine policy and the PPG is expected to support that policy.

The whips (currently ten in number, though when in government the number is usually fourteen) are MPs and are appointed as whips by the party leader. When in government, the whips form part of the government: that is, they are part of the team of ministers. The principal whip, the Chief Whip, is regarded as a senior minister and he attends (though is not formally a member of) the cabinet. Other whips have the status of junior ministers. The whips hold regular meetings and have responsibilities of communication (between ministers and backbenchers), parliamentary management and persuasion. If some members of the PPG indicate that they may vote against the party line in a parliamentary vote, the whips seek to persuade them to support the party. They have few formal sanctions to employ against members who defy the party line, though they do determine which members are chosen to be members of parliamentary committees and of overseas parliamentary delegations. In extreme cases, the leader or Chief Whip may withdraw the whip from a rebellious member. Between 1900 and 1945, the whip was withdrawn from five MPs, between 1945 and 1990 it was not withdrawn from any MP, and between 1990 and 1997 it was withdrawn, exceptionally, from no less than ten MPs, nine of whom subsequently had it restored to them (Norton 1995a: 10–11).

Second, there is the 1922 Committee. This, as we have seen, comprises all Conservative Private Members (i.e. everyone except the leader when in opposition, everyone except ministers when the party is in government). It meets once a week for one hour or so. All Conservative Private Members are entitled to attend, though in practice few do so. Most meetings are characterised by very low attendances. A whip attends to announce the parliamentary business for the following week and the meeting discusses particular issues of concern to the parliamentary party as a whole. The subject discussed most often since the body was formed has been that of MPs' pay. (Other topics variously discussed over the years include the broadcasting of parliamentary proceedings, the reform of the second chamber, and office resources for MPs.) The meeting also receives reports from the various PPG subject committees, though weeks can pass without any reports being made. Meetings are held in private: that is, the media are excluded, though fairly full reports sometimes find their way into the press, courtesy of some garrulous MP. The chairman may also be deputed to report the views of the meeting to the party leader.

Third, there are the PPG subject committees. A greater level of activity occurs within the subject committees than with the 1922 Committee. In the 1992–97 parliament, there were twenty-four subject committees. There were also seven PPG regional committees, each formed of the MPs from the particular region, though these tend to be far less active than the subject committees. The subject committees meet on a regular basis. The more important—such as foreign affairs and finance—meet once a week, though

others meet once a fortnight or less regularly. One or two, such as the committee on constitutional affairs, have a very low level of activity.

The committees meet to discuss forthcoming business of relevance to them. They will consider any relevant bill about to come before the House. They also listen to invited speakers. In government, these will include the relevant senior minister—the Secretary of State for Defence in the case of the defence committee, and so on. (The minister will normally meet regularly with the officers of the committee, often having drinks with them after meetings.) They also invite speakers from relevant outside bodies: the chairman of the National Farmers Union to speak to the agriculture committee, for example, or an ambassador to address the foreign affairs committee. The committees will also go on various fact-finding visits, the health committee visiting a hospital for example. Meetings, like those of the 1922 Committee, are private: the media are excluded, though a party whip will attend and will report back to senior ministers if there is trouble in the committee, for example members objecting to a particular policy.

Like meetings of the 1922 Committee, attendance at subject committees is not usually very large. Sometimes only half a dozen members may be present, though attendance is usually boosted by the presence of an important speaker, such as—when in government—the Chancellor of the Exchequer speaking to the finance committee following the presentation of his Budget to the House.

Conservative committees are unusual in that they have no defined membership. Any Conservative backbencher who wishes to attend a meeting can do so. Conservative members of the House of Lords (where there are no equivalent PPG committees) may also attend, and a few do so.

Both the 1922 Committee and the subject committees have officers, elected at the beginning of each parliamentary year. The 1922 Committee has a chairman, two vice-chairmen (the masculine terminology is retained, even though the positions may be held by women), a treasurer, secretary and executive committee. The subject committees have officers: a chairman, vice-chairman (or vice-chairmen) and joint secretaries. In opposition, the chairman of each subject committee is usually the member of the shadow cabinet responsible for the subject: thus, the shadow Home Secretary will chair the home affairs committee. Apart from the chairmanships of the subject committees in opposition, the officerships are usually contested and can be the battleground for different tendencies within the party. Right-wing tendencies within the party normally put forward a particular slate of candidates, as do more centrist or left-leaning groupings. The chairmanship of the 1922 Committee may be fought for between a candidate loyal to the party leader and another who is more critical of the leadership. In 1994, the incumbent was re-elected against a challenger from the party's Euro-sceptic wing and in 1995 re-elected against a challenger from the party's right wing. Although no voting figures are published, the 1994 contest was reported to be very close.

The 1922 Committee and the subject committee provide a focus for regular activity by Conservative MPs. The 1922 Committee also has one other

important role to play, albeit on an irregular basis. Since 1965, the leader of the Conservative Party (that is, the whole party, comprising the EPO and the PPG) has been elected by the Conservative PPG—every MP in receipt of the Conservative whip is entitled to vote—and responsibility for organising the election has been given to the 1922 Committee. If there is a vacancy, or a challenge to the incumbent, the officers of the 1922 Committee make the necessary administrative arrangements for the balloting, including the counting of the ballot papers and announcing the results. It has had to organise an election on six occasions: in 1965, 1975, 1989, 1990, 1995 and 1997.

The organisation and activity within the Parliamentary Labour Party resembles that on the Conservative side, though there are some important differences. The PLP is not responsible for organising leadership election contests. Until 1981, the leader of the Labour Party (the PPG and the EPO) was elected by the PLP but since that time has been elected by an electoral college comprising the PLP (plus Labour members of the European parliament), affiliated trade unions and constituency parties—each category having one-third of the votes—and with the administration undertaken by the EPO. The other principal difference is that the PLP and the PPG subject committees (known as departmental groups) do not enjoy quite the same level of influence and activity as their counterparts on the other side of the House. Labour groups do have designated memberships (MPs can be members of a limited number of groups), though this is relevant for voting purposes only; any MP can still turn up at any departmental group meeting. Over the years, the PLP has had difficulty in sustaining regular meetings of departmental groups and has variously reorganised them to try to maintain or increase the involvement of Labour MPs (Norton 1979:44–9). The groups tend to meet less frequently than Conservative subject committees, though they engage in similar activities.

The meetings of the 1922 Committee and the PLP, and the more numerous meetings of PPG committees, mean that there is extensive party activity taking place within the House of Commons, supplementing and, increasingly—given the demands on MPs' time—competing with formal parliamentary activity.

The PPGs have limited resources. In government, ministers have the support of the civil service, but civil servants cannot be used for party purposes. Ministers have one or two special advisers (political advisers who enjoy temporary civil service status) to assist with party issues, such as giving advice on the likely reaction in the EPO to policy proposals. Beyond the special advisers, ministers have to rely on the party's national headquarters. The PPGs on the opposition benches get some public funding, which allows them to employ a number of staff to enable them to carry out their parliamentary functions (it cannot be used for any other purpose). The funding is determined on a formula basis, related to the number of votes the party got in the previous election. It allows for the employment of a limited number of researchers. Otherwise, PPGs have very limited resources. Members individually can ask for some help from party headquarters (for example, for some policy briefing material) but the party headquarters are nowadays under pressure, with income

not matching expenditure. Other than that, each MP has an office cost allowance to hire secretarial and research staff but the allowance—just over £50,000 a year—is sufficient only to employ two or three people and, again, the money may not be employed for purely party purposes.

Cohesion

The other feature of PPGs in the House of Commons is that of unity. The internal organisation of the PPGs is closest to that of a ‘parliamentary party complex’, as defined in the introduction to this volume. As we shall see, there is a relatively high level of external organisational resources, at least for the purposes of parliamentary elections, and the degree of PPG discipline is high—extremely high.

Party unity has been a feature of parliamentary behaviour since the nineteenth century. Throughout the twentieth century, voting behaviour in the House of Commons has been characterised by party cohesion. In most votes, all those Conservative MPs voting will go into one voting lobby and all those Labour MPs that are present will troop into the other lobby.

The party whips exist to ensure that members are aware of what business is before the House and what importance the party attaches to it. In the written whip, which is sent each week while the House is in session, an item of business underlined three times (a three-line whip) is the most important business and members are expected to be present to vote. An item underlined two times (a two-line whip) is important but members may be absent through ‘pairing’ (an arrangement under which an MP on one side of the House is absent at the same time as a member on the other side). A one-line whip gives greater freedom to be excused from attending. Most MPs follow the advice of the party whips as to which way to vote. If they indicate they may vote against the party, the whips try to persuade them not to and, if necessary, arrange for a meeting between the potential rebel and the relevant minister or, in opposition, frontbencher.

The whips, as we have seen, have very few powers to discipline MPs who vote against the party. Their most important weapon is the appeal to party loyalty. They can influence an MP’s promotion prospects (though the threat tends to be more important than the actuality) and, as we have mentioned, the committees on which a member serves. Primarily, though, they rely on MPs wanting to vote with their own side and the evidence suggests a high level of instinctive party voting. Even when the whips make no attempt to influence the outcome of votes—that is, on free votes—Conservative MPs typically vote in one lobby and Labour MPs in the other (Cowley 1997).

Party cohesion reached its peak in the 1950s—there were two parliamentary sessions in that decade in which not one Conservative MP cast a vote against the party whip—and during the 1960s Samuel H. Beer was able to declare that party cohesion was so close to 100 per cent that there was no longer any point in measuring it (Beer 1969:350). As can be seen from Table 3.2, expressed as a

percentage of all the votes held in the House of Commons, the votes in which one or more MPs voted against their own party was small. And when MPs did vote against their own party, they usually did so in very small numbers. Of the 214 occasions when one or more Conservative MPs voted against the whips between 1945 and 1970, eighty-eight (41 per cent) involved a lone dissenter and a further eighty-two (38 per cent) each involved between two and five dissenters. The position changed after 1970, with MPs being more willing than before to vote against their own side, to do so in greater numbers than before, and with greater effect (Norton 1975, 1978, 1980). In the 1970s, governments of both parties suffered a number of parliamentary defeats because some of their own backbenchers voted with the opposition. In the 1974–79 parliament, of the 309 occasions when one or more Labour MPs voted against the whip, the majority involved ten or more Labour MPs defying the whip; on sixty-nine occasions, forty or more Labour MPs defied the whips.

In the 1980s and 1990s, MPs have remained willing on occasion to defy the whips (Cowley and Norton 1996a, 1996b). The number of occasions can be seen in Table 3.2. Analysis of each occasion also reveals that the number of MPs defying the whip is larger than in the pre-1970 period. In the 1992–97 parliament, for example, more than a quarter of the votes involving Conservative MPs defying the whips each involved twenty or more Conservative backbenchers. Backbenchers cannot be taken for granted in the way that they could before 1970. Even so, party cohesion remains the norm—virtually all votes are party votes (that is, in terms of those voting, 90 per cent or more of the members of one party voting in one lobby, 90 per cent or more of the members

Table 3.2 Divisions (votes) in the House of Commons witnessing dissenting votes, 1945–1997

<i>Parliament (Number of sessions in parenthesis)</i>	<i>Number of divisions witnessing dissenting votes</i>		<i>Number of divisions witnessing dissenting votes expressed as % of all divisions</i>
	<i>Lab:</i>	<i>Con:</i>	
1945–50 (4)	79	27	7.0
1950–51 (2)	5	2	2.5
1951–55 (4)	17	11	3.0
1955–59 (4)	10	12	2.0
1959–64 (5)	26	120	13.5
1964–66 (2)	1	1	0.5
1966–70 (4)	109	41	9.5
1970–74 (4)	34	204	20.0
1974 (1)	8	21	23.0
1974–79 (5)	309	240	28.0
1979–83 (4)	161	158	19.0
1983–87 (4)	83	202	22.0
1987–92 (5)	137	199	19.0
1992–97 (5)	143	170	20.5

of the other party voting in the other lobby). About one division in five witnesses one or more MPs voting against the whip. Labour MPs tend to vote against their leaders in greater numbers than Conservative MPs. The occasions when MPs on the government side of the House vote with the opposition in sufficient numbers to deny the government a majority are infrequent: it happened only nine times between 1979 and 1997. Even so, they are infrequent rather than—as in the period before 1970—unknown. Nonetheless, most votes in the House of Commons are completely predictable, certainly in terms of outcome.

One thus has a situation in the House of Commons where commitment to party determines the behaviour, especially the voting behaviour, of MPs. The public face of the House of Commons remains one essentially, but no longer completely, where one united party faces the other in party battle. The private face remains one where party MPs gather to inform themselves about issues and to discuss matters away from the glare of public observation.

Position of the individual representative

The position of the individual member on the floor of the House is determined largely by commitment to party, meaning the PPG. The government determines the parliamentary timetable, except on a limited number of days. Twenty days, titled opposition days, are given over to topics chosen by opposition PPGs. The opportunities for members to raise issues outside the context of the PPG are limited: Question Time—traditionally a backbenchers' occasion but one increasingly used by opposition frontbenchers to question ministers and by backbenchers to make party points (Franklin and Norton 1993)—a half-hour debate at the end of each sitting, and Private Members' time on Fridays and on Wednesday mornings. These occasions provide a limited, though nonetheless useful, opportunity to raise issues and on occasion, through private members' legislation, to get some small legislative measure enacted (Norton 1993a: 58–62). Mostly, though, the time in the chamber is taken up with speeches, delivered on a party basis, with a member on one side of the House alternating with a member on the other side, and with members then trooping into the division lobbies, all the Conservatives entering one lobby and Labour MPs entering the other.

The opportunity for the individual member to have some influence outside the context of the PPG—and, indeed, within the context of the PPG—is greatest away from the chamber. The creation by the House of Commons of a series of departmental Select Committees in 1979, each committee examining the activities of a particular government department, has provided scope for MPs to question witnesses (ministers, civil servants, representatives of outside groups) and to make recommendations (see Drewry 1989, Norton 1991, 1993a). The committees include MPs from both sides of the House, the party composition being proportional to that in the chamber. The activity of the committees represents, in King's terminology, a non-party mode of executive-legislative

relations. Ministers and whips do not serve on the committees and reports are usually agreed on a non-partisan basis (votes are rare), though party whips are accused of exerting influence over the selection of members and committees avoid issues that might prove divisive on a party basis.

The Select Committees are formal parliamentary committees. PPG committees provide an opportunity for activity within a party context, allowing each member an opportunity to specialise in a particular subject area or areas (prior to the creation of the departmental Select Committees in 1979, there was no opportunity to specialise through formal parliamentary channels) and to express opinions on current issues and measures coming before the House and to do so freely, among like-minded colleagues in private. Meetings provide an opportunity to question the relevant ministers or frontbenchers about policy in a way not possible in a public forum, where the need for party unity normally takes priority.

Relation to the extra-parliamentary organisation

EPOs are important in British politics, especially in elections to public offices. The EPOs raise money to fund election campaigns (there is, as yet, no public funding of EPOs), they provide the resources to fight a campaign (volunteers to deliver leaflets, canvass electors, provide transport to the polls) and they also select, through local party organisations, the candidates to contest the elections. There are some paid officials at regional and local level, though the number is not large, and paid officials who staff the party national headquarters. The EPOs of both parties are well established and, historically, the Conservative EPO has been especially well organised, well financed and—in terms of membership—well supported, though these attributes are no longer pronounced. In 1953, the party claimed a membership of 2.8 million; today, it is believed to be about one-tenth of the 1953 figure.

Despite the extent of EPO activity in each party, both main PPGs retain some degree of autonomy. Though both are represented on the main national bodies of their EPOs—the Conservative National Union Executive Committee on one side and the National Executive Committee on the other—neither is bound by decisions of the EPO. The Conservative PPG enjoys complete autonomy. There are, in any event, no formal policy-making bodies in the EPO. Conservative Party policy is determined formally by the party leader (see Norton 1996). In the period before a general election, the leader usually sets up a series of small groups to advise on policy proposals to be included in the party's election manifesto, and each group will usually include the relevant frontbenchers, the officers of the relevant PPG committee and some members drawn from the EPO.

In the Labour Party, party policy is determined formally by the annual party conference. In between conferences, organisational issues and policy debate is determined by the party's National Executive Committee (NEC). However,

under the party's constitution, the party's election manifesto—which is not necessarily the same as party policy determined by the conference—is determined by the NEC in conjunction with the leaders of the PPG. (In practice, the leader of the party exercises the most powerful voice.) The PPG, when in power, is expected to give effect to the party's principles 'as far as may be practicable'. There have been occasions when a Labour government, supported by most Labour MPs, has not found it 'practicable' to implement some of the party's programme, resulting in some tension between the party conference on the one hand and party leaders and MPs on the other.

The most important relationship in terms of the EPO is not that between the PPGs and the EPOs as such, but rather between the individual members of the PPGs and their local parties. The British electoral system is the plurality, first-past-the-post system. The country is divided into single-member districts, known as constituencies, each constituency electing one MP. (The number of constituencies has varied; there are presently 659.) Candidates in each constituency are selected by the local constituency party organisations. Though candidates have to be on a national approved list, the number of names on the list far exceeds the number of parliamentary constituencies and it is the local parties that normally make the final choice. In certain circumstances, especially in parliamentary by-elections (where a special election is held to fill a vacancy), the Labour NEC can impose a candidate, but generally constituency parties enjoy a high degree of autonomy in candidate selection. This is especially so in the Conservative Party.

Local parties can also refuse to select a candidate for the next election, even in the case of an incumbent MP. It is rare for a local party to refuse to re-select a sitting MP, though it has happened on occasion. The largest number of de-selections in recent decades took place between 1981 and 1986, when fourteen Labour MPs were denied re-selection. Since then, the number has tended to be one or two in each parliament. It has tended to be even rarer for Conservative local associations to de-select incumbent MPs, though—unusually—four were de-selected at the end of the 1992–97 parliament: one for his public attacks on the prime minister, the other three because of personal scandal.

The local party thus has the power of political life or death over the MP. Though local parties usually cause few problems, most MPs are careful to maintain good relations with local party officers and activists, attending social functions and the annual general meeting. Local parties increasingly expect the MP to be active in the constituency, attending civic events and taking up constituents' problems. There are no residence requirements for candidates seeking election to parliament, but local parties increasingly expect candidates to promise, if elected, to live in or close to the constituency and most newly elected MPs now do so. The expectations of local parties constitute one of the contributory factors to a notable increase in constituency work by MPs in recent years (Norton and Wood 1993).

MPs and their local parties usually enjoy a harmonious or at least civil relationship but tensions are sometimes apparent, at times resulting from claims

that the MP has neglected the constituency or because the views of the MP clash with those of local party activists. Some Labour MPs have clashed with their local parties on political grounds (a right-wing MP clashing with left-wing activists, for example) and in 1990 some Conservative MPs were criticised by their constituency parties for supporting a leadership challenge to the incumbent, Margaret Thatcher.

Though tensions between MPs and their local parties are the exception rather than the rule, they serve to remind MPs of the importance of the local party. MPs enjoy some autonomy in their behaviour—few activists in the EPO follow closely what the MP is doing in Westminster—but are aware of the ultimate power wielded by the local constituency party.

Despite this, the division between the PPG and the EPO can best be characterised as strong rather than weak, whereas—as we have seen—the division between the PPG and the government is weak. Thus, in terms of the classification of PPGs as part of parties as a whole, British PPGs are best characterised—indeed, it is a particularly apt description in the British case—as ‘government-oriented PPGs’. The PPG is essentially an instrument of government.

Relation to interest groups

The PPGs and PPG committees have some links to interest groups, but the effect of contact is limited. This is because of the strength of commitment to the party (meaning, in parliament, the PPG). The loyalty of MPs to the party—hence the cohesion in voting—has facilitated the flow of policy-making power to government and it is therefore to government that interest groups turn when they want to influence policy. Links between interest groups and government departments are extensive and frequent (Norton 1994b: ch. 7). Traditionally, interest groups have seen little need to contact MPs if government is responsible for introducing policy and a party majority in the House is prepared to approve that policy.

However, contact has not been completely absent and in recent years has increased significantly. Some Labour MPs have traditionally been—and remain—formally sponsored by trades unions, and this usually takes the form of a small financial contribution to the local party. This does not formally bind the MPs in their parliamentary work and behaviour and such sponsorship is, in any event, being ended. More central to policy deliberation, interest groups have sought to maintain contact with MPs through the PPG committees. Prior to the creation of the departmental Select Committees in 1979, PPG committees provided the only means of targeting MPs with an interest in a particular sector. Interest groups will frequently volunteer the services of one of their leading figures to address the relevant PPG committee. A survey of 253 interest groups in 1986 found that 103 of them—41 per cent—had some contact with PPG committees, with most of these (81 out of the 103) having

been invited to send someone to a committee meeting. Of those having some contact, almost 74 per cent of them rated their contact as 'useful' or 'very useful' (Rush 1990:286–7).

Parliamentary lobbying by interest groups has increased notably since 1979. This is partly a consequence of government in the period from 1979 to 1997 adopting a more arms-length relationship with many groups and parliament itself-with departmental Select Committees and with MPs being a little more willing to take an independent stance—appearing more attractive (Norton 1991). The focus of such lobbying activity has tended to be members of departmental Select Committees and legislative standing committees, and members individually (Rush 1990). Though lobbying of the officers of PPG committees takes place, it is not focused on PPGs as such.

Relation to the government and cabinet formation

There is a difference between the two sides of the House in relation to government. Conservative MPs elect the party leader and the party leader can be subject to a leadership challenge, including when the party is in power. It is thus possible for Conservative MPs, in practice, to replace a Conservative Prime Minister with another, as happened in 1990 when they replaced Margaret Thatcher with John Major (see Norton 1993b, 1996). Labour MPs, as we have seen, are no longer the exclusive electorate for the election of the leader of the Labour Party.

The 1922 Committee also appears to play a more active role in the removal of Conservative government ministers when there is public criticism of them than is the case with the PLP during periods of Labour governments. During the period of Conservative governments from 1979 to 1997, several ministers resigned following criticism of their policies or personal actions at meetings of the 1922 Committee. The ministers included three members of the cabinet: Lord Carrington in 1983 (over policy towards Argentina concerning the Falkland Islands), Leon Brittan (over his handling of the Westland crisis) and David Mellor in 1992 (over his private life). The first two resigned after facing crowded and hostile meetings of the 1922 Committee and the third resigned shortly after receiving a telephone call from the chairman of the 1922 Committee (Norton 1994a: 124–5).

However, Labour MPs play a more central role than Conservative MPs in the selection of cabinet ministers. The Labour Party adheres to the principle of intra-party democracy and in opposition Labour MPs elect members of the 'Parliamentary Committee'. This constitutes in effect the shadow cabinet, though the party leader chooses which portfolios each member will hold and may add one or two members to those elected by MPs. Though under the British constitution a Labour Prime Minister is free to choose who will occupy which posts, the membership of the shadow cabinet is a major influence. On the Conservative side, the party leader is free to choose the members of the

frontbench, whether in government or in opposition, though leaders do tend to take account of the support on the backbenches enjoyed by leading figures.

Ultimately, the most important relationship derives from the fact that the government depends upon the confidence of the House of Commons. That means a majority of the House and that majority is provided by the MPs of the winning party. A government need not pay too much attention to opposition parties as long as it has the support of its own party MPs. Hence the importance of the intra-party relationship within the House. For ministers, the most important MPs are those sitting behind them. On the one hand, government backbenchers are limited by the Prime Minister's power to request the dissolution of parliament. If the Prime Minister makes a particular vote in the House a vote of confidence—signifying that the government will request a general election if defeated in the vote—then the MPs in the PPG are expected to vote loyally for the government. A vote of confidence thus maximises party voting. However, few votes can be made votes of confidence (for political as well as practical reasons—MPs would resent it if they were frequent, and it is difficult to justify making an issue not central to government policy one of confidence), and on non-confidence votes government MPs can threaten to vote against the government. Government thus has to pay attention to its own backbenchers if it is to avoid the embarrassment of a public split and even a defeat. For that reason, government whips pay close attention to what backbenchers say, including in PPG committees.

Consequences

What purpose is served by party organisation, principally the backbench organisation: the 1922 Committee and PLP, and the various PPG subject committees? The organisation is essentially multi-functional: that is, it has several consequences for the parties.

The principal consequences can be derived from the foregoing analysis. They may be summarised (drawing in part on Norton 1994a: 119–25) as:

- **Policy influence.** The PPG committees provide the means for backbenchers to have some input into policy deliberations, especially on the Conservative side of the House.
- **Specialisation and information gathering.** The PPG committees provide the opportunity for MPs to specialise in a particular area and to do so in an area of their choosing (they are not dependent on others, as is the case with formal parliamentary committees), and also to build up a body of knowledge that is useful to them and may help inform parliamentary debates. Acquiring that knowledge may also loosen the grip of government as an information supplier to the House.
- **Autonomy and leadership selection.** The creation of an organisation helps provide collective strength to party MPs and gives them some degree of

autonomy from the EPO. The structure also provides some means of influencing the choice of party leader or members of the front bench.

- **Safety valve.** The party gatherings allow MPs to give vent to anxieties in private, away from public gaze. Having vented their anger in private—and perhaps been listened to by party leaders—it is easier for MPs to rally round and support their party in public. Though MPs are more independent in their voting behaviour than before, it is arguable that the extent of rebellions by backbenchers would be even greater if the party committees did not exist.
- **Regime support.** The PPG committees allow not only for the integration of MPs in party activity, they also provide a means of allowing interest groups some input into the political process. Though now overshadowed by the departmental select committees of the House of Commons, PPG committees still act as a magnet for the attention of interest groups. That contact may be especially important for groups that are or feel excluded from access to government departments.

The party organisation in the House of Commons thus serves some purpose, being of value to MPs, party leaders and to groups outside the House. Though other activities (constituency work, select committees) increasingly draw MPs away from active involvement in party gatherings in the House (see Norton 1992), party allegiance—primarily allegiance to the PPG, under the party leader and whips—still provides the principal determinant of MPs' behaviour in the House of Commons.

Explanations of party organisation and activity

Finally, what explains party organisation and party activity in the House of Commons? The parliamentary form of government (government ministers being drawn from, and remaining in, parliament) as well as the first-past-the post electoral system appear to have encouraged a clash between two parties for the all-or-nothing spoils of election victory, the largest single party normally achieving a majority of parliamentary seats. The nature of the contest has generated high levels of partisanship and an emphasis on party unity. MPs are elected on a party label in order to support their party in the House of Commons. Ideology also appears to be an important independent variable, MPs voting with their fellow party ideologues against those supporting an alternative ideology, hence the 'natural' party voting when free votes are permitted. Constitutional conventions have further encouraged a propensity toward party unity, government MPs being reluctant to vote against their own party in any vote that may jeopardise the continuation of the government in office.

Party organisation on the Labour benches appears to have been the product of a commitment to the principle of intra-party democracy, with internal debate followed by a show of unity, in large part reflecting the trade union influence in the party's formation. Constitutional precepts have led to some modification,

not least in allowing a Labour Prime Minister freedom in the selection of ministers. Party organisation on the Conservative benches appears to have been the product of more pragmatic forces, Conservative backbench MPs wanting a more regular means of discussing what is going on and having some means of expressing themselves to party leaders (Norton 1994a). Conservative MPs—and members of the EPO—defer to the party leader, but that deference has been contingent rather than certain (Norton 1996).

The 1990s have seen the party organisation come under pressure, as competing demands have drawn MPs away from PPG and PPG committee meetings. Recent years have also shown the extent to which backbench MPs cannot be taken for granted. That is shown in MPs' voting behaviour, though there is no agreement on the cause of this change in behaviour (see Norton 1978; Schwarz 1980; Franklin, Baxter and Jordan 1986; Norton 1987; 1995b). There is little evidence to suggest that party unity will collapse, but equally little evidence to suggest that party unity will return to its pre-1970 level (Cowley and Norton 1996a, 1996b). The oppositional mode of executive-legislative relations will continue to dominate the public face of the House of Commons, but the intra-party mode will be central to the private face.

Pressure for change

Both main political parties have seen pressure for reform in recent years, especially in terms of the relationship between the party leader, the PPG and the EPO. The changes support a convergence theory, the two parties coming to resemble one another in structure.

On the Labour side, the pressure has been to limit the autonomy of local EPO parties and the power of the party conference, and to provide the party leader with greater power in relation to both the PPG and the EPO. This has largely happened in practice. The party's NEC, dominated by the party leader, has been given greater powers over candidate selection, especially but not exclusively in by-elections. The standing orders of the PLP have been changed in order to restrict the opportunity for members of the PPG to vote publicly against policy agreed within the PPG (which usually means the policy put before the PPG by the party leader). There is also more central coordination of Labour MPs, organised by a government minister: MPs now have electronic pagers and are paged when a particular story is breaking, telling them how to respond to media inquiries.

On the Conservative side, the EPO has been demanding a greater role in the election of the party leader and in determining the officers of the professional party organisation (the party's Central Office). In return for some involvement in the election of the party leader (it is presently asking to have 20 per cent of the votes in an electoral college, the remaining 80 per cent being held by the members of the PPG), it is prepared to consider a greater degree of involvement by the national leadership in the selection of parliamentary candidates, similar to

that now enjoyed by the NEC in the Labour Party. It is likely that these changes will come about, thus ensuring some similarity in organisation between the two main parties.

However, in the longer term, more fundamental change may occur. The Labour government elected in 1997 is committed to holding a referendum on the electoral system. If there is popular support for change, and the government introduces and achieves passage of a bill to introduce a form of proportional representation for parliamentary elections, then there is the potential for dramatic change in the degree of political influence wielded by the PPGs and the PPG committees.

Notes

- 1 The cabinet comprises the Prime Minister and senior ministers who head departments plus one or two non-departmental ministers. The membership normally totals just over twenty and members are chosen formally by the Queen but in practice by the Prime Minister. They are drawn from the governing party and by convention are members of either House of Parliament (predominantly the House of Commons).

4 Parliamentary parties in the French Fifth Republic

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Origins of the parliamentary party group (PPG)

The parliamentary party groups in France (*groupes parlementaires*, PPGs) were officially recognised in a resolution of 1 July 1910. The statutes of the assemblies made provisions to regulate the composition of parliamentary commissions by reference to the division into parliamentary groups. Thus, their creation was indirect (Waline 1960). This recognition reflects the tendency of French political culture to reject parties and groups as factors of division. In France, the political parties have very often been considered particular groups, contravening the principle that the deputies represent the nation as a whole (Avril and Gicquel 1988). However, the parliamentary groups were not a pure and simple expression of political parties. They constituted a true parliamentary reality, as distinct from partisan reality. The Socialist Party (Section Française de l'Internationale Ouvrière—SFIO) was the only party where the labels of the parliamentary party group and the party-as-a-whole corresponded completely (Mayeur 1984). Notwithstanding the recognition of the PPGs, the French parliament was characterised for many years by the individual and undisciplined behaviour of MPs, which gave it an archaic character up until 1958. The constitution of 1958 did not mention PPGs, but it was the first French constitution to recognise political parties (Article 4) (Avril and Gicquel 1988).

In reaction to the assembly regime which had characterised the Third and Fourth Republic, the constitution of the Fifth Republic introduced a rationalised regime of parliamentarism, which was to function through its protective mechanisms of government at the cost of parliamentary liberty. If one adds to this the unforeseen appearance of the majority factor, the reduced role of the French parliament is noticeable. Another profound reason for the decline of the French parliament is the progressive erosion of the parliamentary responsibility of government and its replacement by the responsibility before the President of the Republic, which makes the government more attentive to the presidential will than to parliamentary opinion.

Formal position of the PPG

The French parliament has two chambers: the National Assembly (Assemblée Nationale) and the Senate (Sénat). The indirectly elected Senate reflects positions in the local politics of the rural and small town communes. In the National Assembly, deputies are also primarily local representatives, spokespersons for local grievances and sources of local patronage. The system of single-member constituencies has encouraged the constituency-oriented deputy. In France, local and national politics are intimately related. Deputies who are also mayors spend a large amount of their time in their constituencies.

The PPGs are recognised in the statutes of both houses of parliament. These texts contain rules concerning their composition, affiliation and role. A PPG is defined as a body of like-minded parliamentarians who accept the reference to the programme of a party. The establishment of PPGs devoted to special interests, local or professional, is expressly prohibited. At the time of their formation, the PPGs are obliged by the statutes of both houses of parliament to draft a declaration of principles and present it to their members. After the legislative elections of 1988, the number of deputies required to form a PPG was reduced from thirty to twenty. The socialist deputies in power at the time accepted the reduction of the number to twenty to allow the Communist Party to constitute an autonomous PPG. In 1959, the statutes of the National Assembly had stipulated that thirty deputies were required to form a PPG in an effort to avoid an increase in the number of PPGs. In effect, the number of PPGs diminished progressively to reach a minimum of four in 1978. The decline in the number of PPGs is the result of the increasing structuration of French political life. Five of the six political groups of the National Assembly elected in 1997 represent the five large parties of French political life: French Communist Party (Parti Communiste Français, PCF), Socialist Party (Parti Socialiste, PS), Union for the French Democracy (Union pour la Démocratie Française, UDF), Rally for the Republic (Rassemblement pour la République, RPR) and Liberal Democracy (Democratic Liberate).

The Assembly gives important financial and material help to PPGs. Four elements can be distinguished in this respect:

- 1 The Assembly provides offices for PPGs in proportion to their number of parliamentarians.
- 2 The Assembly awards a financial grant to the PPGs. Each PPG receives a donation which comprises a fixed part (40,000 francs per month) and a variable part (4,000 francs per month, per deputy).
- 3 The Assembly takes charge of the expenditure of resources. Thus, the National Assembly made the necessary credits available to the information facilities of PPGs (computers, etc.).
- 4 The Assembly takes charge of the operational expenditures (photocopies, telephone, etc.).

Table 4.1 Parliamentary party groups of the National Assembly

	<i>Communis-</i>	<i>Socialists</i>	<i>Centre-</i>	<i>Centre-</i>	<i>Moderate</i>	<i>Gaullists</i>	<i>Unity</i>	<i>National</i>	<i>Non-</i>	<i>Total</i>
	<i>nists</i>		<i>Left</i> ^a	<i>Right</i> ^b	<i>Conser-</i>		<i>of the</i>	<i>Front</i>	<i>registered</i>	
					<i>vatives</i> ^c		<i>Republic</i> ^d		<i>deputies</i> ^e	
1958		44	39	56	118	216	47		32	552
1962	41	66	39	55	35	233			13	482
1967	73	121		41	42	200			10	487
1968	34	57		33	61	293			9	487
1973	73	102	34	30	55	183			13	490
1978	86	115			123	154			13	491
1981	44	285			63	88			11	491
1986	35	212			131	155		35	9	577
1988	26	272		41	91	131			16	577
1993	23	57			215	258			24	577
1997	36	250	33		113	140			5	577
1999	35	251	34		70	138			5	577
					(UDF)					
					+ 44					
					(Lib. Dem.)					

- a Democratic Entente in 1958, Democratic Rally in 1962, Reformers and Social Democrats in 1973, Radical, Citizen, Green in 1997.
- b Popular Republicans and Democratic Centre in 1958, Democratic Centre in 1962, Progress and Modern Democracy in 1967 and 1968, Centrist Union in 1973 and Union of Centre in 1988.
- c Independents and Peasants with Social Action in 1958, Independent Republicans in 1962, 1967, 1968 and 1973, UDF in 1978, 1981, 1986, 1988, 1993 and 1997.
- d Unity of the Republic, deputies elected in Algeria in 1958.
- e Among the thirty-six non-registered deputies in 1958, there were ten Communist deputies already counted. In 1988, twenty-three of the twenty-four non-registered deputies constituted the Republic and Liberty group.

The PPGs benefit equally from material aid donated by their members. There are two types of help:

- Financial aid: this can take the form of a monthly contribution and is stipulated by the statutes of the EPO or the PPG.
- Personnel help: MPs can put one of their three assistants at the disposal of the PPGs.

The principal expenditures of a PPG are twofold. The first is related to the organisation of the ‘parliamentary days’. Traditionally, most of the PPGs organise, in the province, a meeting of their members before the opening of the parliamentary session. The second type of expenditure by PPGs concerns the salaries of secretaries.

When the socialists were in power between 1988 and 1993, the socialist PPG of the National Assembly received about sixty assistants given by MPs. Between 1993 and 1997, the RPR group had twenty-eight assistants.

The work of the PPGs essentially consists of following the work of the six permanent commissions of the Assembly that have existed since 1958. The relationship between the staff of the PPGs and the parliamentarians varies from one group to another:

- In the UDF group, the staff of the PPG assists the parliamentarians in drafting the propositions of law and written questions.
- In the RPR and PS groups, the assistants have the much greater task of conveying all parliamentary initiatives of the PPG.

The PPGs are an important tool in the workings of parliament. They always serve as a reference for the composition of parliamentary commissions, which is proportional to their numerical composition. They also serve to ensure the smooth running of parliament during legislative work. Frequently, individual parliamentarians submit draft bills with the backing of their PPG. Although these bills have little chance of being adopted, they successfully confirm the political orientations of their authors. As such, they show in concrete terms the differing intentions of the various political parties, notably those of the opposition parties (Maus 1985). The MPs also arrange for a right to speak distributed proportionally between the PPGs on the occasion of a general discussion of a legal text in plenary session. They intervene equally at the time of the discussions of the vote and at the closing of the debate (Maus 1985). They participate in the procedure of questions to the government. The questions are asked on Tuesday and Wednesday afternoons. These days are the most favourable of the week, because at this time almost all the ministers and MPs are in Paris. Within their time to speak, each PPG fixes the list of authors and themes of questions which are to be discussed. The question is asked and the minister concerned will reply. This mechanism allows the PPGs to control the interventions of their members in a way which best uses the time given. First established at the National Assembly, then at the Senate, this mechanism has known a certain success (Maus 1985).

Presidents of the PPGs are members of the 'presidents' conference' and as such participate in determining the order of the day, which takes into account the political wishes of the PPGs and the advancement of the commissions' works. The 'presidents' conference' has lost much of its importance since the order of the day was fixed as priority by the government. Moreover, the system of balance of votes means that the majority of the 'presidents' conference' members necessarily belong to the political majority of the National Assembly, and therefore to the government (Maus 1985). The presidents tend also to play the role of advisors in certain circumstances. For example, in 1994, Prime Minister E. Balladur invited the presidents of the PPGs to a meeting on the fight against corruption, which was held on 12 October 1994 (*Le Monde*, 14 October 1994). Subsequently, at the initiative of the President of the National Assembly, a working group composed of PPG presidents and representatives designated by

them, met from 13 to 17 November 1994 to study the modification of the current legislation on relations between money and political life.

Internal organisation of the PPG

There is only one document that deals with the formal internal organisation of PPGs: their statutes. However, the PPGs are not obliged to have statutes. The Communist group at the National Assembly, for example, has no statutes. Its internal organisation is governed directly by the EPO statute. But the internal organisation of other PPGs is governed by statutes. The statutes are relatively brief and have little influence on the actual functioning of PPGs. The statutes of the RPR group of the National Assembly are briefer still, having only eleven articles. All the PPGs are structured in the same way, following the statute of the National Assembly.

The groups meet at least once a week; generally on Tuesday. The statutes bestow great importance on these plenary meetings. In reality, and without exception, the PPG is not a decision-making body. The aim of the meetings is to define future parliamentary activity and to reunite the 'family'.

There is a formal hierarchy within the PPGs. The hierarchy comprises a president and a vice-president, both of whom are assisted by a *bureau*. The president is most often a seasoned parliamentarian, accustomed to the techniques of parliamentary work. Generally the leader of the PPG is not the leader of the EPO, nor the political leader of the party-as-a-whole. Traditionally the PPG president remains at the head of the group for several years. The election of the PPG leadership takes place at the beginning of the five-year legislature. There are two types of PPGs with regard to the designation of the president: those where the designation is open and those where it is not. If the PPG is part of a heterogeneous and moderately structured party, it practises an open designation which shows the divisions within the EPO. PPGs related to a homogenous and powerful party practise a formal vote which confirms the choice implemented by the direction of the EPO. There is generally only one candidate. The Gaullist, Socialist or Communist parliamentarians are generally informed of the choice they have to make rather than invited to participate.

The election of a PPG president was recently the cause of fierce battles in the heart of the groups. In the autumn of 1989, the election of a president of the UDF group in the National Assembly triggered a vicious competition between Francois Léotard and Charles Millon; the latter finally won. After the nomination to the government of Millon in May 1995, Gilles de Robien was elected against Claude Malhuret. The presidency of the RPR group in the National Assembly was also very coveted. In 1988, Bernard Pons carried a majority of only one vote against Phillipe Séguin; in 1995, Michel Péricard had to confront the candidacy of François Guillaume before winning it. The character of the election for the designation of a PPG president (disputed or not)

constitutes a good measure of the ability of a parliamentary group to present a united front on the occasion of an important vote.

PPGs have their own rules for the composition of their *bureaux*. It is at this level that political problems are highly apparent. The importance of the role of the RPR group *bureau* is demonstrated by the fact that the secretary general of the RPR assists with meetings of the *bureau* and acts as a liaison between the PPG and the EPO. It is in effect at this level that parliamentary strategies and tactics are elaborated. It is also the *bureau* which designates the group spokespersons. It is therefore up to the *bureau* to maintain a certain discipline within the group. This is not always easy in practice.

The secretary general of a PPG is a technical position under the authority of the *bureau*. He is charged with ensuring the smooth functioning of the group legislative activity and organising the interventions and the votes of the PPG. But there are some elements that question the formal hierarchy of PPGs: the seniority of a representative in the party as a whole (that is, the duration of the parliamentary mandate), expertise (acquired in parliamentary positions or in the government), and factionalism (the result of the division of the party into group around various party leaders). Moreover, many members of parliamentary groups are also locally elected members—notably mayors—or presidents of general or regional councils. They are therefore often absent, as they have a tendency to favour their local mandate. It must also be noted that, in accordance with the rule of incompatibility between parliamentary and governmental functions (Article 23 of the constitution), the ministers do not sit in parliament and are therefore not members of the PPGs. In all groups it is often the same spokesperson who speaks on the same subjects. Spokespersons (specialists in a certain policy area) are nominated by the *bureau* of the PPG to follow a draft proposal within a permanent commission and at the plenary meeting of the Assembly. The spokesperson's role is to check amendments submitted by members of his PPG, to coordinate the strategy of the PPG on the draft proposal and to intervene in plenary meetings on behalf of his PPG. It is often through their expertise, and the quality of their interventions, that parliamentarians become influential amongst their political colleagues. Each group has its specialists who rapidly become known as the indisputable authorities within the PPG in their respective policy domains (Carcassonne 1993).

There are also factions or informal networks within the PPGs. Some of them reflect the present divisions at the heart of the EPO. After the legislative elections of 14–21 June 1981, the socialist group comprised a perfect reflection of the political divisions of the time; this became apparent at the time of the preparation of the Socialist congress in Metz in 1979 (Hanley 1982). The UDF, which is a confederation of parties with different political traditions (liberalism v. statism, social-Christian v. secular, etc.) has set up a PPG which reflects the opposition between the different parties of the confederation (Démocratic Libérale, Force Démocrate, Parti Radical, Parti Populaire pour la Démocratic Franchise). Démocratic Libérale has even instituted a new autonomous PPG since 1998. The RPR group of the National Assembly is also divided.

Some PPGs—namely the Socialist and Communist groups—practise a disciplined vote. For the RPR group, this only applies in certain cases, at the discretion of the *bureau* and confirmed by the group, whereas the freedom of vote is traditional for the UDF group. Parliamentary rebellions have become rare. They happen more often in the right-wing parties than on the left. But there is now a high level of unanimity among MPs belonging to the same PPG. This homogeneity seems to have increased in recent years (Avril and Gicquel 1988). The discipline is not forced upon the PPG, but in case of resistance the government can use the blocked-vote procedure or that of Article 49–3 of the constitution, which are disciplinary instruments primarily used against the PPGs of the governmental majority.

Position of the individual representative

Among the rights of the parliamentarians, one must distinguish between those which are exercised individually and those which are exercised collectively. The deputies cannot challenge the government individually, nor address the Constitutional Council on their own. According to Article 49–2 of the constitution, a motion of censure is not admissible unless it is signed by one-tenth of the members of the National Assembly. The submission to the Constitutional Council by the MPs requires the signatures of sixty deputies or sixty senators. The implementation of these rights is in fact reserved for the PPGs.

The parliamentarians in both the National Assembly and the Senate also have individual rights. They have the right to initiate legislation (Article 39 of the constitution) and the right to amend (Article 44). They can also question the government (oral questions to the government, written questions) in order to control its actions. However, in practice, these rights are often exercised collectively. Thus, Article 16 of the statutes of the RPR group in the National Assembly states that PPG members cannot introduce private bills, resolutions or oral questions to the *bureau* of the National Assembly without the consent of the PPG *bureau*. The same holds for written questions, and every amendment with political significance. The Communist and the Socialist groups work in the same way.

The MPs have material means at their disposal for fulfilling their mandate. The principle of the parliamentary salary was established by the constitution as early as 1848. At the time, this was an important democratic advance, since it made it possible for any citizen to exercise a parliamentary mandate. However, salary was also intended to shield the parliamentarians from possible temptation and pressure. In concrete terms, the parliamentary salary went up to 30,600 francs a month as of 1 January 1994. The entire salary has been made subject to tax since 1992. Furthermore, the parliamentarians receive aid in the form of personnel, since they benefit from the support of three parliamentary assistants, who are directly employed by the assembly, and one or two secretaries, who they can

employ thanks to the grant for typing assistance which is given to them. They also receive some material benefits (an office at rue de l'Université, hotel accommodation at rue Saint-Dominique, paid postage, free telephone communications, and free travel by railway or by air between Paris and their constituencies).

Relations with the extra-parliamentary party organisation

The reciprocal relations between the EPO and its PPG, as well as between the leaders of the party-as-a-whole and the parliamentarians of that party, constitute an essential element in analysing the problems of leadership within the political parties, even if many leaders amass their elective mandates in the country, and their leadership positions in the party-as-a-whole consequently depend to a certain degree on this local basis.

The statutes of the political parties more or less determine how strong the ties are between the EPO and the PPG. At one extreme, one finds the case of the UDF, whose statutes contain practically nothing on the PPG. After the 1988 legislative elections, the deputies with the CDS label preferred to have a certain autonomy, because they wanted to be able to reply to a possible desire for an *ouverture* towards the centrist parties of the President of the Republic, François Mitterrand, and Prime Minister Michel Rocard. They therefore established a new group, Union du Centre, which remained in existence until the end of the legislative term, but which disappeared after the legislative elections of 1993. The statutes of the UDF mention only that the National Council of the EPO is made up of six representatives of the group from the National Assembly and six representatives from the Senate. The president of the PPG in the National Assembly possesses a large margin for manoeuvring, to the point of appearing like a second leader of the UDF. He represents the confederation most notably in the heart of various liaison or coordination committees of the right-wing parties during the candidate selection for the legislative elections.

The RPR finds itself in a similar situation. Its statutes, too, contain no provision for PPGs. It mentions only that the presidents of Gaullist PPGs in the National Assembly and the Senate figure among the members of the political *bureau* of the EPO. But the PPGs and their presidents often show their desire to be informed and to participate in discussion meetings on the elaboration of the political line of movement. The presidents of the PPGs demand a rather large degree of autonomy to resist the pressures of leaders of the party-as-a-whole.

The statutes of the PS are the most complete with respect to the PPG. They stipulate that the PPG cannot commit the party as-a-whole without its consent. The Socialist parliamentarians accept the party line and conform to its tactics. They must respect the rule of voting discipline in their group or be subject to the following sanctions: a public or private warning, a reprimand, temporary suspension, or exclusion from all delegations. The statutes of the PS also mention that the Socialist groups can deliberate and vote in common with the

executive committee of the EPO at the request of one or the other. The decision is made by a simple majority from each of the two colleges. This allows the EPO to balance its PPG, although it must be kept in mind that the leaders of the EPO are deputies at the same time. This mechanism, consequently, allows for strict control. The procedures combine the PPG with the EPO decisions, be it by consultation or by direct participation in the authority of the decision. It is difficult for the PPG to resist the very strong hold of the EPO and to impose an independent point of view.

The Communist Party statutes contain only some brief provisions for the parliamentarians and their groups. In particular they mention that the Communist deputies are militants like the other party members with the same rights and duties. Their activities are considered to be inseparable from the action of the working class and the people. The mandate the MP possesses is at the disposal of the party. At the National Assembly and the Senate, the Communist parliamentarians constitute a group which elects its leadership in agreement with the central committee. None of the Communist parliamentarians sit in the executive committee of the EPO. Communist parliamentarians must pay back the whole of their 'indemnity' to the party treasury; the party then gives them a salary that equals that of a qualified worker. However, a phenomenon of 'personnel union' (the fulfilment of several functions by the same person) has progressively appeared. Numerous party leaders have won parliamentary seats and are sitting in parliament. They do not personally direct the group, but they have an undeniable influence. The president of the Communist PPG is in a position to ensure the liaison and the development of this influence.

The presidents (or secretaries general) of the EPOs do not take part in the meetings of PPGs, unless they are members as deputies or senators. It is difficult to define the leader of a French political party. It is necessary to answer two questions in order to obtain an answer: the first is, does the party belong to a governmental majority or is it in opposition? If it is part of the majority, the next question is: is it the 'party of the President' or not? The political leader of an opposition party is often the head of the EPO.

On the other hand, the political leader of a majority party is either the President of the Republic (one then speaks of 'the party of the President') or the Prime Minister or one of the other ministers. However, one of the essential rules of French political life since the beginning of the Fifth Republic is the separation of the functions of the executive (presidential or governmental) and the functions of the party-as-a-whole. But this rule is being attacked more and more often. The example of Alain Juppé, who was Prime Minister and president of the EPO of the RPR at the same time, illustrates the new tendency towards an accumulation of functions.

The selection procedures for candidates for the legislative elections are taken care of by the EPOs. However, because of the characteristics of the French electoral system, these organisations are under pressure from the PPGs or their presidents. Indeed, the electoral system is a two-round voting system in small

electoral constituencies which favour candidates who are well established locally. Therefore, the influence of the local level in the EPOs is important in the selection of candidates.

Relations with the government

The parliament is the place where the majority PPGs and the government meet and establish ties. The Colbert Room symbolises this place at the Palais Bourbon. However, the government tends to limit the field of initiative of majority PPGs. In general, PPGs do not interfere greatly with governmental affairs, such as the formulation of the governmental policy. The government thus favours its links with the parliamentarians who support it, but it rarely meets the parliamentarians in opposition. This liaison is ensured at several levels. The Prime Minister's cabinet has an important unit that specifically deals with parliamentary affairs. There is often a minister in charge of the relations with parliament; this minister coordinates the preparation and monitoring of parliamentary sessions. The Prime Minister himself has regular contact with the presidents and the principal representatives of the majority PPGs (Ardant 1991). The Prime Minister must also frequently respond during the sessions with the parliamentarians to explain the government's policy. This is why he is often called 'majority leader' (Chagnollaude and Quermonne 1991). Whether or not he is recognised as the 'majority leader', the Prime Minister must continually deal with majority PPGs. He must explain, plead, convince and fight to maintain their support without which he cannot govern (Ardant 1991).

The liaison with the majority PPGs shows up especially in legislative work. The government sometimes shows its desire to play the parliamentary game to its fullest extent—to strictly associate the majority groups with the action of the government—within certain limits. It accepts the legislative modifications as long as the presidential or governmental commitments are preserved. The government accepts, however, the parliamentary amendments of majority PPGs more easily, of which certain ones are destined to improve the text without contradicting its objectives, whereas others are adopted that do not respect these objectives. The liaison with the majority PPGs also applies to the exercise of parliamentary control. The questions on Tuesday and Wednesday from the majority PPGs are prepared in strict liaison with the Prime Minister's cabinet. When the criticism is too severe, the government can regain control of the majority PPGs by using the blocked vote or Article 49–3. The blocked-vote procedure allows the government to ask the Assembly to state its views by a consensus vote on one part or on the whole of the discussed text. The procedure of Article 49–3 allows the government to engage its responsibility in voting on the text: the text is considered to be adopted if a motion of censure is not approved by the deputies. In practice, the government is driven to use these two mechanisms, not because of difficulties with the opposition,

but because of the resistance it meets inside the PPGs of its own majority (Maus 1985). In particular, this procedure has turned into an instrument in the hands of the heads of the government who, with a narrow majority or without a majority, must find support in order to adopt their texts. Raymond Barre (1976–81), Michel Rocard, Edith Cresson and Pierre Bérégovoy (1988–93) are all examples of Prime Ministers who have used the procedure. However, in political life in the Fifth Republic, Prime Ministers have regularly had difficulties in their relations with majority groups, but this has not led to governmental crises, except in 1962. Limited disagreements do not jeopardise the adhesion to governmental politics. The heads of the government can take action, on the main points at least, without having continually to bring up the question of confidence to count on the support of PPGs and to fuse the majority.

The liaison with the PPGs in opposition is more difficult. They strive to use all the resources given by the constitution and the statutes of parliament, either to voice their opposition to the bill on the table or to delay the voting. In certain cases, judged politically important, the groups in opposition may harden and adopt an attitude of obstruction. The government is not lacking in means to overcome such obstruction. It can use the body of prerogatives which it has with respect to parliamentary work. It can in particular use Article 49–3, not, this time, to reinforce the cohesion of its majority, but to hasten the vote on a text. According to Article 23 of the constitution ‘the functions of a member of the government are incompatible with the exercise of any parliamentary mandate’. It is a matter of infringing one of the essential principles of the parliamentary system, according to which the ministers are chosen from within the parliament. In 1958, General de Gaulle and Michel Debré did not hide their intentions to put an end to the ‘confusion of powers’ which, according to them, was the mark of the Fourth Republic. One of their fundamental concerns was to put an end to the ‘regime of parties’. This is the reason why the deputies and senators who join the government must abandon their seats in parliament.

The importance and the frequency of meetings between the PPG and the PiG depend strictly on the political context. These relations are weak when the right-wing parties are in power, since the PiG only plays a small part in the elaboration of policies. The relations are somewhat more important when the left-wing parties are in power. However, there must be no mistake about it: under the Fifth Republic, it is the President of the Republic and/or the Prime Minister who are the leaders of the parliamentary majority.

François Mitterrand always made sure that he placed one of his loyal associates at the head of the socialist PPG in the National Assembly (Pierre Joxe, André Billardon, Louis Mermaz, Jean Auroux). Jacques Chirac did the same thing after his election when he appointed Michel Péricard to take over the direction of the RPR group. However, it is actually the responsibility of the Prime Minister to coordinate the action of the parliamentary majority under the Fifth Republic. When the left-wing parties were in power during the 1980s, the

Prime Minister made sure that he brought together the ‘heavyweights’ of the Socialist Party, which included the leaders of the PPG and the EPO.

Relations with interest groups

In France the function of the state is to stand above private interests and to embody the ‘general interest’. It is even a fundamental point in the institutional doctrine of the Gaullists: in 1958, de Gaulle’s primary intention was to restore the authority of the state that had been undermined by the war in Algeria and the ‘regime of parties’. As far as the institutions are concerned, that intention was translated into the prohibition provision of Article 27–1 of the constitution, according to which delegated office is forbidden. Article 79 of the statutes of the National Assembly is even more explicit: no deputies are permitted to ‘join an association or a group for the defence of private, regional or professional interests or to subscribe to a commitment concerning one’s own parliamentary activity, when this affiliation or commitment implies the acceptance of a *mandat impératif*. Article 23 of the standing orders of the National Assembly also prohibits the forming of groups for the defence of private, regional or professional interests within the assembly. Therefore, interest groups have no official representation in parliament. There are no seats reserved for representatives from interest groups within the PPGs.

However, this assertion should be qualified, since reality is more complicated. Despite the provisions of Articles 23 and 79 of the statutes of the National Assembly, the deputies are allowed, with the agreement of the *bureau* of the Assembly, to form groups in order to look into a certain problem. There are today more than eighty groups within the National Assembly that are officially recognised. In general, the political parties are anxious to treat their voters carefully. The right-wing parties always listen attentively to the complaints of the farmers, the doctors or the private schools. State schools have important contacts in the left-wing parties.

Finally, it must not be forgotten that the deputies are particularly sensitive to the interests of the voters in their own constituencies: the interests of the wine-growers, for example, are well defended by the representatives of the wine-producing *départements*. In this way, the well-organised interest groups, found throughout the country, manage to find allies on all the benches of the chamber. This is also the case for war veterans, who have a powerful network of associations and are capable of making themselves heard by a majority of the parliamentarians.

The role of the PPGs in cabinet formation

The leaders of the PPGs do not take any part in the formation of the government. Apart from periods of *cohabitation* (when the President is in political opposition

to the majority in the National Assembly), the government is in fact formed by the President of the Republic and the Prime Minister (Article 8 of the constitution). Various factors contribute to the explanation of this phenomenon. First, the Fifth Republic is a majority parliamentary system. Contrary to what happened during the Third and the Fourth Republics, there is normally only a single kind of majority possible within the National Assembly. As a result, there is no reason to start negotiations in order to define the makeup of the parliamentary majority. Second, it is a multi-party political system. Under these conditions, and contrary to what happens in countries where the two-party system reigns, the leaders of the PPGs do not play a dominant political role. It must be emphasised that no Prime Minister during the Fifth Republic has previously been the leader of a PPG. Finally, the importance of the President of the Republic in the political field must be reiterated. With the strength of his personal electoral legitimacy, he is the one who in the final analysis defines the shape of the government and decides whether or not to appoint a political personality to the government.

During a period of *cohabitation*, the President plays a lesser role. The Prime Minister forms his government, but the precedents of 1986, 1993 and 1997 show that he should include more of the different components of the new majority when forming it. However, it is the EPOs and not the leaders of the PPGs that are then consulted by the Prime Minister when the new governmental team is formed. One factor in particular underlines the weaker role of the PPGs in the procedure of forming a government. After the legislative elections, the government is formed before the first meeting of the National Assembly; when the PPGs are forming themselves and nominating their leaders, the government has already started to work.

By virtue of Article 49–1 of the constitution, the Prime Minister commits the government as a whole to the support of his programme. This programme is drawn up by the Prime Minister and his cabinet at the prime minister's office at the Hotel Matignon, sometimes on the basis of notes that the new ministers have put together. Apart from periods of *cohabitation*, the programme is traditionally submitted by the Prime Minister to the President of the Republic, who may request some corrections. But the PPGs are hardly included in the development of the programme.

The role of PPGs in decision-making on policy questions

The PPGs play a minor role in the decision-making process for most public policies. The carrying out of the vote on bills necessary for the implementation of public policies is the responsibility of the government—either directly, or through the majority PPGs. The government actually has a decisive influence within the parliament. However, even in the case of a disciplined and submissive majority, the government must constantly take the opinion of the members of the majority PPGs into account. Otherwise it risks a rebellion among the

backbenchers. The bills from the PPGs are numerous, but they rarely succeed since it is the government that makes full use of the necessary administrative means for the elaboration of legislative texts. The PPGs participate fully in exercising the right of amendment. Indeed, they can multiply the amendments in order to change government bills. The parliamentarians are helped by assistants of the PPGs in the preparation and the drafting of these amendments, either in committee or in open session.

A general assessment

After the Revolution of 1789, the republican tradition of representation made the parliament the sole representative of the people. The latter expresses its opinion through the deputies. There is no difference between the will of the people and the will of parliament. Parliament, therefore, is invested with a sovereign power. All the other organs of the state, from the government downwards, are logically subordinate.

The constitution of the Fifth Republic, however, implemented a rationalised parliamentary system, which is expressed through protecting the mechanisms of government at the expense of parliamentary liberty. This was a reaction to the drift towards the *régime d'assemblée* which characterised the Third and the Fourth Republics. If one adds to that the election of the President by universal suffrage and the unexpected emergence of the majority phenomenon, one comes to the conclusion that the parliament now plays a reduced role. The direct election of the President has instituted another expression of the will of the people. The function of representative is no longer granted exclusively to the French National Assembly, which henceforth shares it with the executive. The decline of the French parliament has also directly caused the progressive weakening of the government's responsibility to parliament which has been replaced by its responsibility to the President of the Republic, which makes the government more attentive to the President's will than to parliamentary opinion.

5 Not yet the locus of power

Parliamentary party groups in Austria

Wolfgang C.Müller and Barbara Steininger

Introduction

As in most European countries, parliamentary party groups (PPGs), which are traditionally called ‘parliamentary clubs’ in Austria, existed before extraparlimentary mass parties. Internally-created parties monopolized the Austrian parliament until 1897 when all male citizens were granted voting rights in a fifth voting body (*Kurie*). As a consequence of this, mass parties began to establish themselves in parliament. Democratization of the electoral law was eventually completed in 1918. With elections being general, equal, free, direct and secret, it was no longer possible to win and maintain parliamentary representation without an effective extra-parliamentary organization (EPO). Politics became pure party politics. Political parties, in turn, had several ‘faces’, with the PPG being part and parcel of the ‘party in public office’ face (Katz and Mair 1993:594). Parties differed to the extent to which they were able to integrate their various faces and make them speak with one voice (cf. Duverger 1959:182ff). Leaving aside the tiny Communist Party, the Social Democrats undoubtedly rank first in terms of ‘unifying’ their ‘faces’ and they did so under the leadership of the central party executive committee. For the general public, and also for professional observers, politics in the inter-war and post-war periods has been a game (or war) between political parties. They may have been acting in different arenas but they were still the same actors.

From this perspective, the PPGs did not constitute a relevant focus for analysis for several reasons. First, the dominance of the extra-parliamentary party organization (EPO), and the central party office in particular, over the PPG made the former rather than the latter a relevant topic for analysis. Second, the dominance of the executive over the legislature suggested that whatever the PPGs were doing would be largely irrelevant. What role could they possibly play if the vast majority of bills emanated from government and most were enacted in an unamended form? While these features may apply to most European parties, they were particular strong in Austria, where the Social Democratic Party (SPÖ) and the People’s Party (ÖVP) have built the strongest EPOs of their respective political families. As we will see, the composition of the PPGs still reflect this

heritage. Finally, the role of parliament was reduced by the corporatist channel through which a large number of the bills in the social and economic areas were processed. Again there was no *a priori* reason to think of the PPGs as relevant actors.

The existing scholarship reflects this reasoning. There is only one chapter in the political science literature focusing on the PPGs, and this is quite dated now (Fischer 1974). Party research and parliamentary research have largely been conducted in splendid isolation. Party research has hardly moved into the parliamentary arena. Parliamentary research, in turn, has treated political parties as unitary actors and has not tried to look behind the parties' largely uniform appearance when voting on the floor of the House. But the PPGs potentially merit another look for a number of reasons.

First, since 1983 Austria has moved from the single-party government of the late 1960s and 1970s back to coalition government. In contrast to the expectations of many observers, parliament is more lively (and relevant) under the 'grand coalition' government of the Social Democrats and the People's Party than ever before since 1945 (Müller 1993). This has much to do with the strengthening of the opposition parties since 1986 (see Table 5.1). However, it also relates to the dynamics within the two traditional major parties, the Social Democrats and the People's Party. Corporatism has declined and parliament no longer rubber-stamps government proposals. Coalition government potentially puts a strain on PPGs because government policies are necessarily based on compromises which may be difficult to accept from the point of view of an individual party.

Second, the 1992 electoral law and intra-party primaries in the major parties make MPs more accountable to their constituencies. While maintaining a system of proportional representation, this reform has increased the number of electoral

Table 5.1 Parliamentary seats per party, 1975–1997 (N=183)

	1975	1979	1983	1986	1990	1994	1995	1997 ^a
SPÖ	93	95	90	80	80	65	71	71
ÖVP	80	77	81	77	60	52	53	52
FPÖ	10	11	12	18	33	42	40	42
Greens	—	—	—	8	10	13	9	9
Liberal Forum	—	—	—	—	—	11	10	9

Notes

a an 1996 the Freedom Party gained two seats, one from the People's Party in a partial repetition of the 1995 election and one from the Liberal Forum by an MP crossing the floor.

SPÖ, Sozialdemokratische (Sozialistische) Partei Österreichs (Social Democratic (Socialist until 1991) Party of Austria).

ÖVP, Österreichische Volkspartei (Austrian People's Party).

FPÖ, Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs (Freedom Party of Austria).

Greens, Die Grüne Alternative (Die Grünen) (Greens).

Liberal Forum, Liberales Forum (Liberal Forum).

districts from nine to forty-three and has strengthened intra-party preference voting (Müller 1996; Müller and Scheucher 1994). This potentially undermines the cohesion of the PPGs.

Legal status

In the monarchy (before 1918), parliamentary clubs were of practical importance but they were neither mentioned nor legally regulated in the parliamentary rules of procedure or in any other legal document. The same holds true for most of the First Republic (the inter-war period). It was not until 1932 that the parliamentary rules of procedure mentioned ‘parliamentary unions or groups’ (*parlamentarische Vereinigungen oder Verbände*) and gave them the crucial role in selecting and deselecting the members of parliamentary committees.¹ In 1948 an amendment to the parliamentary rules of procedure² mentioned ‘parties’ briefly when regulating situations in which the three presidents of the parliament cannot carry out the functions of their offices.³ In 1961 a major revision of parliamentary rules of procedure formally recognized and to some extent regulated PPGs.⁴ In 1973 PPGs also received indirect constitutional recognition. An amendment to Article 30 entitled the president of the Nationalrat to assign public personnel to the PPGs (Fischer 1974:117).

The substance of the PPGs’ regulation stems from the 1961 reform of the parliamentary rules of procedure. Its text has remained unchanged since then:

MPs who belong to the same electoral party (*wahlwerbenden Partei*) have the right to form a parliamentary club. The recognition of a parliamentary club requires a minimum of five MPs. MPs who do not belong to the same electoral party can form a parliamentary club if the Nationalrat approves it.

The precise meaning of this paragraph was extensively discussed in 1993, when five MPs split from the Freedom Party to establish themselves as a new PPG, the Liberal Forum (Liberales Forum).⁵ These MPs claimed that they had belonged to the same electoral party—the Freedom Party—and therefore were entitled to form a PPG without the approval of the Nationalrat (i.e. a majority of the Nationalrat). This claim was rejected by the Freedom Party which threatened to artificially divide itself into several PPGs (and thereby increase its income from state subsidies) if the Liberal Forum’s claim was accepted. After a lively legal and political debate the president of parliament decided not to reject the Liberal Forum’s claim, thus implicitly recognizing it as a ‘parliamentary club’.⁶ This decision was upheld by the constitutional court.

What are the implications of having the status of a ‘parliamentary club’?⁷ Since 1932, the PPGs have exercised a monopoly in selecting and deselecting committee members. The Nationalrat only decides upon the number of committee members and their deputies. These positions are distributed among the PPGs according to their strength.⁸ MPs who do not belong to a PPG are

excluded from committee membership. Individual committee members and deputy members are considered to be elected once their names have been given to the president of parliament by the respective PPG.⁹ The PPGs can withdraw their nominations for committee membership at any time. Since 1975 the parliamentary minutes of procedure are explicit about this. They also provide for automatic retirement from committees of those MPs who are no longer members of the PPG which nominated them. The PPGs also have an important position in the plenary proceedings.¹⁰ Since 1975 the rules of procedure guarantee each PPG at least one seat on investigation committees (Fischer 1997:104).

The numerical strengthening of parliamentary opposition parties since the mid-1980s and their sometimes excessive use of parliamentary instruments has also contributed to giving the PPGs a stronger position in the rules of procedure. Since 1993 parliamentary time has increasingly been allocated to PPGs rather than individual MPs. Under these rules, attempts at filibustering by numerically strong opposition parties, in particular the Freedom Party, are contained. They can no longer exceed the ‘bloc speaking time’ by mobilizing most or all of their MPs.

PPGs participate in the presidial committee of the Nationalrat. This committee consists of the three presidents of the parliament and the leaders of the PPGs. Formally the presidial committee is only an advisory body to the first president of the parliament. *De facto*, however, it functions as a parliamentary steering committee in which consensual decision-making is the rule (Widder 1979; Fischer 1997:105). Representation on this committee is therefore very important.

Finally, the status of a ‘parliamentary club’ provides access to crucial resources: space in parliamentary buildings, personnel and finance.

Resources

Before 1963 the PPGs relied entirely on financial contributions from their members. In the last two or three decades the People’s Party MPs have paid 5 per cent of their salaries before tax, the Social Democratic MPs 7 per cent. In 1996 the Social Democrats reduced this contribution to 3.5 per cent in order to increase the readiness of its MPs to accept cuts in the income of politicians. In both traditional parties, MPs also pay contributions to the extra-parliamentary organization. Similarly, the Freedom Party generates a relevant share of its party income from ‘party taxes’. The Freedom Party MPs pay 12 per cent to their PPG (Sickinger 1997; 117). The Green MPs contribute an unspecified portion of their income to a special fund to be used to support citizen initiatives and other projects.

In 1963 the very first step in introducing public party finance was taken. The PPGs were the only permanent and constitutionally implicitly acknowledged ‘faces’ of political parties.¹¹ At this time the EPOs had been mentioned only negatively in the constitution (as amended in 1929), in that

their functionaries and members were excluded from becoming members of the constitutional court. In contrast, electoral parties were constitutionally recognized, but they were seen as being constituted just for participating in specific elections, thus lacking permanence. Since 1963 the scope of state subsidies was extended to the political parties' educational institutions (in 1972) and the EPOs (in 1975) (both were legally recognized for that purpose) and gradually increased (Müller 1992a:115–17; Sickinger 1997). Simultaneously the state subsidies to the PPGs were increased. In so doing political parties proved full of ideas for coming up with new good causes to claim public money. Table 5.2 provides the details.

Since 1970, state subsidies to the PPGs have been increased by more than 2,000 per cent in real terms. The absolute amount spent on PPGs was more than ATS 157 million in 1995 (roughly US\$ 14 million). Applying the rules specified in Table 5.2, the Social Democrats got ATS 44.6 million, the People's Party 35.9 million, the Freedom Party 35.2 million, and the Greens and the Liberal Forum 18.8 million each. In addition to this financial support, public employees of parliament and government departments are 'lent' to the PPGs. In 1996 they totalled fifty-two, thirty-nine of whom were university graduates. Both developments, increasing financial and personnel support, have allowed the PPGs to increase their staffs considerably. In 1996 the Social Democrats's PPG had a total of forty-six staff members. The corresponding figures are forty-six for the People's Party, twenty-three for the Freedom Party, nineteen for the Greens and fourteen for the Liberal Forum.

Access to the staff of the PPGs has traditionally reflected their internal hierarchy. While those in leadership positions have been (relatively) well served, backbenchers have mostly had to rely on themselves. Some of them have been able to compensate for the lack of genuinely parliamentary resources by

Table 5.2 Rules for state subsidies to PPGs in 1995

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- 1 Each PPG is granted the annual salary of four university-trained civil servants and four typists (ATS 3,090,248).
 - 2 Each PPG is granted the annual salary of two university-trained civil servants (ATS 1,020,544) for each full or partial ten MPs (Nationalrat).
 - 3 Each PPG is granted the annual salary of two university-trained civil servants (ATS 1,020,544) for every ten (full or partial) members of the Bundesrat.
 - 4 A 90 per cent increase for public relations is paid on top of (1), (2) and (4).
 - 5 Each PPG which is represented on parliamentary committees is granted the annual salary of four university-trained civil servants (ATS 2,041,088).
 - 6 PPGs with more than ten MPs additionally receive the annual salary of two university-trained civil servants (ATS 1,020,544) for every (full or partial) twenty MPs.
 - 7 Each PPG receives a 25 per cent increase (on top of (1), (2), and (3)) for computer equipment and personnel.
 - 8 Each PPG receives a 15 per cent increase (on top of (1), (2), and (3)) for international relations.
-

drawing on those of interest groups. This, of course, has strengthened corporatism. In 1992 a new law was introduced which, for the first time, provided resources not for the PPGs but for individual MPs. Each MP is allowed to spend a relatively modest amount of money on personnel. Under this law MPs are free to choose for what purpose they spend their money: secretarial assistance, research, assistance in the electoral district. In practice many MPs have joined forces with one or more of their colleagues. Pooling their resources allows them to get a share of all these services (Schwimmer 1992; Pointner 1994:208–10).

Internal organisation

The internal life of PPGs is not regulated by law. The Social Democrats and the People's Party have also refrained from regulating it by statutes for most of the post-war period. In both parties several attempts have been made to enact a PPG statute. All of them came to nothing in the People's Party, although a guide to parliament and the PPG was worked out and accepted by the *Klubpräsidium* in 1995 (*Vademecum*). The Social Democrats ultimately adopted a statute in March 1996. According to sources close to the leadership of the PPGs, many attempts at statute-making failed because a statute would mean a loss of 'flexibility', i.e. it would constrain leaders. Both the Social Democrats and the People's Party have nevertheless developed quite stable conventions for the governance of their PPGs. The People's Party applies the parliamentary rules of procedure to internal elections. The PPG of the Liberal Forum does not have a statute so far. In contrast, the PPGs of the Freedom Party and the Greens have had statutes more or less since they established themselves in parliament.

Membership

All PPGs include the MPs of both chambers of parliament, the Nationalrat and the Bundesrat (if they have seats in this chamber). The Bundesrat, the representation of the Länder in parliament, has few formal powers and when issues emerge on its agenda they have generally already been decided on politically (Müller 1992b). Since there are no separate decision-making mechanisms for the Nationalrat and the Bundesrat, the participation of the members of the Bundesrat in the PPG potentially provides them with more influence than their formal positions. In practice, however, this has not proved relevant.

In terms of membership, the Austrian PPGs deviate slightly from the Heidar and Koole definition put forward in the introduction to this book in that they include members who do not belong to either of the two chambers of parliament. Since 1995, when Austria acceded to the European Union, the MEPs have been full members of the PPGs.¹² In addition, all PPGs include the cabinet

members from their party. In the Social Democratic Party they were given voting rights in 1996. Finally, all parties include the holders of central party offices. In the People's Party the party statute granted membership and voting rights to the party chairperson and general secretary in 1972. (Before this date the incumbents of these offices always were MPs in the Nationalrat.) Traditionally other leading party politicians have also participated in the plenary meeting of the People's Party PPG (Fischer 1974:139). In the Social Democratic Party the members of the EPO's leadership bodies traditionally have the right to participate in the meetings of the PPG in an advisory capacity. The statute of the Freedom Party PPG does not have provisions which extend membership beyond MPs. However, the chairman of the EPO (who did not have a parliamentary seat before 1966 and between 1989 and 1992) participated in its meetings whenever it seemed appropriate to him. The statute of the Greens has provided for the participation of two representatives of the party executive committee since 1990. Together they have one vote. Furthermore the employees of the PPG and the individual MPs can participate in the meetings of the PPG without voting rights. In practice, the addition of 'big shots' such as senior EPO office-holders has eased the transmission of EPO leadership positions to the PPG.

Internal divisions

Internal divisions are most visible in the PPG of the People's Party. The People's Party is an indirect party (cf. Duverger 1959) with the Farmers' League (ÖBB), the Business League (ÖWB) and the Workers' and Employees' League (ÖAAB) as its constituent units (Müller and Steininger 1994). It is these leagues which have traditionally dominated recruitment to parliament (Stirnemann 1989). In the 1970s, the party's women, youth and pensioners' organizations were formally given the same status as the leagues, with all six officially called constituent organizations (*Teilorganisationen*) since then. A 10 per cent quota for the party chairperson in nominating parliamentary candidates to 'eligible' places (since 1980) and open primaries in recent years¹³ have somewhat reduced the capacity of the leagues to control parliamentary recruitment. However, they nevertheless still constitute the main pathway to parliament. The strength of the leagues has varied over the post-war period. The Workers' and Employees' League held around 35 per cent of the seats until the mid-1970s. From then on its share gradually increased to 51 per cent in 1995. The Farmers' League occupied between 35 and 42 per cent of the seats until the mid-1970s. Since then it has gradually dropped to 23 per cent in 1995. The Business League always held between 21 and 29 per cent of the People's Party seats. In 1995 it was 26 per cent.¹⁴

The People's Party leagues are not only relevant for recruitment to parliament. They have also been traditionally organized within it. Each of the leagues has constituted itself as a separate 'club' or 'working group' within the framework of the People's Party PPG: the agrarian club, the business club, and

the ÖAAB club. These clubs comprise all MPs and cabinet members of the respective league. MPs who have not made a 'typical' career via one of the leagues nevertheless join one of these clubs in order to improve their standing in the PPG. The clubs in turn are eager to recruit MPs and cabinet members. Important representatives of the corresponding interest organizations who have no seat in parliament regularly participate in the meetings of the leagues' clubs. The clubs elect their own chairpersons. More often than not the leadership of the leagues and of their club in the PPG of the People's Party are held by different people.

The leagues' clubs play an important role in the distribution of parliamentary positions and tasks within the People's Party PPG. It is a convention that their chairpersons are elected deputy leaders of the PPG and that they are proportionally represented in its leadership bodies (Fischer 1974:136). Committee seats are distributed among and through the leagues' clubs. They select the MPs for service in parliamentary committees. Similarly, the selection of speakers for plenary debates has to take into account the league affiliation of MPs. If a particular league has a special interest in a specific policy area, the majority of committee members and plenary speakers are recruited from it. So the Farmers' League dominates the People's Party delegation in the Agricultural Committee. The same holds true for the Business League and the Trade Committee and the Workers' and Employees' League and the Social Policy Committee, respectively.

Meetings of the leagues' clubs are scheduled before each of the meetings of the full PPG. Recently conducted interviews and minutes dating from the second half of the 1960s suggest that these clubs play a crucial role in internal decision-making in the People's Party PPG. During these meetings the leadership provides details about intra-party decision-making and contacts with the government. Parliamentary tasks are distributed, ensuring that the 'club' is represented in all parliamentary activities. Particular attention is given to the special interests of the respective leagues. Thus the agrarian club, for instance, reviews policies which are in the pipeline from the point of view of the farmers. It also receives reports from cabinet ministers if the People's Party is in government. Since the government departments which are closest to the special interests of a particular league are as a rule held by one of the leagues' representatives, the minister routinely attends the meetings of the club. The exchange between the minister and the MPs is very much an internal debate. The agrarian 'club' is generally considered to be the most relevant as regards control over its members.

The People's Party leagues are also important actors in the corporatist arena. They dominate or play an important role in the internal politics of the compulsory interest organizations which make up Austria's chamber system. The Business League dominates the Chamber of Business, the Farmers' League the Chambers of Agriculture while the Workers' and Employees' League is the second force in the interest organizations of employees, the Chamber of Labour, and in the Trade Union Congress (ÖGB). The latter two interest organizations

are dominated by the Social Democratic Trade Unionists (FSG). The FSG plays an important role in the recruitment of Social Democrats MPs, a quota of which always goes to it. In contrast to the People's Party leagues, however, the FSG MPs do not have a separate organisation within the PPG of the Social Democrats.

Formal structure and internal decision-making

The agenda of the PPGs is determined by the agenda of the Nationalrat. In all PPGs the highest decision-making authority rests with the plenary meeting of all members. This body elects a chairman (*Klubobmann*) or chairwoman (*Klubobfrau*) and up to three deputy leaders. As already mentioned, it is a convention in the People's Party that the leaders of the leagues' clubs are elected to these offices. The smaller PPGs (the Freedom Party before 1994, the Greens and the Liberal Forum), do without further leadership bodies. In contrast, the Social Democrats and People's Party PPGs, which at one time comprised more than eighty or ninety Nationalrat and about thirty Bundesrat MPs, have a more elaborate formal structure. Both have a large and a small leadership body. The small leadership body in the case of the Social Democrats is called *Klubpräsidium*, in the case of the People's Party its name is *Klubvorstand*. Until 1986 the Social Democrats' *Klubpräsidium* consisted of the PPG leader, his deputies and the representative of the Social Democrats in the parliamentary presidium. Since then the president of the parliament no longer participated as a formal member of the *Klubpräsidium*. The larger leadership body of the Social Democrats' PPG, the *Klubvorstand*, comprises about twenty members and is elected by the plenary meeting. It includes the officials which constitute the *Klubpräsidium* and leading party functionaries (party chairperson, central secretary) (Fischer 1974:136). The People's Party *Klubvorstand* by convention comprises the PPG leader, his (or her) deputies, the treasurer, and the protocolist; all are elected to their respective offices by the plenary meeting. The larger leadership body, the People's Party *Klubpräsidium*, consists of these office-holders and an additional ten MPs who are elected by the plenary meeting. In 1994, when the Freedom Party had reached its then all-time high in terms of parliamentary seats (forty-two in the Nationalrat and twelve in the Bundesrat), the Freedom Party PPG also established a small leadership body, the *Klubvorstand*. It consists of the leader of the PPG, his deputies, the Freedom Party's leader in the Bundesrat, and additional members (the number of which is not specified in the statute).

According to Heinz Fischer (1974:136f), the tasks of the Social Democrats' *Klubpräsidium* are to discuss items before they appear in other bodies of the PPG, to prepare the Social Democrats' position for the meetings of the parliamentary presidial conference, and to take urgent decisions. Similarly, the tasks of the Social Democrats' *Klubvorstand* are to prepare the PPG's plenary meetings and to take urgent decisions. The 1996 statute basically ratified this

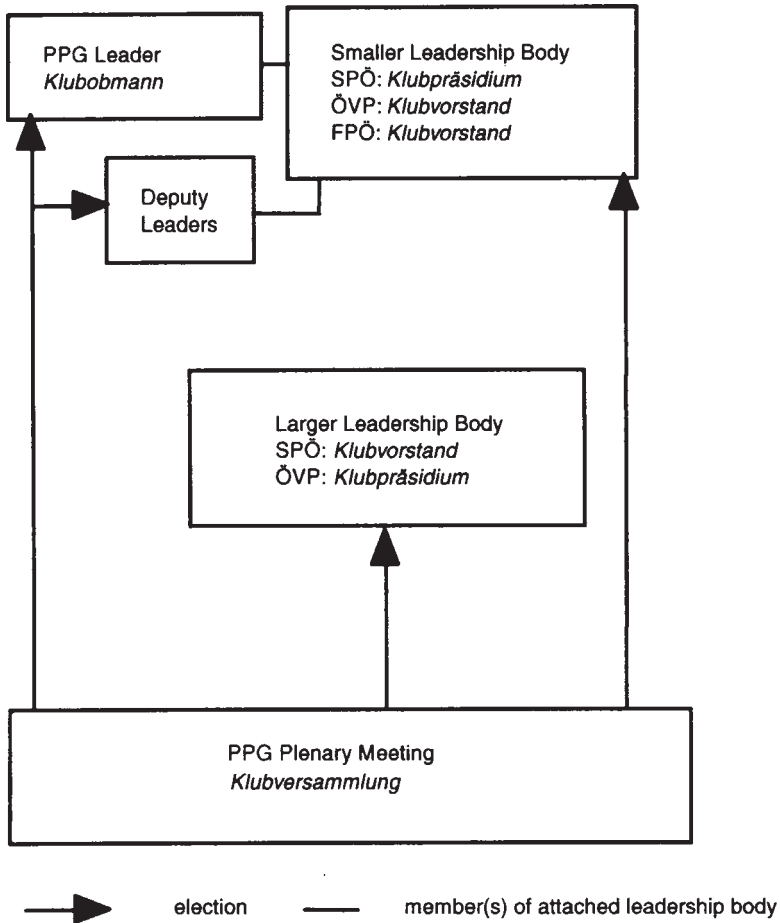


Figure 5.1 Formal structure of Austrian PPGs

practice. Formally, all decisions are made in the PPG plenary meeting. In practice, most decisions in the *Klubvorstand* are made unanimously and they are routinely ratified by the plenary meeting.

In the People's Party PPG the *Klubvorstand* is mainly concerned with managing administrative and financial tasks. The politically most important body is the *Klubpräsidium*. It is here that critical decisions are made *de facto*, although formal decision-making powers rest with the plenary meeting.

In all PPGs the party groups or individuals in specific parliamentary committees play a crucial role in decision-making in the respective policy area. The large amount of legislative work calls for an effective division of labour between MPs of the same PPG. Such a division of labour allows for specialization. It is based on mutual trust and anticipated reciprocity (Fischer 1974; cf. Krehbiel 1991). Normally MPs do not look at the bills they vote on if

they are recommended by party comrades who were concerned with them in parliamentary committees.¹⁵ When a decision to be taken in a parliamentary committee seems to be 'critical', however, the PPG leader is informed and the leadership bodies may discuss and decide the issue (Fischer 1974:140).

Decision-making in the plenary meetings in all traditional PPGs has generally not been by formal vote. Instead, reports from the leadership of the PPG have been received and no objection has been raised (Fischer 1974:134). According to Fischer (1974:134), formal votes in the PPG plenary meetings have been held 'hardly more than once or twice per year'. In the Social Democratic Party the *Klubvorstand* with a few exceptions has also decided unanimously (Fischer 1974:137). In the People's Party formal votes in the more relevant leadership body have been more common than with the Social Democrats, though they still occur relatively rarely.

The voting discipline of PPGs used to be 100 per cent or close to this mark. It is instructive to recall that the majority-based single-party governments of the People's Party (1966–70) and the Social Democrats (1971–83) managed to govern without a single defeat in parliament, although their lead over the opposition was no more than three to five seats. Party cohesion has declined substantially (by traditional Austrian standards) since 1986. In the 1986–90 parliament at least one of the PPGs could not close its ranks in 10.3 per cent of the votes. The respective figures for the 1990–94 and 1994–95 parliaments are 8.7 per cent and 10.7 per cent respectively (Müller 1997b). However, this has not affected policy outcomes. Although the PPG leaders were not happy with the decline in voting cohesion, the government's majority was comfortable enough to cope with abstention or voting against the party line by individual MPs or groups of MPs. One case demonstrated particularly well that voting against the party line is more a signalling game than an attempt to influence outcomes. Immediately before the 1995 general election, 'coalition discipline' in parliamentary voting was lifted for one extra-plenary meeting. As a consequence, several majority constellations among the five PPGs emerged in a series of votes. In a vote on specific clauses in the criminal code dealing with homosexuals a 'liberal coalition' of the Social Democrats, Liberal Forum and Greens and a 'conservative coalition' of the People's Party and the Freedom Party formed. The People's Party-Freedom Party coalition would have been turned into a losing one by one dissenter and indeed there was one Freedom Party MP, the former Minister of Justice, Harald Ofner, who had publicly supported the 'liberal' proposal. However, Ofner did not vote against his party and, as a result, the 'liberal' proposal failed. Ofner explained his position in a plea for party democracy, claiming that majorities formed on party grounds should not be changed by the dissenting behaviour of individual MPs.

As this example shows, individual MPs as a rule have accepted voting in line with their party not only if they disagreed and their vote was decisive, but also in many other cases of disagreement. The PPG leadership in turn has tried hard to maintain this high degree of cohesion. In so doing the leaders of the PPGs have sticks and carrots available. Positive incentives include little favours such as participation in

parliamentary delegations which travel to interesting locations and the chance of advancement within the PPG (a better seat in the plenum, more prestigious committee assignments, more salient nominations as speaker in plenary debates, etc.) or politics in general. All these things can be withheld if an MP turns out to be a trouble-maker. The ultimate sanctions are deselection as a parliamentary candidate and, even more severe, expulsion from the party. These decisions would be made by the relevant bodies of the EPO. For many MPs, expulsion from the party would also have severe social and economic consequences (cf. Michels 1963). Journalists have tended to see the traditional cohesion of the PPGs as forced upon individual MPs by these and other means (*Klubzwang*). In reality the positive and negative incentives mentioned above certainly work via the ‘law of anticipated reaction’ (Friedrich 1941:589–91). The same law, however, is more important if it is applied to the gains which individual MPs receive from the existence of a powerful PPG (cf. Cox and McCubbins 1993).

Relations to the extra-parliamentary organisation

The PPG is not mentioned in the statutes of parties or is only mentioned briefly without making any substantive statement about its status. This stands in striking contrast to the comprehensive and detailed regulations of intra-party life in the statutes (cf. Müller 1992a). This ‘silence of the statutes’ is to a large extent on legal grounds. Since the constitution includes the principle of the ‘free mandate’, i.e. that the MPs are ‘bound in the exercise of their function by no mandate’ (Art.56), any formal subordination of the PPG to external bodies would be a violation of this rule. As we have seen, the People’s Party does not have a separate statute for the PPG either and the Social Democrats’ is of very recent origin.

Despite their always unambiguous legal status and their early state funding, the PPGs have in practice always been the instrument of the respective EPOs or, more precisely, the leadership of the EPOs. There is no doubt that the leader of the EPO is *the* party leader (Müller and Meth-Cohn 1991). The EPO has exercised control over the PPG by three means: its influence in the recruitment of the PPG’s leader, recommendations for the PPG’s behaviour by the party executive committee and the participation of the EPO’s leaders in the decision-making of the PPG. In the remainder of this section we discuss these means of influence, describing the traditional pattern and pointing out recent changes.

Recruitment of the PPG leader

In the Social Democratic Party until 1983—with a temporary deviation between 1967 and 1970—it was usual for the party chairperson to be automatically elected leader of the PPG. In order to relieve the party leader, who used to be the party’s top representative in government, acting leaders of the PPG were nominated by the party executive committee and approved by the PPG. In 1983,

the new party chairperson Fred Sinowatz gave up the party chairperson's claim to formal parliamentary leadership. Since then the leader of the PPG has been elected by the MPs. Until 1990, this was still done on the basis of an official candidate, proposed by the party executive, who was always elected without any problems. Since 1990 the party chairperson has used more informal means to identify his candidate, who has always been elected with a large majority.

The People's Party traditionally separated party leadership from the leadership of the PPG. The position of the PPG leader was required for the balancing of power between the leagues. Until 1970 this was done within the party executive committee, which issued a formal recommendation to the PPG which in turn elected the respective politician as its leader. In the 1970s this practice was abandoned. The 1970 and 1978 elections of the leader and acting leader of the PPG respectively were contested and the results were relatively close. From 1978 until 1987, the party chairperson also held the PPG leadership. Until 1978, the practice of separating the EPO and PPG leadership was maintained. In 1978, however, the party chairperson took over the vacant PPG leadership and also became acting chairperson in 1979. In 1987, the People's Party returned to government (in a coalition with the Social Democrats). Since then the People's Party chairmen have held cabinet office. Due to intra-party convention and the fact that they resigned their parliamentary seats, they could no longer occupy the PPG leadership position. The EPO refrained from issuing an official candidate for the leadership of the PPG but the party chairmen informally influenced elections by specifically targeting their support to various candidates. Although the candidates supported by the EPO chairmen were elected, the elections were contested and very close. Summing up, it is clear that leadership recruitment of the PPG has changed in the People's Party. The autonomy of the PPG has increased. Although, as in the Social Democratic Party, informal ways of influencing the recruitment have proved relevant, the fact that elections have been contested and that results have been close indicate that the changes have been deeper than in the Social Democratic Party.

In the Freedom Party, the PPG leader was always elected by the MPs. Initially the party chairmen were not MPs and therefore not eligible for the leadership of the PPG. When, in 1966, the party chairperson was elected to parliament the incumbent leader of the PPG was reelected to this position. After his retirement in 1970, party chairman Friedrich Peter also took over the leadership of the PPG and was able to maintain this position under his two successors in the party chairperson position (for a few months he was only acting leader of the PPG while party chairman Götz was its formal leader) (Piringer 1982:289). After Peter's retirement the position of the PPG's leader was held by the party chairman or the latter's candidate, who was formally elected by the PPG.

When the Liberal Forum established itself as a break-away from the Freedom Party in 1993, its leader, Heide Schmidt, was third president of the parliament. Since she did not want to give up a prestigious position which provided her with important resources, the Liberal Forum elected Friedhelm Frischenschlager as PPG leader. He was the most experienced MP of the Liberal Forum (and is

actually the only MP who has ever been leader of two different PPGs) and therefore was a natural choice in the given situation. In the new Nationalrat which was elected in 1994, Schmidt, as a representative of the smallest party, had no chance of being reelected to the presidium of the parliament and assumed the leadership of the PPG. She has maintained her position ever since.

As we have seen, in all three 'traditional' parties and the Liberal Forum the leader of the EPO has also been the leader of the PPG for certain periods of time. Whenever a party leader wanted to take over the leadership of the PPG it was possible. The only qualification which had to be fulfilled is that party leaders, with the exception of the Freedom Party in 1991, have done so only when a vacancy in the parliamentary leadership has arisen, thus not requiring the replacement of incumbent leaders of the PPG (as pointed out above, the replacement of Frischenschlager by Schmidt has to be interpreted differently). We have also seen that the EPOs or, more precisely, the leaders of the EPOs, have influenced the recruitment of PPG leaders considerably.

When the Greens established themselves in parliament they did so as a rather loose electoral alliance of various green groups. Although the building up of a joint extra-PPG organization was envisaged for the future, initially there was no corresponding EPO to the PPG of the Greens. Thus there was no alternative to the election of the leader of the PPG by the MPs, who chose the leading figure of their electoral campaign, Freda Meissner-Blau. During the first parliamentary term the Greens built up their EPO. In order to link the PPG and the EPO in 1990 one of the EPO's leaders became an *ex officio* member of the PPG. In a small party with between eight and thirteen MPs one vote was more likely to matter than in larger voting bodies. Indeed, in 1990 the vote of the party representative was decisive in electing the leader of the PPG, who was supported by only five of the ten MPs.

Recommendations of the party executive committee or the party congress

In all parties the party congress and the party executive committee are used to issue recommendations to their PPG. Party congress resolutions are much more frequent but generally less relevant. Most of them come from the party's rank and file and are concerned with the initiation of legislation. Delegating these proposals to the PPG may well have the function of shelving or burying them. In rare but important cases the party executive committee may recommend a specific voting behaviour to its MPs. Normally, however, the transmission from the top bodies of the EPO to the PPG is not formalized.

Participation of the EPO leaders in the decision-making of the PPG

In all parties, top representatives of the EPO are *ex officio* entitled to participate in the deliberation and *de facto* also the decision-making of the PPG. Although

the leaders of the PPG in turn participate in the meetings of the party executive committee, all evidence suggests that this mainly serves to ease communication from the EPO to the PPG rather than vice versa. Occasionally it is difficult to get the support of the MPs or important groups of them for the party leadership's policy, but the party leaders' access to better information, their greater authority and the appeal to party solidarity are normally sufficient to overcome these difficulties. Since all parties normally want to demonstrate unity, the ultimate remedy to achieve this is the internal vote within the PPG. Its result is then normally accepted by those MPs who were in the minority. Almost all of them support the position which emerges as the party's position in the internal vote in parliamentary voting and even debate. This, however, has been less the case in the last decade. As mentioned above, party discipline in parliamentary voting has decreased substantially since 1986.

Summary

In summarizing the discussion of the relationship between the EPO and the PPG it has to be said that in the three 'traditional' parties, the PPG has been directed by the EPO during the post-war period. However, the PPGs have gained in autonomy and this development will certainly continue. The PPG is most important in the new parties, the Greens and the Liberal Forum. There it enjoys complete autonomy as far as parliamentary activities are concerned, but it is also in command of most of the resources the Greens and the Liberal Forum have.

Relations to the government

The PPGs have traditionally been involved in government formation in two ways. First, most members of the party teams in coalition negotiations hold a parliamentary seat; the PPG leaders have always been included. Second, the PPGs have received reports on coalition negotiations and government formation. At least in recent years, they have also formally approved the results of these negotiations. Having a formal vote in the PPG, however, may be seen more as a strategy by party leaders to commit MPs to the support of the government, than real decision-making on the part of the MPs.

While there has not been much change concerning the involvement of the PPGs in government formation over the post-war period, there has been when it comes to governing. In the 1950s and early 1960s, the PPGs were hardly more than voting machines. They were controlled by the leaders of the EPO, the most important of which occupied the leading cabinet positions of chancellor and vice-chancellor in the People's Party-Social Democratic Party grand coalition. Since then much has changed. The opposition periods of the Social Democrats (1966–70) and People's Party (1970–86) have increased the relevance of their PPGs (see Fischer 1993b for the Social Democrats). This trend has continued

even under the new grand coalition which has been in office since 1987. Moreover, in the 1990s three opposition parties are represented in parliament. For them parliament is the most important battleground and most of the party resources are concentrated in the PPGs.

The PPGs of the government parties have been important since the late 1960s as sounding-boards for the cabinet. Since the new grand coalition assumed office in 1987, the PPGs have taken over additional functions. MPs act as party representatives in negotiations with the coalition partner in those cases where the particular party does not hold the relevant portfolio, save for issues of top priority which are handled by the EPO chairpersons. Moreover, the PPGs have gained importance in the policy-making process. Parliament no longer only rubber-stamps decisions already taken by the government or in inter-party negotiations but has considerable leeway in a substantial proportion of decisions. This is the case where there has been only a rough agreement between the parties in government, leaving the details to a parliamentary committee, or where proposals were seen as finalized by the government, but were reopened in parliament (Müller 1993).¹⁶ The PPGs are even more important in other aspects of parliamentary behaviour than in legislation (parliamentary debates, questions, investigation committees, etc.). As regards these activities they are less constrained by the coalition agreement. Finally, the PPG leaders of the government parties are deeply involved in the management of the coalition. Since 1996 they and their chiefs of staff officially participate in cabinet meetings.

Conclusion

In the early 1970s Heinz Fischer (1974:111) introduced his seminal chapter on the PPGs, which appeared in what became the standard work on Austrian politics of the 1970s, by stating that until a few years before it would have been hardly conceivable to include a chapter on PPGs in such a book. PPGs would not have been considered to have political weight in their own right but only as part and parcel of the parties-as-a-whole. This chapter has shown that the relevance of the PPGs has continued to grow since the 1970s. Now they have a stronger legal position. They also have more resources available than ever before. Most important, however, is that their relative position vis-à-vis the other 'faces' of political parties has changed considerably. The PPGs have improved their position vis-à-vis the EPO and the government and they have become more relevant in the public policy decision-making process. Thus party politics has gone through a process of parliamentarization in Austria. It is not possible, however, to say so without qualifications. The first concerns the scope of this change. Despite relevant improvements in the PPG's positions in domestic politics, they are not yet the most important locus of power. It should also be noted that the PPGs have lost power vis-à-vis the individual MPs. This is largely a consequence of the new electoral system (introduced in 1992), which

strengthened local ties, and the introduction of intra-party primaries (in the People's Party and the Social Democratic Party). While this development weakens the PPGs it certainly adds to the parliamentarization of Austrian politics. In the Heidar-Koole typology the changes in the relative position of the Austrian PPGs can be summarized as follows. By means of the enormous increase of their external resources they have developed from the *fraktion* to the *parliamentary party complex* type. Austrian PPGs always have been *integrated PPGs* and as such belong to the PPG as 'voting machine' subtype. While remaining within this category, they have become less dominated by government and the EPO over time.

The second qualification relates to the changes which occurred with Austrian accession to the European Union. The transfer of considerable law-making powers to the European Union has reduced the parliament's capacity for determining public policy. While it is true that the Austrian parliament has established stronger instruments for checking the behaviour of cabinet members in Brussels than any other EU country,¹⁷ this may not be enough to compensate for the loss of legislative power. But that is another story, to be researched before it can be told.

Notes

- 1 As a legacy of the monarchy, before 1961 two versions of the rules of procedure existed, a law which required a two-thirds majority (and a 50 per cent quorum) in the Nationalrat, and the autonomous rules of procedure (*autonome Geschäftsordnung*) which did not require a two-thirds majority. PPGs were mentioned in the autonomous rules of procedure.
- 2 The amendment affected both the law and the autonomous rules.
- 3 This amendment was triggered by the fact that a procedural loophole about who should serve as chairperson of the Nationalrat in such a situation had served as a means to suspend it unconstitutionally in 1933. For details see Jenny and Müller (1995:360f).
- 4 The parliamentary rules of procedure are contained in the following laws: *Bundesgesetzblatt* 10/1920, 847/1922, 144/1923, 40/1928, 61/1928, 93/1948, 178/1961, 410/1975, 302/1979, 212/1986, 720/1988, 569/1993, 438/1996. Authoritative commentaries on these laws are Czerny and Fischer (1982) and Atzwanger et al. (1990 and 1993). Recent changes in the rules of parliamentary procedure are analysed in several contributions to the *Österreichisches Jahrbuch für Politik '89* and '96 (Vienna: Verlag für Geschichte und Politik, 1990 and 1997, respectively) and to the *Jahrbuch des österreichischen Parlaments 1994* (Vienna: Manz, 1994).
- 5 In German the right to form a PPG reads '*das Recht, einen parlamentarischen Klub zu bilden*', where *einen* can be both *a* and *one*.
- 6 See Fischer (1993a), Öhlinger (1993) and Winkler (1993) (with further references).
- 7 See also Widder (1979; 378–81).
- 8 Before 1975 the Nationalrat decided on the number of MPs required for a committee seat. From 1975 until 1993 the d'Hondt formula was applied in all cases. Since 1993 the d'Hondt formula has been applied but the Shaply method can be used in exceptional cases as long as the majority in the particular committee equals that of the plenum of the Nationalrat.
- 9 The only exception to this rule is the Main Committee (*Hauptausschuß*) of the Nationalrat, the members of which are elected by the Nationalrat.

- 10 Since 1975 each PPG has been entitled to nominate one additional speaker in plenary proceedings and committees once the decision had been made to close the debate. Since 1988 a two-thirds majority can decide to ration plenary time. In this case plenary time is distributed to the PPGs which in turn are free to distribute it among its members.
- 11 See Schaden (1983) for a discussion of the ambiguous legal status of the various 'faces' of political parties before 1975.
- 12 In the case of the Greens, MEPs do not have voting rights in elections (but they have in all other decisions).
- 13 The open primaries were introduced to the party statute in 1991 and held in 1994 for the first time. Since the general election of 1995 had been brought forward unexpectedly to only one year after the previous one, no primaries were held at that time.
- 14 Stirnemann (1980:418) and own research.
- 15 Two relatively recent cases illustrate this well. In 1989 the People's Party chairman Josef Riegler was criticized for having earlier received a compensation payment for politicians who retired from parliament to which he was not entitled. Riegler defended himself by stating that he was not aware of the relatively recent law which had reduced these payments. However, critics soon pointed out that he himself had voted for it as an MP. Riegler's honesty was hardly challenged by anyone (but this did not help him very much politically). The other prominent example was the chairman of the Justice Committee, Michael Graff. When he criticized the new immigration laws of the 1990s it was pointed out to him that he himself had voted for them. Graff then confessed that he had not read the parliamentary proposals but had relied on his party comrades on the relevant committee.
- 16 The justice portfolio is a special case, having been held by non-political experts since the beginning of the new grand coalition. For its proposals, the Justice Committee of the parliament constitutes the main debating floor, which has led to a high number of substantial changes in government bills.
- 17 The Main Committee of the Nationalrat can issue binding instructions to the ministers which must be observed in their voting behaviour in the EU Council.

6 Fractiocracy?

Limits to the ascendancy of the parliamentary party group in Dutch politics

Rudy B. Andeweg

‘Anyway, the Second Chamber functions as a *fractiocracy*: the parliamentary parties [*fracties*] have complete control. The substantial debates, if they take place at all, usually take place in the meeting of the parliamentary party, and not on the floor of the House’

(Erik Jurgens MP, *NRC-Handelsblad*, 21 December 1991)

According to this quote, the Dutch political system is not a *partitocrazia*, dominated by political parties, but a *fractiocratie*, dominated by *fracties*, i.e. parliamentary party groups (PPGs). Erik Jurgens, a specialist on constitutional law, and a member of the Dutch Second Chamber on and off since the 1970s, has observed PPGs as an outside observer, and as an inside participant in three different parties. His *cri de coeur* about the ascendancy of the PPG is directed primarily at its domination of life in parliament, at the relationship between the PPG and the individual MP. Others have also used the term *fractiocracy* in this regard (e.g. Elzinga 1993:24). However, on the basis of recent Dutch political science literature, it would be easy to extend the use of the term *fractiocracy* to encompass relations between the PPG and extraparliamentary actors as well. Many scholars have pointed to long-term changes in Dutch executive-legislative relations, from a situation, unusual for a parliamentary system of government, in which the government remained relatively aloof from party-political squabbles, to one in which the PPGs of the governing majority are increasingly involved in cabinet decision-making. In addition, and in line with the international literature on party organisation, it has been pointed out that within political parties a shift in leadership away from the extra-parliamentary party organisation (EPO), or its executive board, towards the parliamentary party group has occurred.

In this paper we shall use the term *fractiocracy* to denote the ascendancy of the PPG over the party-as-a-whole, over the party-in-government (PiG), i.e. the party’s cabinet ministers, and over the party’s MPs. We shall look at the parliamentary party group in each of these three relations separately, to discuss evidence of the development towards PPG domination of politics, and to assess

Table 6.1 Distribution of seats in the Second Chamber, 1977–1988

	1977	1981	1982	1986	1989	1994	1998
PvdA	53	44	47	52	49	37	45
CDA	49	48	45	54	54	34	28
VVD	28	26	36	27	22	31	39
D66	8	17	6	9	12	24	14
SGP	3	3	3	3	3	2	3
GPV	1	1	1	1	2	2	2
RPF		2	2	1	1	3	3
GL	(6)	(9)	(9)	(3)	6	5	11
CD			(1)		1	3	
Other	2					9	5
Total	150	150	150	150	150	150	150

Notes

PvdA, Partij van de Arbeid (Labour Party).

CDA, Christen Democratisch Appèl (Christian-Democratic Party).

VVD, Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie (Conservative-Liberal Party).

D66, Democraten '66 (Progressive-Liberal Party).

SGP, Staatkundig Gereformeerde Partij (Orthodox Protestant).

GPV, Gereformeerd Politiek Verbond (Orthodox Protestant).

RPF, Reformatorisch Politieke Federatie (Orthodox Protestant).

GL, Groen Links (Green Left—before 1989: Communists, Pacifists, Radicals and Evangelical Left).

CD, Centrum Democraten (Extreme Right—in 1982: Centrum Partij).

the extent to which fractiocracy can be said to exist in the Netherlands. For reasons of space and availability of data, the discussion is confined to the four major political parties in terms of current size and proven government potential, but it should be clear from Table 6.1 that there is a not insignificant number of other parties in which the position of the PPG may well be different, perhaps precisely because of their smaller size and absence of participation in government.

Fractiocracy and the party organisation

The ascendancy of the PPG over the extra-parliamentary party organisation (and its party executive board in particular) has been hypothesised or implied by many scholars (for example Panebianco 1988:264; Ware 1996:109). It is part of a wider syndrome of changes in party organisations in the Netherlands that Koole subsumes under the label of the 'modern cadre party' (Koole 1992, 1994). The use of that reference to Duverger's classification almost implies a circular development: after the *parti de cadre* (in which the PPG dominated the all but non-existent EPO) came the *parti de masse* (in which the EPO dominated the PPG), after which now comes the modern cadre party in which the PPG

dominates once again. In the Netherlands at least, the changes over time have been less radical. Although the first national political party in the Netherlands (the Protestant Anti-Revolutionary Party) split in 1894, not least as the result of an attempt by the EPO executive board to discipline the PPG, in general the EPO executive board has never controlled the PPG in any of the major parties. It is significant that, with very few exceptions, the EPO president has never been regarded as the party's political leader, whereas the PPG chairman usually has been (especially when the party was not part of the governing coalition). Actually, on balance, relations between EPO and PPG have tended to be quite friendly, the odd moment of tension resulting from the familiar principal-agent problem notwithstanding. Such an exceptional episode is the period 1971–86 in the Labour Party, when three successive 'New Left' EPO presidents tried very hard to radicalise both the PPG and the PiG when in government. In 1977 the Labour Party's council even rejected an agreement reached by the PPG with other prospective coalition parties. However, such episodes are the exceptions that seem to prove the rule of relatively harmonious relations between the PPG and EPO.

In recent years, the PPG is presumed to have become more dominant as the result of professionalisation. Salary increases in 1968 and subsequently have allowed MPs to become full-time parliamentarians, and nearly all of them are. Since 1964 the PPGs are given state funding (from a modest Dfl 15,000 in 1964 to nearly Dfl 28,000,000 in 1998), most of which is used to employ staff. Roughly two-thirds of the money goes to the PPGs, one-third to individual MPs: since 1974 individual MPs are allowed some personal assistance (since 1979 one full-time assistant per MP). Koole (1992:214) reports that in the autumn of 1991, the Christian-Democrats' PPG had 101 staff members (full-time and part-time), sixty of them assisting individual MPs; the Labour Party had ninety-one (forty-five assisting MPs); the Conservative-Liberals twenty-four (eighteen assisting MPs); and the Progressive-Liberals had twenty-two (none for individual MPs). The result of these changes has been the development of what Koole calls a 'parliamentary party complex'—a concentration of professional full-time politicians and their assistants, easily outweighing the often meagre resources of the EPO.

There is only a little counter-evidence: since the late 1960s parties have moved to restrict the existing *cumul des mandats* within the party, resulting in a much smaller representation of the PPG on the EPO executive board than used to be the case. However, that development merely allows us to disentangle the two bodies; it does not disprove the ascendancy of the PPG. That ascendancy is nicely illustrated by the answers MPs gave to the question 'If your parliamentary party has a difference of opinion with the party executive board, who, in your view, should have the final say?' (see Table 6.2).

However, it should be emphasised that these are answers to a normative question: 'who *should* have the final say'. In order to assess the empirical degree of fractiocracy, we now take a closer look at two activities in which the EPO is still supposed to outweigh the PPG: policy formulation and candidate selection.

Table 6.2 Solution of conflicts between the EPO and PPG, 1990

<i>Final say with</i>	<i>Labour</i>	<i>Progressive-Liberal</i>	<i>Christian-Democrat</i>	<i>Conservative-Liberal</i>	<i>Total</i>
Parliamentary party	69	33	79	58	65
It depends	27	67	17	42	31
Party executive board	2	—	4	—	3

Source: Dutch Parliamentary Study, 1990.

Drafting the manifesto

As late as the 1970s, the chairman of the Conservative-Liberal PPG claims to have set aside a rainy Sunday afternoon sometime before the election, lit a cigar, and written the party's election manifesto (interview with the author). If that was the usual procedure back then, the role of the PPG has diminished rather than increased. Formally, the PPG plays no role in drawing up the election manifesto in any of the four major parties. It is the EPO executive board that appoints a programme committee (with the exception of the Progressive-Liberal Party where a permanent programme committee exists) to produce a draft. If the draft is acceptable to the EPO executive board, it is debated in various EPO bodies (such as the local branches) and ultimately amended and decided upon by the national party conference or party council. A detailed study of the drafting of the 1986 manifestos (Zielonka-Goei 1989) shows that, in practice, the PPG is involved to some degree in the preparation of the first draft. This is by far the most important stage: the number of amendments to the programme that are proposed at later stages may be very large (in 1986 4,125 amendments in the Labour Party, 1,150 in the Christian-Democratic Party, 1,170 in the Conservative-Liberal Party, and 400 in the Progressive-Liberal Party), but very few substantial changes are accepted (in 1986 with the possible exception of the Labour Party). Within the Labour Party, the programme committee consisted of three representatives from the PPG (including its chairman) and three representatives from the EPO executive board (including its president), but at a later stage the EPO executive board substantially altered this committee's draft. The Conservative-Liberal programme committee contained only one PPG representative (not its chairman!), but he was regarded as very influential in the committee (and directly involved in the drafting of two of the manifesto's chapters). Within the Christian-Democratic Party, no member of the PPG was included in the programme committee, but the PPG chairman was asked to attend its meetings in an advisory capacity, and is reputed to have been quite influential. The Progressive-Liberals' permanent programme committee had one PPG representative, but in that particular year the EPO executive board rejected the draft of the committee on the grounds that it lacked vision, replacing it with its own proposal. No detailed studies are available for more recent elections, and the procedures for drafting the manifesto seem to vary considerably over time

and across parties. However, there are no indications that this variation affects the main conclusion: that the PPG may have some or even considerable influence, but is certainly not the dominant player.

Given the EPO's dominance in the drafting of the manifestos, it is puzzling that in the 1990 Dutch Parliamentary Study (interviews with almost all incumbent MPs in both Houses of Parliament) only 13 per cent of the MPs interviewed agreed with the statement 'My party involves the parliamentary party insufficiently in the drafting of election manifestos', while 75 per cent disagreed. This is even more puzzling given the apparent importance of the election manifesto: 67 per cent of the MPs agreed with the statement 'The election manifesto plays an important role in the discussion in case of differences of opinion within the parliamentary party' (with 27 per cent disagreeing). One explanation may be that the ideological homogeneity of Dutch political parties is such that there are few differences between the EPO and PPG on policy matters; a more cynical explanation would be that the manifestos are cast in terms that are sufficiently vague to allow the PPG plenty of room for manoeuvre. And apart from the drafting of the manifesto, the EPO executive board does not seem to interfere much in the PPG's decision-making. Only four out of the 138 MPs interviewed answered the question 'Do you think your party's executive tries to force its point of view upon your parliamentary party too often?' in the affirmative; 97 per cent did not think so.

Nominating the candidates

The Dutch electoral system of proportional representation uses a list system in which the whole country is regarded as a single electoral district. A vote for the first candidate on the list, usually the party leader, implies acceptance of the party's ordering of the candidates. A preference vote (i.e. a vote for a candidate somewhere down the list) is possible, but despite attempts to give preference votes more impact, only a handful of MPs have been elected in this manner since World War II. The party's ordering of candidates is therefore of crucial importance to the electoral prospects of individual candidates, including sitting MPs seeking reelection (more than 70 per cent of all MPs interviewed in the 1990 Parliamentary Study). For the PPG, the composition of the list in effect determines its composition in terms of political opinions, expertise in various policy areas, etc. It would seem that the PPG has every incentive to extend its influence to the nomination procedure.

Formally, the PPG plays no role in candidate selection. The common denominator in the four major parties is 'regionalism' (Koole and Leijenaar 1988): regional party bodies are very influential in selecting the candidates and in determining the ordering of the list, but in ways that vary considerably across parties. The following account is largely based on a study of the 1986 candidate selection (Hillebrand 1992). Within the Labour Party, at least before 1994, the procedure was completely decentralised, with each regional party assembly

more or less autonomous in the composition of the list in its part of the country. The national EPO executive board always tried to influence the process. In 1986, for example, it appointed an independent committee, which drew up a list of twenty-three candidates who should be considered, exclusive of sitting MPs. The PPG was not represented on the committee, although it was consulted by the committee on the 'profile' of the new PPG. The independent committee, as well as the national EPO executive board, then tried with only partial success, to persuade regional assemblies to adopt some of these twenty-three candidates. An important exception to the marginal role of the PPG is the *de facto* designation by its chairman, at the national party conference, of his own successor as party leader. In 1992 the procedure was changed to centralise the determination of the list in the hands of the national EPO executive board and party congress.

The procedure within the Conservative-Liberal Party was almost as decentralised, but here the PPG chairman played a more important role. Together with the EPO president, he visited all EPO regional executive boards to brief them on the performance of incumbent MPs: 'His so-called "death list" sealed the lot of a number of these MPs' (Hillebrand 1992:369), but this experiment was not repeated in later years. It is interesting that there have been similar at least partially successful attempts by the EPO president to 'renew' the PPG in the Labour Party (1994) and the Christian-Democratic Party (1998). In 1990 the Conservative-Liberals changed their procedure so that now the EPO national executive board first produces a draft list.

Within the Christian-Democratic Party and Progressive-Liberal Party, regionalism plays a lesser role. Within the CDA, for example, the EPO president and the PPG chairman were given a mandate to produce a draft list, which was changed but little in the subsequent proceedings. The Progressive-Liberal Party stands apart, as it holds a postal ballot among all its members to determine the order on the list. Its EPO executive board appoints a committee to 'advise' the members on the ordering of the list. This advice has proven very influential. The PPG is not represented on this committee. In summary, if we can extrapolate from the 1986 procedures, the PPG as such has no influence over the nominations, although its chairman is one of the key players, at least in Christian-Democratic and Conservative-Liberal parties. At first sight, the recent changes in the procedures of Labour and the Conservative-Liberals are more important for the relationship between the national EPO and its regional branches than for the relationship between the EPO and PPG.

We are presented with a puzzle reminiscent of the drafting of the manifestos, for, despite their lack of influence, the MPs seem quite contented with the nomination procedure. In Hillebrand's study, 53 per cent of all Labour candidates were satisfied with the procedure against 29 per cent dissatisfied; among the Christian-Democratic candidates 44 per cent were satisfied, 32 per cent dissatisfied; of all Progressive-Liberal nominees, 56 per cent were satisfied and 27 per cent dissatisfied. Only in the Conservative-Liberal Party, where the

PPG chairman's 'death list' played such an important role at the time of the study, were 53 per cent of the candidates dissatisfied with 32 per cent satisfied (Hillebrand 1992:336). In the 1990 Parliamentary Study, 51 per cent disagreed with the statement 'When drafting the list of candidates, my party pays insufficient attention to the distribution of expertise within the parliamentary party' (27 per cent agreed). The most likely explanation for this high level of satisfaction is that incumbent MPs, despite their lack of influence over the procedure, can feel relatively secure with regard to their own fate. The individual party members in the Progressive-Liberal Party, the delegates to the Labour Party's regional party assemblies, and even the members of regional party executives in the Conservative-Liberal Party, simply lack the necessary information to assess the past performance of incumbent MPs (Hillebrand 1992:370). As a result, Dutch MPs are not overly worried about reselection: the MPs see no need for automatic reselection; 64 per cent disagreed with the statement 'In principle (except in cases of misconduct), my party should put up each MP for reselection at least once' (28 per cent agreed). This, however, was in 1990. The strengthening of the role of the EPO national executive boards in the nomination procedures of Labour and the Conservative-Liberals since then could well turn out to be much more threatening, as the executive board is likely to be better informed. Future studies may well report a decrease in the level of satisfaction, and attempts by the PPG to exercise more influence over the nominations.

Apart from possible future developments, we should mention the selection of the party leader as a partial exception to the analysis so far. Strictly speaking, Dutch political parties do not have an overall party leader; the EPO has its president (elected by the party congress), the PPG its chairperson (elected at the beginning of each parliament by the PPG meeting), and, when in government, the PiG is led by the Prime Minister or deputy Prime Minister (nominated by the PPG chairperson). In practice, one member of this 'troika' functions as the leader of the party-as-a-whole (and the leader of the party list in elections). As we have already mentioned, this is never the EPO president, and often the PPG chairperson, although we shall later discuss the trend that, when in government, the leader moves to the office of (deputy) Prime Minister. Depending on the party's political fortunes and the timing of the transfer of power, the selection of a new overall leader may take various forms. Sometimes, the PPG elects its chairman after a real contest (as in the Christian-Democratic Party in 1994, for example), but more often the procedure is not as democratic, and there have been cases in which the outgoing leader more or less designated his own successor (the Labour Party in 1986, the Progressive-Liberals in 1997, for example). The EPO president or executive board is less involved in the selection of the overall party leader than it is in the nomination of 'ordinary' candidates, but it is not necessarily the PPG that fills this partial vacuum. All in all, the conclusion can still be that there is even less support for the fractiocracy hypothesis in the nomination procedure than we found in the drafting of the election manifestos.

Fractiocracy and coalition government

In 1952, Professor Zijlstra, later to become Prime Minister but then an academic economist, was appointed Minister of Economic Affairs. A political novice at the time, he sought the advice of the chairman of his party's PPG. The latter declined to help 'as they had separate responsibilities'. The anecdote illustrates the tradition of separation of powers between a party's ministers (PiG) and its PPG, reinforced by the constitutional prohibition of the combination of a seat in parliament with a portfolio in the cabinet, and symbolised by the fact that, in the Second Chamber, ministers sit in a separate section, on chairs unadorned by the parliamentary seal, facing the members of parliament. Today, however, Mr. Zijlstra's experience would be highly unlikely to occur. When they are part of a governmental coalition, PPGs are no longer as restrained when it comes to influencing the decision-making in cabinet. There are at least three indicators of the increased interference by PPGs in PiGs. First, more ministers are now recruited directly from the PPG. Of all ministers appointed between 1848 (the introduction of ministerial responsibility to parliament) and 1990, only 35 per cent were recruited directly from the parliamentary benches and a further 7 per cent had been an MP at an earlier point in time. This percentage obfuscates considerable changes over time. Ignoring the government in exile during World War II, the percentage of ministers with parliamentary experience has been as low as thirty (1848–88), but is now as high as sixty-eight (1967–90), with 53 per cent actually resigning their seat to become a minister, and 15 per cent having some prior parliamentary experience (Seeker 1991:198).

The PPGs have not only increased their influence over the selection of government personnel, but also over the formulation of its policy. The negotiations that result in a new governing coalition are conducted by the chairpersons of the PPGs involved. Since as far back as the 1920s the negotiations have also included some of the policies that the new government was to pursue, the results forming the coalition agreement. When a new cabinet would first meet, the ministers would add their own plans to the coalition agreement, resulting in the government programme. Since the 1963 cabinet formation the coalition agreement has expanded, both in scope and in detail. Today, there is hardly any room left for the new cabinet to add its own projects to the coalition agreement: the coalition agreement has become the government programme (Bovend'Eert 1988). It also plays an important role in cabinet discussions, although naturally its impact wears off gradually over the life of a cabinet. As the coalition agreement became more important, the PPG became more involved in the negotiations. It has become quite common for the PPG chairmen to ask some of the MPs to prepare proposals for the coalition agreement, often in collaboration with their counterpart(s) in the other prospective governing party/parties. Moreover, when the negotiations are concluded, the draft is debated within the PPGs, and sometimes amended before it is ratified. In the 1990 Parliamentary Study, 86 per cent of the MPs agreed with the statement 'Coalition agreements enable parliamentary parties to exert a

lot of influence on future government policy during the cabinet formation', with only 9 per cent disagreeing.

Once the cabinet formation is over, the PPGs do not sit back 'to let the government govern'. Since the late 1960s an elaborate system of weekly consultations has developed in which the PPG chairman meets with his party's PiG to prepare that week's cabinet meeting (Andeweg and Irwin 1993:131). Until then, ministers from each governing party had lunch together between the morning and afternoon sessions of that meeting. At the end of the 1960s and in the early 1970s it became customary for the PPG chairman to attend this luncheon meeting. The lunch then assumed such political importance that few decisions were taken during cabinet's morning session. In 1973 the lunch was replaced by a meeting the evening before, during which a party's cabinet ministers and junior ministers discussed the cabinet agenda for the following day. Gradually the circle of regular attenders has widened to include the chairperson of the parliamentary party group in the Senate, and the EPO president. In addition, a weekly Wednesday luncheon meeting has been set up, convening the Prime Minister, the deputy Prime Minister(s) (i.e. the leading minister(s) from the other governing party/parties), and the PPG chairpersons of the governing majority. During the 1990 Parliamentary Study the governing coalition consisted of Christian-Democrats and Labour. In response to the question 'Is the parliamentary party chairman given instructions by the parliamentary party meeting about which stand to take during these meetings with the ministers?' 52 per cent of the MPs from these two parties reported that the PPG regularly gave such instructions, 38 per cent occasionally, and only 11 per cent never. Such consultations are a far cry from Mr Zijlstra's experience back in 1952, but 78 per cent of all MPs interviewed now regard them as desirable.

In an earlier Parliamentary Study, in 1979, 68 per cent of the MPs agreed with the statement 'Government policy is formed in close consultation and cooperation with the parliamentary parties in the governing majority', and 84 per cent of the MPs agreed that 'more than in the past, the government is dependent on what the parliamentary parties in the governmental majority want'. In the 1990 study 78 per cent of the MPs from the two governing parties denied that their party's ministers too often try to impose their point of view on the PPG.

Yet it would be an overstatement to conclude that fractiocracy is now complete when it comes to executive-legislative relations. What appears to have happened is that the PiG and PPG have integrated to a considerable degree, making it rather difficult to disentangle the parliamentary party group's influence on the party's ministers from the party's ministers' influence on the parliamentary party group. Since the 1960s, the coalition agreement has no longer been binding on the ministers alone, but also on the PPGs. Recruiting more ministers from the ranks of the PPG has meant that more of the party's leading politicians become ministers (and they do not stop acting as leaders after taking the oath of office). Interestingly, it used to be common for the party

leader to stay in parliament, as PPG chairman, when the party entered government (with the exception of the Labour Party). The chairman of the Catholic PPG during part of the 1960s once remarked that ‘being the parliamentary leader of the largest governing party is a much more influential, powerful, and creative function than being prime minister’ (quoted in: Ammerlaan 1973:241; my translation). However, since then it has become common for the party leader to enter government with his party, as Prime Minister or deputy Prime Minister, leaving a *locum tenens* to look after the PPG for him (although some Conservative-Liberal leaders still prefer the old practice). Especially when a party has been in government for a long time, like the CDA until recently, the result would seem to be not so much a politicisation of the PiG, but a governmentalisation of the PPG (Cf. Andeweg 1996).

Fractiocracy and the individual MP

The relationship between the PPG and the individual MP is the most important of the three we discuss in this chapter: any strengthening of the PPG vis-à-vis the EPO or the PiG lacks political significance if the parliamentary party group is merely a collective label for the party’s individual MPs. Indeed, formally, the PPG is not much more than that. Since 1966, the Standing Orders of the Second Chamber define a PPG as ‘all Members who have been declared elected on the same electoral list’. If only one candidate is elected from a given list, that single MP constitutes a PPG. However, subsequent clauses in the Standing Orders indicate that there is more to it (Elzinga 1993:19–20). Changes in the PPG’s composition must be reported to the Speaker. He needs to have this information for a number of reasons:

- The subventions to PPGs to hire staff are contingent upon their size.
- The Speaker assigns a bloc of seats to the PPG, and leaves it to the PPG to distribute the seats to its MPs (interestingly, members of the Dutch Senate are not seated by party!).
- The Speaker allots speaking time in debates to the PPG in rough proportion to its size, leaving the selection of speakers to the PPG.

The Speaker must also be informed about the membership of the PPG executive board. This is partly because the PPG chairperson gets a supplementary salary. These are all the formal rules pertaining to PPGs, but in practice the PPG carries greater impact on committee membership, for example. According to the Standing Orders, the Speaker appoints MPs to committees, but he always acts on PPG proposals (Franssen 1993:28). (For the importance of the PPG’s control over committee assignments, see, for example, Cox and McCubbins 1993; Damgaard 1995.)

In addition to the written and unwritten rules of parliament, PPGs have their own internal rules about the organisation of the PPG—usually consisting of the

PPG meeting (at the beginning of each parliamentary week, behind closed doors, but often in the presence of staff members), the PPG executive board and the PPG chairman, and a system of PPG committees—and the obligations of its members and assistants (Elzinga and Wisse 1988). The PPGs of the Labour and the Christian-Democratic parties even have elaborate written standing orders. MPs are expected to abide by decisions of the PPG meeting, even if they were not present; if they feel they cannot vote the party line, they have to give advance warning to the PPG secretariat and/or executive board. Voting in parliament is usually by show of hands (asking for a roll call is regarded as nearly equivalent to filibustering), and the votes are recorded by the PPG (Franssen 1993:28). Wolters (1984:182–5) argues that this practice suggests a low level of dissension, and cites estimates of PPG unanimity of 92–98 per cent during the 1967–71 parliament (see also Elzinga and Wisse 1988:178).

Some parliamentary parties also require their members to seek permission before making use of *individual* parliamentary rights, such as putting a written question to a minister (see Table 6.3).

According to the MPs interviewed for the 1990 Parliamentary Study, parliamentary parties vary with respect to who give the permission (the percentages can add up to more than 100 per cent because more than one PPG body may be involved). Some PPGs regulate other aspects of an MP's life as well, such as participation in debates, pairings, requests for interviews, or even being a respondent in survey research (Elzinga and Wisse 1988:175).

All these rules are in apparent violation of Article 67.3 of the Dutch constitution, which reads 'The members shall not be bound by a mandate or instructions when casting their votes.' Hence they are not legally binding: just as in many other countries, Dutch MPs are assumed to submit voluntarily to PPG discipline. However, the PPG has some sanctions at its disposal to discipline disobedient members: it can warn the MP that the PPG chairman will not consider the MP for future nominations to the cabinet; it can dismiss the MP from positions within the PPG such as a PPG committee chair, or spokesperson for the PPG on particular issues; and it can reassign the MP to a less prestigious parliamentary committee. It can even withdraw an MP's membership of the

Table 6.3 Seeking permission before putting a parliamentary question, 1990 (percentage answering 'nearly always')

	<i>Labour</i>	<i>Progressive-Liberal</i>	<i>Christian-Democrat</i>	<i>Conservative-Liberal</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>Permission sought from</i>					
PPG chairman	—	—	98	67	44
PPG executive board	37	—	2	6	15
PPG meeting	—	—	—	—	—
PPG committee	51	—	46	18	43

Source: Dutch Parliamentary Study, 1990.

PPG. What the PPG cannot do, however, is force the MP to resign from parliament. Many parties have rules to the effect that MPs must give up their seats when they leave the party, but neither the EPO nor the PPG have the power to enforce that rule. The ultimate sanction—a low position on the party list in the next election, or no position at all—is in the hands of the EPO, and not in the hands of the PPG. Even when the PPG does interfere in the nomination process, the voters may not agree. In a parliamentary inquiry of government support for the shipbuilding industry, the Conservative-Liberal MP Joekees took an independent stand, despite attempts by his PPG leadership to make him tone down his criticisms of the party's Minister of Economic Affairs. The PPG chairman subsequently put Joekees on the 'death list' mentioned above, and managed to persuade the EPO to put him in an unelectable slot on the party list. He was, however, re-elected with a huge number of preferential votes!

On balance, the PPG's sanctions, although not insignificant, are not very impressive. As much depends on the MPs' voluntary submission, why do MPs defer to PPG discipline? In the 1990 Parliamentary Study, open-ended questions were used to find out what MPs regard as the most important advantages and disadvantages of PPG discipline (Thomassen et al. 1992:277–89). The positive aspect mentioned by nearly all MPs was that PPG discipline serves to maintain a united front to the outside world, which prevents confusion among the voters as to what the party stands for, and maximises the party's influence on legislation. A few also mention 'democratic' arguments in favour of PPG discipline: one is elected on a list, not on one's personal strength; it is democratic to bow to the majority within the PPG; it forces MPs to listen to each other, to build a consensus; it structures the debate in parliament. The negative aspects that were mentioned mostly had to do with the curtailment of individual freedom and the conflict with their personal responsibility or conscience. Some also mentioned the effect of stifling parliamentary debate, or at least of oversimplifying the nuances and differences of opinion.

Apparently, the pros of PPG discipline outweigh the cons in the perception of most MPs. This is evident from their answers to the question 'If an MP has to vote, but holds an opinion which differs from the one held by his or her parliamentary party, should (s)he vote in accordance with the opinion of the parliamentary party or follow his or her own opinion?' (see Table 6.4).

The MPs who answered 'It depends' often elaborated by arguing that an MP should stick to his own views on matters of conscience, whereas he should follow the PPG on issues mentioned in the manifesto or coalition agreement. Over time, the proportion who think that an MP should always follow his own judgement seems to have declined dramatically: in the 1972 Parliamentary Study 40 per cent of MPs felt they ought to put their own judgement above that of the PPG; in 1990 only 11 per cent expressed this view.

Although these figures refer to a hypothetical situation it is not to say that it is an unrealistic one. What we do not know is how frequent conflicts between individual MPs and their PPGs are. This is crucial, because the high level of PPG unanimity in votes is not necessarily the result of PPG *discipline*; it could also be

Table 6.4 Solution of conflicts between individual MP and PPG by party, 1990

	<i>Labour</i>	<i>Progressive-Liberal</i>	<i>Christian-Democrat</i>	<i>Conservative-Liberal</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>MP should follow</i>					
Parliamentary party	25	—	28	11	20
It depends	71	75	57	79	69
Own opinion	4	25	15	11	11

Source: Dutch Parliamentary Study, 1990.

the consequence of PPG *homogeneity*. In fact, party discipline without at least a modicum of ideological homogeneity is likely to be counterproductive. This is illustrated by the fate of the single-issue parties that occasionally enter the Dutch parliament (farmers, retailers, pensioners) and invariably suffer splits from the PPG. Apparently, having only one policy goal in common resulted in a level of heterogeneity that could not be offset by party discipline. In general, however, splits are rare in Dutch parliamentary history: since World War II (and before the 1998 election), there had been seventeen splits involving thirty MPs (Visscher, 1999–A 0600-23, 24). This is one, admittedly imperfect, indicator that most PPGs are relatively homogeneous.

A better indicator is found in the standard deviation from the average position on several policy questions by party. In several studies, MPs were presented with seven-point scales, with the extremes being defined as, for example, ‘the government should outlaw abortions, regardless of the circumstances’ and ‘on abortion, every woman has the right to decide herself, or ‘income differences should become bigger’ and ‘income differences should become smaller’. Respondents were asked to position themselves (and, sometimes, the various parties) on these scales. We then calculated the mean and standard deviation per party. The lower the standard deviation, the more homogeneous the PPG. There is no objective standard with which to compare the standard deviations, but there are several indications that they are in fact quite low. First, from Hillebrand’s study it appears that, with only a few exceptions, in all parties the standard deviation among successful candidates was lower than that among unsuccessful candidates, national party executive board members, local party secretaries, party members, and party voters (Hillebrand 1992:307, 313, 316, 319). This indicates that the PPG is the most homogeneous body within the party. Second, we can calculate these PPG standard deviations on the basis of the 1990 Parliamentary Study for six policy issues (nuclear energy, abortion, euthanasia, law and order, income differences, and worker co-determination), and compare them with similar standard deviations (except for euthanasia) calculated on the basis of the 1979 Parliamentary Study (Thomassen 1981:213). Between these two studies, the PPGs of Labour, the Progressive-Liberals, and the Conservative-Liberals have become more homogeneous (the standard deviations decreasing by -0.2, -0.3, -0.1 respectively), while the parliamentary

party of the Christian-Democrats shows no change in this respect. In other words, during the 1980s—a period during which PPG discipline is said to have increased—the PPGs have also become more homogeneous. Third, we can compare the PPG standard deviations, as calculated from the 1990 Parliamentary Study, with those we would have obtained had all of a PPG's MPs given the same answer. Obviously, in that case the standard deviation would be zero, but to allow for some 'measurement noise' we calculated the hypothetical standard deviation in case one-third of a party's MPs had placed themselves on the party mean, one-third one point to the left of the mean, and one-third one point to the right. In that case the standard deviations would all have been around 0.82.¹ Actually, we find them to vary from 0.6 to 1.5. In other words, the average party standard deviations are not much above what we should expect in a perfectly homogeneous party. PPG unanimity in parliamentary votes may rely on party discipline far less than is often assumed.

There is yet another alternative explanation for PPG unanimity in voting: negative co-ordination, or cue taking. Dutch MPs tend to focus on a particular policy field, most often in relation to their committee membership. The bigger parties have PPG committees shadowing the parliamentary committees. If the PPG's recognised specialist on a particular issue advises the rest of the parliamentary party group to vote this way or that, he or she is likely to be followed unless the relevant PPG committee is divided, and unless it is a politically controversial issue. In both the 1979 and the 1990 Parliamentary studies, about 80 per cent of the MPs fully agreed with the statement that 'as a rule, the parliamentary party allows one considerable freedom to manoeuvre in parliamentary committees', while less than 5 per cent disagreed. At the same time, in the 1972 and 1979 Parliamentary studies most MPs fully agreed (80 per cent in 1972; 91 per cent in 1979) that 'as a rule, one votes according to the advice of the specialist'. In the 1990 study this question was not put to the MPs, but there are similar indications in the answers to a question about the centre of gravity within the parliamentary party's decision-making process (see Table 6.5).

Interestingly, the centre of decision-making is not the PPG meeting (except in the Conservative-Liberal Party), or the PPG leadership (a little bit in the Labour Party), but the PPG committee, or the individual specialist. This finding clearly fits with widespread criticisms of the 'sectorisation' (*verkokering*) of the Second Chamber, but it is also clearly at odds with the fractiocracy thesis.

This brings us to a final restriction to the ascendancy of the PPG in relation to individual MPs. So far in this paragraph we have looked at it from the perspective of the MP as a member of his PPG. However, an MP is not just a member of a PPG; he is also a member of a parliamentary committee, and, last but not least, he is a Member of Parliament as such. These other memberships present MPs with their own sets of rules, role models and loyalties. As a member of the PPG, an MP sees himself as a representative of his party's voters, and feels loyalty to the party and its programme. As a member of a parliamentary committee, an MP sees his role as a policy advocate, feeling responsible for a

Table 6.5 Centre of decision-making within parliamentary party, 1990, 1979

	<i>Labour</i>	<i>Christian-Democrat</i>	<i>Conservative-Liberal</i>	<i>Total 1990</i>	<i>Total 1979</i>
PPG meeting	17	20	63	26	50
PPG leadership	15	5	—	9	3
PPG committees	61	63	6	53	38
PPG specialist	7	13	31	13	8

Sources: Dutch Parliamentary Study, 1990 (and 1979).

Note

This question was only put to MPs from the Labour Party, the Christian-Democratic Party, and the Conservative-Liberal Party.

specific social interest. In the past, the major religious parties in particular reserved slots on their electoral lists for representatives of affiliated interest groups. MPs on such ‘quality seats’, as they were called, are likely to have had continued loyalties to the interest group they represented. Today such close formal ties between parties and interest groups no longer exist, but on an informal level these loyalties are still likely to be found. Finally, as a Member of Parliament as such, an MP may define himself as a representative of ‘the people’, feeling loyalty to ‘this House’. Not all these roles are equally important for all MPs, and the partisan role probably dominates, but there is evidence that MPs wear all three hats, constantly changing them according to the nature of the issue under consideration (Andeweg 1997). Whenever an issue relates to party ideology, manifesto or coalition agreement, MPs can be expected to act as partisans, and the PPG is their reference group. When the agenda is primarily about ‘technocratic’ issues, MPs are more likely to act as policy advocates, and when they deal with government fiascos, or the traditions and rules of parliamentary democracy, they are primarily parliamentarians. In those circumstances, other reference groups are more important, and the role of the PPG is a limited one.

Fractiocracy or countervailing trends?

We have looked at the parliamentary party group (PPG) in three relationships: with the extra-parliamentary party organisation (EPO), with the party’s ministers when in government (PiG), and with its MPs. Assessing relative influence or power is notoriously difficult, but in all three relationships we found indications of a strengthening of the role of the PPG: the professionalisation of MPs and their staffs has shifted the balance with the largely amateur EPO; the politicisation of ministerial recruitment, the development of the coalition agreement, and the institutionalisation of contacts between PPG chairman and ministers have increased the PPG’s role in governmental decision-making; the

development of the PPG organisation and discipline have strengthened the PPG vis-à-vis its individual members. In terms of the classificatory schemes discussed in the introductory chapter, Dutch PPGs seem to be moving from ‘fractions’ (or even ‘clubs’ in some cases) to ‘parliamentary party complexes’ (Cf. Figure 1.1), and from ‘party-oriented PPGs’ to ‘government-oriented PPGs’ (Cf. Figure 1.2).

However, we have also uncovered evidence of countervailing developments in all three relationships. In its relationship with the party organisation, the PPG sees its influence restricted by the EPO’s (re)assertion of its role in the drafting of the manifesto, and particularly in the nomination of candidates. In its relationship with the PiG, the integration between the PiG and the PPG is such that it has become impossible to disentangle who influences whom. The fact that the party leader is now often found in the PiG, not in the PPG, may well serve as an indication that the PPG is not necessarily always in the driving seat in this relationship. In its relationship with individual MPs we found that the high level of unanimity among MPs belonging to the same PPG is not necessarily the result of PPG discipline. Often MPs do not need to be disciplined, as they hold opinions that do not differ much from those of their colleagues in the PPG, and this homogeneity seems to have increased in recent years. Such homogeneity is most likely to exist on issues that are central to the party’s ideology and programme; in other words: in the politically most controversial dossiers, PPG discipline is most likely to be redundant. And if the dossier is not politically controversial, MPs not involved in the committee work do not form an individual opinion, but take their cues from the PPG specialist or PPG committee (increasingly seen as the focal point of PPG decision-making), also rendering discipline unnecessary. Most importantly, the influence of the PPG over MPs is restricted by the fact that MPs are not just partisans, but also policy advocates and parliamentarians. Depending on the issues on the parliamentary agenda, these other roles may temporarily reduce the salience of the PPG.

Of course, the situation with regard to these three relationships varies considerably across parties. In the Labour Party the EPO seems to have been most successful in warding off the encroachment of the PPG, whereas the PPG seems most influential vis-à-vis the EPO in the two Liberal parties. The Conservative-Liberals’ PPG has also been the most reluctant to integrate the party-in-parliament and party-in-government. The Christian-Democrats and Labour have gone furthest in this respect, while the position of the Progressive-Liberal Party is not very clear because of its limited experience in government. PPG discipline seems most developed in the Labour and Christian-Democratic parties (although specialisation is also most advanced in these parties) with the two Liberal parties giving the greatest freedom to individual MPs. If these first impressions were supported by a more systematic analysis, they would show a striking correlation with the historical development of the parties: the Conservative-Liberal Party is successor to several liberal *partis de cadre* and the young Progressive-Liberal Party is a modern cadre party; the Labour Party and Christian-Democratic Party are successors to parties that originated as *partis de*

masse. It is also interesting to see that the pattern is not uniform across the three relationships: where the PPG seems stronger in relation to the EPO, it seems weaker in relation to its MPs (the Conservative-Liberals), and the other way around (Labour). In conclusion: the relations between the parliamentary party group and other components of the party have undoubtedly changed, but the pattern of change is complex and does not (yet?) warrant a simple diagnosis of fractiocracy.

Note

- 1 The empirical standard deviations by PPG and issue are available from the author. I should like to thank Galen Irwin for helping me calculate the hypothetical standard deviations.

7 PPGs in Belgium

Subjects of partitocratic dominion

Lieven De Winter and Patrick Dumont

With an extremely fragmented party system,¹ due to a multitude of cleavages and policy dimensions, Belgium's parliament provides fertile ground for a study of parliamentary party groups (PPGs). To narrow the focus, this study will look only at the PPGs in the Chamber of Representatives during the 1995–99 period.² How do PPGs operate in a partitocratic context such as the Belgian political system? This chapter will examine the extent to which extra-parliamentary parties (EPOs) manage to exert their predominance within the parliamentary subsystem and in the relationship of the latter with the executive.

Origins of the PPGs in Belgium

The creation of the Belgian state was the result of the collaboration of the Catholic aristocracy and the Liberal bourgeoisie in opposition to the Dutch king and was therefore based on a compromise between two opposite groups: a Catholic elite favouring a state in which the church would play an important role, and a liberal bourgeoisie that wanted a secular state. Catholic and Liberal notables decided to collaborate in government for the first sixteen years, the period of 'Unionism'. However, until 1846, there was hardly a party system or parties to speak of since neither the Catholics nor the Liberals were organised at the national level, but merely constituted rather loose groups of equal-minded notables in parliament. The Liberals were the first to organise themselves as a national political party after the first Liberal Congress was held in 1846 which created the Liberal and Constitutional Association in 1847. The Liberal Party split up into two distinct linguistic wings in 1971, namely the Parti Réformateur Libéral (PRL) and the Partij voor Vrijheid en Vooruitgang (PVV).³

The Catholics began to hold national congresses from 1863 on, but only in 1868 did they begin to organise themselves into permanent structures by bringing the local Catholic electoral associations under one organisational roof and creating the Federation of Catholic Circles. In 1968, the Catholics split according to linguistic lines into two parties: the Christelijke Volkspartij (CVP) and the Parti Social Chrétien (PSC).

The first socialist organisations (co-operatives, trade unions, mutual aid and cultural associations) appeared on the political arena as early as the second half of the nineteenth century but only led to the creation of a genuine party at the national level (the 'Belgian Workers Party') in 1885. Of the three traditional parties, the Socialist Party entered parliament last (in 1894), but was also the last one to give up its unitary structure since the separation only took place in 1978 with the creation of the Parti Socialiste (PS) and the Socialistische Partij (SP).

Thus, of the three political families that have virtually monopolised governmental power since the foundation of the Belgian state, the Catholic and the Liberal like-minded MPs formed PPGs of a 'club' type before turning to 'fractions' when their electoral associations slowly grew into EPOs. For the Socialists, the origin lies in the birth of a proletarian movement aimed at improving workers' living and working conditions. The PPG was formed after the EPO, and was thus a 'fraction' from the beginning. All of the other parties represented in the current parliament (after the 1999 elections) are also of extra-parliamentary origin. The two green parties, Ecolo and Agalev, were created in 1980 and 1982 respectively (see Rihoux 1995). The Flemish regionalist Volksunie (VU) formed in 1954 (see De Winter 1997), the Brussels regionalist Front Démocratique des Bruxellois (FDF) in 1964, and the Walloon regionalist Rassemblement Wallon (RW) in 1965 (see Buelens and Van Dyck 1998). Finally, the extreme-right Vlaams Blok (VB) dates back to 1978 (see Gijssels 1994), and the Front National-Nationaal Front (FN-NF) to 1984 (see Abramowicz 1993). All of these parties were formed to participate in general elections and exert influence through winning parliamentary seats.

Formal position of the PPG

Parliamentary and legal rules

Even though the PR list system has existed since 1899, the constitution has never mentioned political parties, and in spite of the formation of the Catholic and Liberal parties in parliament, parliamentary internal rules did not formally mention the existence of parliamentary groups until 1962.⁴ Until that time, the groups were only informally recognised, and distribution of formal legislative leadership positions (speaker and vice-speakers, committee chairs, Quaesture, Bureau, etc.) was decided informally and secretly in the Bureau of the Chamber in which the main parties were represented.⁵ And in spite of the fact that Belgium has been considered a partitocracy since the interwar period (Perin 1960:100–2), political parties were not formally recognised until 1989, when the system of public financing of parties was introduced.

Since 1995, a parliamentary party has needed five MPs to be recognised as a group in the Chamber (From 1962 to 1995, it was only three and there were 212 representatives instead of 150; Delvaux 1996) (see Table 7.1).

Table 7.1 Seat Distribution since 1971 in the Chamber of Representatives (parties ordered on the left-right scale)

Election	PCB	SP	PS	Agalev	Ecolo	RW	FDf	CVP	PSC	VU	PVV	PRL	UDRT	FN	VB	Other	Eff.	N	Total
1971	5	61			14	10	10	47	20	21	20	14					5.85	212	
1974	4	59			13	9	9	50	22	22	21	12					5.76	212	
1977	2	62			5	10	56	24	24	20	17	16					5.21	212	
1979	4	26	32		4	11	57	25	14	22	15	1	1		1		6.77	212	
1981	2	26	34	2	2	6	43	18	20	28	24	3	3		1		7.71	212	
1985	0	32	35	4	5	0	3	49	20	16	22	24	1		1		7.0	212	
1987	0	32	40	6	3	0	3	43	19	16	25	23	0		2		7.17	212	
1991	0	28	35	7	10	0	3	39	18	10	26	20	0	1	12	3	8.41	212	
1995	0	20	21	5	6	0	a	29	12	5	21	18	0	2	11		8.06	150	
1999	0	14	19	9	11	0	a	22	10	8	23	18	0	1	15		9.05	150	

Source: De Winter, Timmermans and Dumont (1997).

^a The party still exists, but in a federation with the French-speaking Liberals. The 'new party' is called PRL-FDF.

PCB, *Parti Communiste Belge* (Belgian Communist Party).

SP, *Socialistische Partij* (Flemish Socialists).

PS, *Parti Socialiste* (French-speaking Socialists).

Agalev, *Anders Gaan Leven* (Flemish Ecologists).

Ecolo, *Ecologistes Confédérés pour l'Organisation de Luttes Originates*

(French-speaking Ecologists).

RW, *Rassemblement Wallon* (Walloon Rally)

FDF, *Front Démocratique des Francophones* (French speakers' Front).

CVP, *Christelijke Volkspartij* (Flemish Christian-democrats).

PSC, *Parti Social-Chrétien* (French-speaking Christian-Democrats).

VU, *Volksunie* (Flemish Nationalists).

PVV, *Partij voor Vrijheid en Vooruitgang*, which became the VLD (*Vlaamse*

Liberalen en Democraten) in 1992 (Flemish Liberals).

PRL, *Parti Réformateur Liberal* (French-speaking Liberals).

UDRT, *Union Démocrate pour le Respect du Travail* (French-speaking

poujadists, extreme right).

FN, *Front National* (National Front, extreme right).

VB, *Vlaams Blok* (Flemish Nationalists, extreme right).

Yet, there are other thresholds that are more important in practical terms: twelve MPs are needed to have a permanent member in the Bureau, while for the Quaesture (management of the Chamber in terms of personnel, infrastructure, budget, and ceremonial matters) and standing committees, membership is proportionally allocated through the D'Hondt method.⁶ Given the small number of positions to be distributed, in practice this system excludes the smaller parties from full representation. Since 1995, permanent membership in standing committees has required at least nine elected members from the same group (committees consist of seventeen members).

Internal regulations

In general, there are two types of internal party rules covering the structure and operation of parliamentary groups: general party statutes and internal group rules. Most parties refer to the organisation and role of the PPG in their general party statutes. In addition to the regular stipulations concerning candidate selection and eligibility criteria (De Winter 1988), the statutes also cover the following:

- General duties of MPs as party members, as well as a number of disciplinary procedures and sanctions applicable to all party members and officials who violate party statutes and statutory decisions.
- Representation of MPs and the PPG in various organs of the party.
- Rules of incompatibility between the parliamentary mandate and other elected positions, between positions within the party at different levels, and, for some parties, also between private sector and interest groups.
- The obligation and methods of MPs and the PPG concerning their reporting—*a priori* or *a posteriori*—to the EPO with regard to parliamentary initiatives.
- Representation of members of the EPO in the PPG.
- Financial contributions of MPs to party finances.
- The MP's obligation to resign from parliamentary office when he or she leaves or is excluded from the party.
- In some cases, especially for the largest parties (CVP and PS), specific rules for the internal organisation and operation of the PPG.

Nevertheless, the normative power of these rules contained in the general party statutes should not be overestimated, since most PPG members and staff are hardly aware that these rules exist.

The CVP, Ecolo-Agalev (PPG consisting of MPs from both parties), and the VB have developed specific formal group statutes that stipulate in detail the operation of the PPG and the rights and duties of individual MPs. In the socialist groups and the VU, the general party statutes demand that their groups elaborate an internal set of rules. Yet, in practice, they have failed to draft such a set and instead operate entirely on the basis of informal rules.

Given the fact that all groups do not have a detailed set of written rules (of its own or contained in the general party statutes), and that formal rules tend to be ignored or neglected anyway, the following parts of this chapter will mostly refer to common practices and behavioural regularities, irrespective of whether or not they comply with the formal rules.

Nevertheless, some parties have decided to regulate MP's duties on a more individual basis. In the 1980s, Ecolo was the first party to draft a charter consisting of a moral and political code (to abide by the party's code of conduct) and a reciprocity commitment (a comprehensive financial arrangement in the event that the candidate is elected) to be signed by each of its candidates. Since 1995, the SP statutes have included a new text (separated from the rest of the articles, as well as the text on sanctions) stipulating integrity requirements for mandate-holders with regard to constituency service and aiming at a greater transparency with regard to the public and private mandates they uphold. Enforcement is assured by a code of conduct committee. The executive of the PSC has also elaborated its code of conduct. The latter, to be signed by all of the party's elected officials, contains a catalogue of rules and behaviours with regard to the fulfilling of their mandate, co-ordination and solidarity with other party officials, a greater transparency,⁷ the limitation of former reprehensible practices (clientelism, excessive personal publicity, patronage and corruption), and the ban on any form of collaboration with non-democratic parties (the *cordon sanitaire* around the VB and the FN-NF). All in all, statute reforms and/or texts added to these minimal party requirements have a strong flavour of democratic face-lifting. They usually correspond to an EPO decision of formally and temporarily giving in to the pressures of a section of the party that wants more influence.

Finally, the 'new political culture' wave, i.e. the drive for 'cleaner' and more democratic politics, has led several assemblies to create interparty working groups that prepare proposals for enhancing the quality of democracy, including codes of behaviour regarding in particular the MP's clientelistic practices, their obligation to declare their interest and wealth in a (non-public) register, and the limitation on the cumulation of elected mandates, etc. Once these proposals have been voted on by the different assemblies, they will become part of the official statute of the individual MP and legally enforceable.

Internal hierarchical structure of PPGs

All groups are headed by a PPG chairperson. These chairpersons automatically become members of the important Conference of Group Chairmen, which constitutes, next to the Speaker, the leading body of the Chamber. It comprises the Speaker, the vice-speakers and the chairperson of each parliamentary group. The parliamentary committees' chairpersons can be invited. The Prime Minister is informed about the conference and can assist personally or send a representative (usually a minister). The conference meets

weekly and decides—usually by consensus—on the agenda of the Chamber, the time each PPG is allocated for debate, the holding of ‘inter-pellations’,⁸ the regulation of parliamentary activities and long-term planning as well as giving advice on several matters, including the composition and functioning of the parliamentary committees.

In all groups apart from the VB, the chairperson of the PPG is formally elected by secret ballot for a full legislative term by his or her peers, i.e. the MPs of his parliamentary group. In practice, however, the EPO has an important, if not predominant, say in the selection of the chairperson of the PPG, and this explains why there is often only one consensus candidate who enjoys full confidence of the EPO leadership.

Apart from the PPG chairperson, most PPGs are governed by a collective body, the Bureau of the PPG. In most parties⁹ this Bureau is limited to the PPG chairperson and vice-chairperson, the political secretary of the PPG (not usually an MP), and the treasurer if there is one. In some PPGs, when a member also holds the position of vice-speaker, quaestor or secretary of the legislature, he or she is also included in the PPG Bureau. In the CVP,¹⁰ PSC, and VLD the Bureau also contains one or more ordinary members. These PPG bureaux are basically concerned with matters of internal day-to-day management, not political matters. Political matters are usually discussed in the plenary meeting of the PPG, or in formal and informal meetings between leaders of the PPG, the EPO or the PiG (see below).

Material resources of PPGs

The Belgian parliament is characterised by scarce institutionally provided resources. It has a judicial service with a limited staff that can assist individual legislators in the technical drafting of their private member’s bills. Each committee has one librarian who provides committee members with documentation. Apart from these services, no collectively provided staff are available to individual members. Until a few years ago, neither the documentation nor the library and the information it provides were computerised. Thus, there are no means for MPs to assess policies or predict the effects of proposed policies. Only since 1985 do all MPs have a private office within the parliament. However, the parliamentary groups receive large subsidies for covering the costs of personnel and office equipment (see Table 7.2).

The parliamentary financing of PPGs began modestly in 1971 (BEF 200,000 per group plus BEF 12,000 per MP) to become quite considerable today (about BEF 1,700,000 per MP in 1996; Delvaux 1996). Thus, most groups have gradually managed to engage a permanent political secretary for the group and some administrative aides. In addition, since 1988 the Chamber has started to pay for ‘level 1’ staff members, i.e., those paid at the level of civil servant with a university degree. Their numbers have gradually increased from one ‘university-trained’ staff member per eight MPs in February 1988 to one out of

Table 7.2 Material resources of PPGs and EPOs (state subsidies)

	<i>CVP</i>	<i>PSC</i>	<i>PS</i>	<i>SP</i>	<i>VLD</i>	<i>PRL-FDF</i>	<i>VU</i>	<i>Agalev</i>	<i>Ecolo</i>	<i>VB</i>
Formal resources PPGs 1996 in Belgian francs	48,086,640	20,897,290	35,794,990	33,163,200	34,821,360	29,846,880	8,290,800	8,290,800	8,975,330	18,239,760
Formal resources EPOs 1996 in Belgian francs	54,782,356	26,090,764	38,576,664	40,757,908	33,798,208	33,798,208	16,811,512	16,088,608	14,803,804	26,419,564

four from November 1988 until July 1993, then to almost one out of two until the current one-to-one basis adopted in September 1995. The last jump forward was facilitated by a drop in the overall number of deputies in accordance with the 1993 constitutional reform: from 212 to 150 after the 1995 elections. These staff members are statutory employees of the Chamber, like the PPG political secretaries, secretaries of PPG chairmen and quaestors, and staff members of the Speaker of the Chamber. Finally, the personal secretarial staff of MPs has increased, from none before 1980, to one part-time employee in 1980 (paid at the level of a clerk), to one full-time staff member (or secretary) for each MP since 1981.

Since most subsidies are proportional to the number of MPs per PPG, the large groups currently have a couple of dozen staff members, thus requiring some division of labour within the staff. In addition, since groups have great freedom in allocating these group subsidies, the allocation and organisation of these personnel resources differ somewhat between PPGs. First, some groups have not employed the maximum number of staff members that the subsidies received would allow them to—either to pay existing staff members with high seniority more, or to recruit more skilled staff members. Second, some parties seem to save some of the subsidies for a ‘rainy day’, which would allow them to keep on staff members should their subsidies decrease as a result of an electoral defeat.

Some parties (PS, VLD and Ecolo) have split the jobs added since the 1995 increase: there is one part-time extra personal assistant for each MP, and the rest are pooled for collective work for the PPG and the party. In some parties, the university-trained staff members are pooled within the PPG and conduct their activities exclusively for the group and inside the parliament building. In several others, they are transferred to the party research centre and provide a think tank for the party at large. Finally, in the VU, some (and in the VB, almost all) of the PPG staff members engage in organisational work at the national party level, with twenty people allocated to the regional constituency parties in the case of the VB.

Thus, Belgian PPGs have only recently moved from a ‘fraction’ to a ‘parliamentary party complex’ type. The progressive transformation that began with the important financial decisions of the 1980s and was completed with the 1995 reforms has by now already been assimilated by most of them.

Problems of intra-group and inter-group co-ordination within parties

Members’ obligations to the PPG and the EPO

Most PPGs have developed a set of conventions or informal rules in order to maintain an overview of MPs’ individual initiatives and to verify that they conform to the party programme and the decisions of the EPO. For

governmental parties, there is the additional need to verify whether MPs' initiatives respect the stipulations of the coalition agreement, and if this agreement does not cover the policy sector in which an initiative is taken, they have to clear the initiative with the other parties of the coalition (De Winter, Timmermans and Dumont 1997). Thus, because of the structural features of party government in Belgium, the hands of most MPs are securely tied (De Winter 1996a).

In all parties, private member's bills are subject to the approval of the PPG as a whole or its leadership. The same is true for MPs who would like to co-author a bill introduced by an MP of another party. In most cases the introduction of amendments that are not purely technical, or the co-signing of such amendments drafted by MPs of other parties, also require the approval of the PPG. Thus, as far as legislative initiatives are concerned, the hands of the majority MPs are securely tied.

Moreover, when an MP wants to hold an interpellation in the plenary assembly, most parties require the permission of the PPG. Since a motion of no confidence can be introduced after the interpellation of a minister, the PPGs have to monitor their MPs closely: if an MP of the majority tackles a minister too strongly, the opposition can try to profit from the situation by introducing a motion of no confidence against that minister. In Belgium, a minister will in most cases not step down unless he is dropped by his party, even when it has been proved that he made an error. This invulnerability is due to the fact that the parliamentary revocation of a minister would be interpreted by the minister's party as a breach of coalition confidence and goodwill, thereby virtually necessitating that party's resignation from the coalition. Thus, interpellations held by majority MPs can provide ammunition for opposition parties and potential embarrassment and loss of face for the majority parties.

Written questions, given their sheer number and little political importance, do not require preliminary permission.¹¹ However, MPs do have to ask permission of their PPG to ask oral questions during the Thursday afternoon Question Time, but this is due to internal Chamber rules. Each party can only pose a maximum of two questions, and therefore the PPG chairperson has to give the Speaker of the Chamber the name of his MPs who would like to question a minister and the topic of the question. For other types of oral questions (for instance, in committees) no preliminary permission is required.

Most party statutes stipulate a wide variety of sanctions against rebelling MPs and identify the intra-party instances (disciplinary or deontological commissions) that would necessitate applying these sanctions. With regard to voting, the parliamentary group can explicitly enforce a 'vote of discipline', to which all MPs must adhere. Breaches of voting discipline and other violations of the party's will can be sanctioned in a variety of ways in accordance with the statutes, ranging from a simple warning to an exclusion of the MP from his or her committees, his or her group, or from the party at large.

Still, in spite of this impressive arsenal of sanctions, most group spokespeople feel that, apart from exerting informal pressure on rebellious or inactive

MPs and the threat of eventual deselection, the group does not have enough tools to effectively curb a lack of party discipline or neglect. Thus, party group leaders usually try to keep potential rebels in line or correct rebellious behaviour by talking to the MP one-on-one. The possibility of sanctions also depends on the calibre of the MPs under fire: backbenchers can be more easily disciplined than MPs who carry a lot of weight within the EPO.

However, instances in which disciplinary measures are warranted are quite rare, since groups are usually cohesive and show enough solidarity to vote in a disciplined manner without the threat or application of such formal sanctions.¹² Decisions in parliamentary groups are made more through consensus than by majority votes because the ideological and programmatic beliefs and issue positions of individual MPs closely correspond to those of their parties.¹³

Job neglect in terms of attendance is a recurrent problem in the Belgian parliament (Janssens 1972; Drion 1980; De Winter 1992).¹⁴ Thus, some groups have installed formal or informal whips for plenary and/or committee meetings. In most parties, sanctions similar to the ones mentioned with regard to voting rebellion are also envisaged for MPs who are too often absent. In 1993, a general system of financial sanctions was established, punishing those who do not participate sufficiently in plenary voting. Those who annually participate in less than 80, 70 or 50 per cent of the plenary votes receive respectively 10, 30 or 60 per cent less of their parliamentary pay.

Finally, MPs can be disciplined by party bodies other than the PPG, since the parliamentary groups are collectively responsible to the party. In most parties, group chairpersons have to report to the party executive on the collective parliamentary activities of the group and of their individual members with regard to absenteeism, questions, private member's bills, etc. With respect to absenteeism and other abuses, the national party can then decide to communicate them to the MP's constituency party and recommend not to consider him or her in future draftings of lists for general elections.

Committee assignment and co-ordination

Committee members are formally nominated by the plenary Assembly. Normally the groups have designated their candidates for the number of seats they are allotted, and they are declared nominated. Groups that are not large enough to constitute a formally recognised parliamentary group can send one delegate to each committee, although he or she is not allowed to participate in voting. Most permanent committees in the Chamber of Representatives count seventeen permanent members and twenty-five substitutes.¹⁵ Committees nominate their own chairperson, but respect a certain degree of proportionality as far as party affiliation is concerned. Thus, some committees are chaired by opposition MPs.

Institutionally, committee assignments are decided by the parliamentary group and its leader(s). At the beginning of the legislative term, group members

are asked to state their preferences to the group political secretary. The group chairperson and/or secretary then propose a scheme, intending to satisfy all members as much as possible. In case of conflicting demands, seniority¹⁶ (and to a lesser extent specialisation) usually decides. Furthermore, in the CVP (and to a lesser extent the PSC), group leadership sometimes takes into account factional affiliation, whereas the Ecolo-Agalev group evidently takes linguistic background into account.¹⁷

Several methods are used for keeping the PPG as a whole informed about committee business. First, some parties (SP, VLD, VU, Greens and VB) organise a *tour d'horizon* during their weekly PPG plenary meeting, during which committee members orally present the main topics that will be discussed and decided by their respective committees. In the PS and PSC, a written note on committee matters is presented to the PPG. In the PS, once it is discussed and accepted by the group, this note will serve as a guidelines (*a priori* monitoring) for committee members. The CVP chooses one member per committee to organise co-ordination within his committee delegation.¹⁸ However, co-ordination of the PPG occurs only indirectly, that is to say through the EPO. When a controversial matter discussed in a committee attracts the attention of the media, and therefore the party in general, the coordinator will clear such important committee business with the EPO, not the PPG, so that the EPO executive can determine its position and correct its committee members. Finally, during committee meetings, each party delegation can be supported by one extra-parliamentary expert. He or she usually reports back to the relevant policy committee in the party research centre and/ or to the PPG leader or political secretary.

Therefore, most PPGs' operational rules allow for permanent monitoring and even binding supervision over what the parties' permanent members are introducing, discussing and deciding in the committee system, at least for all relevant political matters. Yet, as most parties only have one or two committee members, a certain degree of *de facto* autonomy from the group and the party may appear. Single committee members are constantly asked to join bigger delegations for committee votes and PPG control is of course less effective when committees meet behind closed doors. Small committee delegations, when they decide to collaborate fully, can also become policy dictators (the only compulsory check common to all groups is the *a posteriori* report to the PPG meeting where committee members must explain their behaviour). In any case, since all matters decided in committee eventually still have to be discussed and voted on in the plenary meeting, PPG leadership has a final guarantee against committee delegations that stray too far from the party line.

Intra-party co-ordination between PPGs of different houses

Before the 1995 elections, all members of the community and regional parliaments (apart from the Brussels and German-speaking parliaments) were

also members of the Chamber of Representatives or the Senate.¹⁹ One week they would sit as members of the federal parliament, the next week as a regional/community MP. Through this personal combination of mandates, co-ordination between the PPGs' position at the federal and subfederal level did not pose a major problem. Since 1995, this system of 'wearing two hats' has no longer been in operation because positions at the two legislative levels are no longer compatible. The working environments of Senators, Representatives and regional/community MPs have grown strictly separate, to the extent that after the 1995 elections, some parties organised special encounters where MPs from different PPGs could get acquainted with each other. This proliferation of autonomous PPGs poses an additional problem for policy coordination, especially in federal systems where there are no federal parties (Deschouwer 1996). Indeed, Belgium has only Flemish and francophone parties; no party pretends to represent the entire nation any more (see De Winter and Dumont 1998). Therefore, the federal and subfederal PPGs have to be more in tune with each other than in other federal systems. Since the end of the double mandate, divergent views between national and regional MPs are more and more frequent, not only with regard to regional/linguistic conflicts, but also to socioeconomic issues as well as democratic reform.

Thus, the parties have installed co-ordination mechanisms to harmonise the positions of their four to six parliamentary groups.²⁰ Co-ordination can occur at the top of the party hierarchy, at the level of the PPG, or at a decentralised policy level. Oligarchic co-ordination occurs on a regular basis in the CVP and VLD. In the latter, the party president meets weekly with all group chairpersons and the director of the party research centre. In the CVP, the group chairpersons and political secretaries of the CVP groups in the Chamber and the Senate meet every month with the Flemish and Brussels legislatures.²¹ In fact, the role of the CVP president is becoming more and more one of conflict-resolver or consensus-seeker between his four groups, rather than that of policy-setter or voice for the EPO. The French-speaking Christian-Democratic correspondent organises meetings between PPG political secretaries once a week at the party's headquarters. Once every two weeks, ministerial cabinet chiefs attend these meetings.²²

Some groups (SP, VLD, PSC) hold regular joint meetings of full PPGs, while the Volksunie Chamber and Senate PPG do not hold separate meetings at all any more. At the beginning or the end of every parliamentary session, parties usually organise study week-ends in the country where parliamentarians (from all assemblies at the federal level only, or even just from one assembly) can meet, with or without EPO presence.

Last but not least, there is decentralised co-ordination for different policy sectors. In most parties, there are many standing and *ad hoc* working groups (usually headed by an MP), in which MPs from different PPGs work together with the experts from the party research centre, the PPG staff members (and sometimes the PPG political secretary), and external experts (academics, civil servants, etc.) to prepare the party's positions and initiatives on specific policy

Table 7.3 Relationships between PPGs and EPOs

	CVP	PSC	PS	SP	VLD	PRL	VU	Agalev	Ecolo	VB	FDf
Size of group in Chamber	29	12	22	20	21	16	5	5	5	11	2
Senate	12	7	11	9	10	8	3	2	3	5	1
Regional parliaments + European parliament	36 + 3	31 + 3	50 + 3	26 + 3	25 + 3	39 + 2	10 + 1	6 + 1	18 + 1	17 + 2	14 + 1
Total number of MPs	80	53	86	58	59	65	19	14	27	35	18
Total number of party executive members	54	37	32	21	30	150	13	12	9	14	26
Statutory minimum representation of MPs in party executive (percentage of Representatives exclusively)	CVP chairpersons of assemblies (2%)	PPG chairpersons + 2 deputies (8%)	PPG chairpersons or other MP only with advisory vote (0%)	PPGs chairpersons but only with advisory vote (0%)	All PPG chairpersons with (10%)	All federal MPs + regional PPG chairpersons (11%)	All PPG chairpersons (8%)	All (3) PPG (co-) chairpersons (0.8%)	All (5) PPG (co-) chairpersons plus their (only) Euro MP (1%)	One Representative for all PPGs (0.7%)	All federal and Euro MPs + 8 regional MPs (8%)
Number of Representatives in party executive	7	4	2	3	6	16	3	1	1	1	2
Number of senators in party executive	5	4	2	3	3	8	3	1	1	4	1
Number of regional or Euro MPs	12	3	7	6	8	38	6	1	4	5	9
Total MPs in party executive	24	11	11	12	17	62	12	3	6	10	12
Effective representation of Representatives (exclusively) in party executive	13%	11%	6%	14%	20%	11%	23%	0.8%	1%	0.7%	8%
Effective representation of all MPs in executive	44%	30%	34%	57%	57%	41%	67%	25%	67%	71%	46%
Percentage of Representative members of party executive	24%	34%	9%	10%	28%	100%	60%	20%	20%	0.3%	100%
Percentage of all MPs members of party executive	30%	21%	13%	21%	29%	95%	63%	21%	22%	29%	67%

Sources: Party statutes and composition of party executives (September 1997).

issues. Most of these groups are not permanent; their existence depends on the issues at stake and the potentially salient ones for the future.²³

The co-ordination between PPG and EPO

The co-ordination between PPGs and EPOs is primarily channelled through the representation of the PPG in the EPO (see Table 7.3).

All parties include their PPG chairpersons in the EPO executive except VB, which has only one representative of all elected officials as an *ex officio* member. The PSC party statutes include two additional representatives of the federal PPGs to the EPO, while in the PRL and the FDF, all federal MPs are members with full voting rights.²⁴ Even in the former cases, in practice, a much larger number of the members of the EPO executive are MPs. Since in most parties members of the EPO executive are elected by the constituency parties, MPs are often chosen as constituency representatives to the central party decision-making organ. Still, in spite of the predominance of elected officials in the party executive, only a small minority of a party's parliamentary personnel usually sits in these executives (except for small parties and the PRL). Thus, one can wonder whether those MPs in the party executive are representatives of the PPG in the EPO, or rather, representatives of the EPO in the PPG. In any case, about half of the MPs feel that generally 'everything is decided at the top of their party' (ICSOP-IMRA 1986).

In some parties, the EPO is formally represented in the PPG. In practice, in about half of the parties the president of the national party organisation attends the plenary meetings of his PPG in the Chamber more or less regularly, in spite of the fact that most of the party presidents are not member of the Chamber of Representatives, but of the Senate.

Finally, there is an indirect channel of EPO representation in the PPG, through the very important co-ordinating and steering role of the party research centre for MP initiatives. The heads of these research centres are nominated by the party leadership and are also responsible to the party leader.

The role of the PPG in candidate selection

Candidate selection is a crucial element in the chain of representation in Belgium, given the fact that the electoral system in practice only gives voters the opportunity to decide on the distribution of seats between parties, not on the nomination of the individuals that will fill those seats. Yet, the PPG or its leadership has no formal say in this process. In all parties—except for the PS—a gradual shift away from the poll procedure, i.e., a selection procedure involving all party members (De Winter 1988), has occurred. In most parties, the process is now in the hands of the local and constituency party activists, while in the CVP it is controlled—also at the constituency level—by the three intra-party

factions. In some parties like the VU and the VB, the national executive party has traditionally had a say in the selection policy of the constituency parties; more recently national party headquarters have gained influence, allowing them to push newcomers recruited from outside traditional recruitment reservoirs of the party.

Selectors not only have preferences concerning the background characteristics of the candidates they select, they also hold strong expectations with regard to the behaviour their candidates display inside and outside parliament, and usually have—through deselection—the means to discipline an MP who does not live up their expectations.²⁵

Pressure groups are traditionally very influential in the selection process of the CVP. The CVP is a Flemish Catholic catch-all party which appeals to Catholic workers, farmers and ‘middle classes’ (e.g., shopkeepers, artisans, professionals and entrepreneurs). These three socioeconomic categories are highly organised, and together with the Catholic educational network, health sector, and cultural and recreational organisations, form the most influential Catholic ‘pillar’. All these bodies consider the CVP to be the sole political representative of their interests. All three have active sections at the constituency level and are represented as *standen* (estates) in the constituency parties. As a result, each tries to achieve as much power within the party as possible. Control over the selection of political staff at all levels—local, constituency, provincial and national—is a major part of their strategy of power achievement (Smits 1986).

In fact, nearly all CVP representatives obtained their seats because one of the *standen* offered them a safe place on an electoral list. Thus CVP MPs are plain group representatives, designated by the ‘estates’ themselves for the purpose of representing the group in parliament. Most of these groups organise regular meetings between their MPs and the leadership of the groups at the federal, regional, and constituency level; here, the MPs are briefed about the issues at stake in parliament that are important to the estates. These estates also ensure that their MPs will become members of the committees relevant to the estates’ interests.

In the other parties, the impact of pressure groups on candidate selection is currently less predominant, either because these parties are not the political spokesmen of a ‘pillar’ (e.g., Greens, VU and VB), or because their pillar organisations are less well integrated into the party organisation (e.g., Liberals and Socialists). Yet, in most parties MPs are encouraged to cultivate informal links with different types of pressure groups and social movements. These links with civil society are taken into account in candidate selection as well as the committee assignment process because involvement in such networks not only boosts the candidate’s electoral value, but also enhances his or her specialisation and expertise in committee matters.

Still, given the comparative irrelevance of parliament in the decision-making process, most influential pressure groups directly contact members of the government, the leaders, executives and the party research centres of the EPO of

the majority parties, but rarely the chairperson of the PPG. Hence, the PPG, as a body, is not the focus of pressure group lobbying activities (De Winter 1999).

PPGs and PiGs

Role of the PPG in cabinet formation

Support for the government has become a permanent duty for majority MPs as far as voting on legislative projects, governmental declarations and votes of confidence are concerned. Paradoxically, though, parliamentary groups and their leaders as such are not involved in the formation of a new government; they are included only when an MP or PPG chairperson is a heavyweight in the EPO or has particular policy expertise, but not out of virtue of his or her parliamentary position. Unlike the party executives, most groups are not systematically consulted or informed during the government-formation process, which is, after the Netherlands, the longest among West European countries (seventy-one days in the 1968–95 period) (De Winter, Timmermans and Dumont 1997). Nor do they ratify agreements struck between coalition parties before or after their party's investiture.

Formally, the parliamentary groups are only involved at the very end of the government formation process when an agreement is reached on the type of coalition, on its detailed programme, and on the ministerial personnel. Since the coalition programme and configuration are approved by the general conferences of the respective coalition parties before the government seeks the usual investiture by parliament, a negative vote by majority MPs would openly defy the decisions of the party's supreme decision-making body. Thus, during the vote of confidence debate, majority MPs may criticise some governmental intentions contained in its programme, but seldom do they dare to follow this up with a negative vote.²⁶ Actually, in the entire post-war period, in both houses, an average of only 0.6 per cent of majority MPs voted against the government at the investiture vote (De Winter, Timmermans and Dumont 1997).

Also with regard to coalition maintenance and collapse, the role of parliamentary groups and individual MPs is extremely limited. Since 1947, not a single cabinet has fallen because of a loss of confidence vote in parliament. Usually, the internal governmental cohesion collapses because of inter-party and intra-party conflicts and the cabinet resigns before giving parliament a chance to formally register its failure.

However, the 1995–99 legislature has introduced a new practice: in all coalition parties, PPGs have been asked by their EPO to evaluate governmental agreements and to update some parts of them. This new function of giving some say to majority PPGs in governmental matters may be linked to the new institutional reform of legislature governments (an alternative majority must exist to make a government fall). Since the cabinet is now intended to serve a four-year term, the need for a mid-term evaluation and update of the contract has

become more necessary. Given the call for a 'new political culture', EPOs have decided to assign this task to their parliamentary groups, rather than keep it solely in their own hands or in the hands of their party presidents.

Government agreement as policy bible

The increasing number of parties involved in the process of government formation has considerably reduced the rewards of government participation in terms of offices and policies. Parties can claim fewer ministerial portfolios, patronage resources, and policies favourable to their electorates and clienteles than before. The decline of the rewards of office has made government participation more hazardous, and the risks of some partner 'shirking' their responsibilities more likely. This has increased the need for contracts *ex ante*, i.e., for clear, encompassing and enforceable agreements on policy as well as on patronage rewards, and for means to monitor and enforce these contracts *ex post*.

Thus, since the beginning of the 1970s, coalition parties have begun to draft elaborate and lengthy agreements (usually over 100 pages), in which most policy fields are covered in detail. These governmental agreements have grown in length and become more detailed, encompassing more and more different policy fields.

By designing these government agreements, supporting parties manage to define in detail what kind of policies the government and individual ministers should elaborate, when they should be implemented, and what kind of policies or problems should not be tackled because of lack of consensus. Breaches of the governmental contract are at the heart of intra-coalition conflict and government resignation.

The references that ministers, party presidents and parliamentary groups make to the agreement can be either positive, in the sense that the 'bible' explicitly includes the new policy initiative, or negative, in the sense that nothing in the bible prohibits such an initiative. Since 1991, this latter strategy has become obsolete, as the coalition agreement now concludes with the formula that 'also for all matters not included in the coalition agreement the majority parties have agreed to observe the classical rule of consensus within the cabinet and in parliament'. This means that in accordance with the agreement, majority MPs and ministers can only launch new policies when their initiative is explicitly covered by the other majority PPGs or by the full cabinet. Thus, for individual MPs and ministers, the clause means 'the bible and nothing but the bible' unless all coalition parties agree to modify or expand the document.

Most parties interpret this clause to refer only to ethical issues, designed in order to prevent a crisis like the one that occurred after an alternative majority of Socialists, Liberals and Greens had voted in favour of a liberalisation of abortion in 1989. The CVP insisted on the introduction of such a clause in order to avoid new alternative majorities. Yet, it seems that the CVP is the party that breaks the spirit of this clause most often. MPs still have the right to introduce proposals,

but these proposals must be discussed between coalition parties. Since consensus is needed, the content of the proposal to be treated in parliament may not correspond at all to the original. Those proposals introduced without the approval of the coalition parties risk remaining untreated in parliament. As for amendments of governmental bills, the clause is taken very seriously by all parties, except perhaps (once again) by the CVP.

Interfaces between the PPG, EPO and the PiG

In all Belgian parties today, nearly all ministers regularly attend the weekly meeting of their party executive, where the PPG is also represented. In addition, the ministers and secretaries of state have a meeting with their respective party presidents (who by definition is not member of the cabinet) the day before the cabinet session. During these intra-party meetings, the agenda of the cabinet is carefully scrutinised, and the positions to be defended by the ministers the following day in the cabinet are defined. In all parties, these meetings with the president and some top party leaders have a greater influence on the positions of ministers than meetings with the executive. In some parties, these 'pre-cooking' cabinet meetings are attended by the leaders of the parliamentary groups in the Chamber and the Senate, the national party secretary, and the head of the party research centre.

Apart from these regular and formal types of contact, informal and *ad hoc* contacts are important as well. For instance, when important issues or new facts unexpectedly arise during cabinet meetings, the meeting is sometimes suspended in order to allow ministers to phone their party president for advice, or the matter is put on the agenda of the next meeting so that there is ample time for consulting party headquarters. Emergency consultations of the PPG by the ministers do not take place.

EPOs also influence cabinet decision-making through direct formal and informal contact between leaders of the parties outside government or parliament, during which agreements are made that are binding for cabinet members and PPGs. Some crucial denominational and linguistic conflicts have been resolved by way of such party summits. Agreements reached at these summits are presented as political pacts, not amendable by the cabinet or by the parliamentary majority.

Finally, there are the direct and indirect contacts of cabinet members with the parliamentary parties as a collective actor, and with individual parliamentary leaders and backbenchers of the majority party or parties (De Winter 1993). In the PS, ministers call themselves for *ad hoc* meetings quite regularly (or are asked to do so) in order to explain a governmental bill in detail. The entire PPG may attend this informal meeting, but more often only the members of the competent committee do so. With these direct contacts and through the representation of the PPG in the party bureau, MPs can influence the texts presented by their ministers.

In the SP, at least one minister (often the vice-PM) assists at the group meetings, and briefs them about government work and negotiation processes; the minister can also brief the government on what is happening in the parliamentary group. There seems to be a good group spirit and collaboration between the parliamentary group, the executive and SP ministers.

In the PSC, ministers are always invited to PPG meetings but are usually merely represented by their *chef 'de cabinet*. The frequency of contacts with MPs and the amount of information given largely depends on the personality of the ministers. There is also a meeting of staff members, political secretaries of the PPGs and members of ministerial cabinets once every two weeks, which is the link allowing effective influence over governmental texts. CVP ministers usually also attend the group meetings, but there is less dialogue and sounding out of the group by ministers than in the other majority partners. Several CVP ministers (often through their *chef de cabinet*) try to include, or at least sound out, the group or its leading members when they are drafting new legislative projects.

As for the liberal parties and the VU, when they were in government, the contact between ministers (or ministerial cabinet members) and PPGs was either felt to be limited (PPGs were informed but had no impact on governmental policies) or insignificant. For example, in the PVV, weekly meetings between PiG and EPO did not include PPG chairpersons; in the VU ministers hardly ever came to PPG meetings, etc.

Variations of the PPG role in decision-making

Most opposition parties, apart from the Greens, feel they do not have any influence over policy-making with respect to the majority, especially not under the previous government, which, through special powers, further curtailed parliament's monitoring role in the form of legislative scrutiny of government bills. Through direct and indirect contact with their PiG (either with or without the EPO), majority PPGs feel that they exert more efficient influence over government policy than they can through bill proposals or amendments of governmental bills. However, they realise that the vast majority of the major compromises between parties are concluded at the level of the government and that legislation is drafted in ministerial cabinets. Compared to an opposition situation, EPO research centres become relatively less influential when their party enters coalitions, because it results in a brain drain of the best experts over to the ministerial cabinets.

While there are few differences across policy sectors, the personality factor, and the political weight, experience and prestige of the key actors in the PPG, EPO and PiG affect the relations between them. According to the position the political heavyweights hold in the three elements of the party, power can shift between them. Yet, the general picture in all parties is that the PPG is the weakest factor, and usually (apart from the Socialists), the PiG is predominant

over the EPO. PPGs in Belgium are thus clearly of an 'integrated' type, and can further be said to act as 'voting machines', although the dominance of EPOs over PPGs varies from one party to another. The calibre of PPG leaders can also spill over onto the ordinary backbenchers.²⁷ Finally, the personality of the Speaker of the Chamber also seems to affect the influence of PPGs. Some have more room for MPs to manoeuvre than others, including those from the opposition.

Conclusion

The study of parliamentary party groups in Belgium uncovers a major problem—that of their political relevance. Belgium, along with Italy, is often labelled a partitocracy (Deschouwer, De Winter and Della Porta 1996). In each process of delegation of political power, political parties play a predominant role. They channel the delegation of power from voters to MPs, from parliament to the cabinet, from the collective cabinet to individual ministers, and from ministers to their civil servants. The parties have developed a large number of *ex ante* and *ex post* control and permanent monitoring mechanisms in order to maintain their control over MPs as well as ministers and civil servants. Thus, in terms of relevance in the decision-making process, a rational allocation of research resources should focus first on party headquarters, the so-called *Kerncabinet*, the informal meetings between party presidents and ministers, and other nexuses of partitocratic decision-making, rather than on less relevant actors in the decision-making process like parliamentary groups. But precisely because of their irrelevance, the study of the 'weak' parliamentary parties is worthwhile, as it further illuminates the degeneration of the Belgian polity from a parliamentary monarchy to an oligopolistic partitocracy.

Until recently, the hierarchy between internal party bodies was in effect quite clear: whatever the governmental or opposition status of the party, its PPG was always considered to be a 'voting machine'. Some recent structural changes, however, seem to affect the relationship between PPG, EPO and PiG in two different ways: on the one hand, as the legislative function of the parliament is further reduced by the use of special powers and the introduction of a clause in the governmental agreement, PPGs have a very weak role in policy-making, and the gap is widened further. On the other hand, PPGs now have better tools for controlling the executive and thus fulfilling the Chamber's second function.

Since 1995, in effect, the Chamber has been exclusively in charge of the control of the government. The constitutional reform that granted this exclusive function contained, or was followed up by, decisions giving the assembly the means to achieve this task. First, MPs have become full-time professionals of a single assembly. Second, parliamentary groups are intellectually better equipped, as the number of university-trained staff members has doubled. Even

when, in some parties, these resources have been pooled and to some extent drained to the party research centre, the thinktank on which MPs can count has generally expanded significantly. This is already visible in the multiplication of interpellations and parliamentary questions: for all these activities, the 1995–96 session was the most active ever (*Chambre des Représentants de Belgique, Rapport Annuel, 1995–96*).

Some changes were already decided at the end of the 1980s: the houses have been less reluctant to establish parliamentary investigation committees (not always meeting behind closed doors and, since 1996, sometimes even broadcasted by public television channels) and in using public hearings in committee sessions. This enhancement of the political control of the Chamber of Representatives has, however, triggered criticism about the personal publicity committee members may attract by participating in highly visible committees and about the amount of work MPs on these new committees have added to their traditional activities (risk of system demand overload). Nevertheless, these changes, added to the 1989 reforms of budgetary procedures, have expanded opportunities for parliamentary control. In addition, more recently, they are more involved in the evaluation of the coalition agreement since its updating at mid-term.

All in all, while the legislative role of the Chamber remains secondary, its control function seems to be on the rise. But for how long? If none of the basic conditions underlying Belgian partitocracy change, this increased parliamentary activism will lead to even more political instability—of which parliament and MPs may become the first victim. The limited role of parliament in the policy-making process (De Winter 1998) is basically due to structural constraints: a multiple cleavage system combined with a PR electoral system leads to an extreme degree of fragmentation of PPGs and multi-party coalitions. As coalitions tend to be highly unstable (with an average duration of 1.4 years in the 1946–95 period), the potentially disturbing interventions of all other loci of policy-making one finds in most parliamentary democracies must be curtailed: PPGs, individual ministers, the judiciary, the party's rank-and-file, and the voters. Thus, the increase of parliamentary control tools as well other measures taken in order to improve the functioning, status and legitimacy of parliament and its role in decision-making can only produce positive effects if the structural conditions that underlie partitocracy in Belgian are removed. Only through a drastic reduction in the size of the party system and a decrease of centrifugal party competition, can parliament and PPGs break their partitocratic chains.

Notes

- 1 The Rae index of fractionalisation reached a peak of 0.88 in 1991 and 1995, with thirteen parties represented in the House in 1991.
- 2 Since both the Chamber of Representatives and the Senate have been symmetrical in

terms of their main functions (government-making, legislation, control) and organisation from the time the constitutional monarchy was established in 1831, a complete picture of the Belgian PPG situation should also have taken the bicameralistic feature into account. However, the constitutional reforms of 1993 reduced the powers of the Senate, amongst other things, making the Senate PPGs a matter for separate study. (For the old and new functions of both chambers, see De Winter (1996b).) We will thus concentrate on the post-1995 situation, in which only the House can invest or dissolve a government, vote on the budget and allow interpellations of ministers, and where all government bills are now introduced. We have analysed past and 1995–99 Chamber standing orders, all parties' statutes and, where available, internal group rules. Interviews were conducted with either the chairman or the political secretary of each PPG.

- 3 In 1992, the PVV became the VLD (Vlaamse Liberalen en Democraten).
- 4 Adaptation of Chamber rules, *Parlementaire Stukken* No. 263, 1961–62, p. 263. Note that the terminology used for PPGs in Belgium differs from one language to another. In Dutch we speak of *fracties* and in French of *groupes*.
- 5 There are several directing bodies. The politically most relevant bodies are the presidency and the Conference of the Chairmen of the Parliamentary Groups. Politically less significant posts are the five vice-chairs (who replace the chairman in case of absence), the four secretaries (who primarily control voting procedures) and the six quaestor positions.
- 6 However, Chamber rules stipulate that the House can decide, on the recommendation of the Bureau, to give representation to groups that are too small to get a seat through PR-D' Hondt allocation of leadership offices.
- 7 The number of public and private mandates is now limited, and the people concerned must report at least yearly to the party and to an assembly of members on their political activities, and they must resign in case of judiciary involvement.
- 8 An interpellation is an oral question asked to a minister. The answer leads to a debate and sometimes to a vote on a motion.
- 9 There is no Bureau in the VB parliamentary group. The PPG is led by the chairperson and the vice-chairperson.
- 10 The CVP has an extremely large Bureau that includes chairs of the other CVP parliamentary groups and formally nearly half of its twenty-nine representatives. This poses a major problem, as matters raised first at the meeting of the Bureau that have to be presented to the full group have already been heard and discussed by half the PPG. A reduction in the size of the Bureau is now being seriously considered.
- 11 There are different types of parliamentary questions: written questions (introduced in written form and answered in written form), oral questions (introduced in written form and answered orally), and urgent questions (introduced orally and answered orally). The House committees have recently started to hold weekly 'questions concerning current events'. In addition, most questions are now asked in committee meetings rather than the plenary. They all concern demands for clarification, confirmation or negation. The minister's answer to questions is not followed by a debate, which limits their utility for controlling government.
- 12 Until 1995, most ministers and party presidents were Members of Parliament, and since they usually attended the meetings of their parliamentary groups, they served as an additional source of party control over the group's decision-making (De Winter, 1990).
- 13 De Bakker (1969); Frogner (1978); De Ridder, Peterson and Wirth (1978); Frogner and Dierickx (1980) and De Winter (1991) found that Belgian MPs position themselves along the three traditional conflict dimensions and on specific issues in a way closely corresponding to their parties' positions.
- 14 De Winter's survey (1992) indicated that, for committees where he or she is a permanent member, the average MP was absent for 27 per cent of the meetings. As far as attendance

- when the House was meeting in plenary session is concerned, the average MP was absent nearly 40 per cent of the time.
- 15 Proportional representation of recognised groups in the 1995–99 legislature allocated four seats to the CVP, three each to the VLD and the PS, two each to the SP and the PRL-FDF, and one each to the PSC, Ecolo-Agalev and the VB. Some permanent committees with little expertise (such as accounting, naturalisations, or petitions) count fewer members (nine, ten or eleven). Some extra-ordinary committees count more than twenty-three members.
 - 16 The SP, for instance, tries to balance committee allocation with regard to seniority by creating freshman-senior tandems (since the SP has two members in each permanent committee).
 - 17 Since the PPG is formed by two linguistic wings from two EPOs, they had to create a system for sharing the single permanent member and supplementary of the Green group in each committee. Permanent and supplementary members must be from different linguistic groups. In addition, within the PPG, effective members and supplementaries are considered to be totally equal in terms of job division: for some sectors of the committee's policy area, the permanent member will act as the party's main spokesperson. In other policy sectors the supplementary member will take on that role.
 - 18 The co-ordinator also serves as a whip towards his colleagues for committee attendance.
 - 19 Since the 1960s, Belgium has followed a difficult path in the direction of federalism. In 1993, the latest of many revisions of the constitution almost completed the organisation of a federal country based on the overlapping of three linguistic communities (Flemish, French and German (a tiny minority)) and three socioeconomic regions (Flanders, Brussels and Wallonia), with numerous connections between them (the main one being the fusion of Flemish Community and Flanders Region in a 'Flemish government').
 - 20 Flemish parties have a maximum four PPGs (House, Senate, Flemish Parliament, Brussels Legislature). Francophone parties have a maximum of six groups (Chamber, Senate, Walloon Parliament, Brussels Legislature, French—and German-speaking Community Legislatures). Note that Euro MPs can be associated with thematic meetings, too.
 - 21 On the other hand, the number of joint plenary group meetings is very low: two under Van Hecke as EPO president (1993–96), one under the current president Van Peel.
 - 22 In Belgium, each minister appoints a personal staff, chosen at his/her own and the party's discretion.
 - 23 *Ad hoc* working groups and party research centre committees may occasionally be bilingual, (re-)uniting members of the two linguistic wings of the same political 'family'. Another unusual procedure case is the Etats généraux de l'écologie politique (around 150 thematic forums organised for a period of three years) created by Ecolo. These meetings are open to everyone in order to define new political orientations for the party ideology. The large majority of participants (experts, researchers, academics, journalists and all people interested or in touch with the subject) are indeed not members of the party.
 - 24 The PRL stands as an exception in the Belgian EPO executive landscape. With more than 100 members invited to the bureau, it is by far the largest one. However, attendance depends largely on the matters at stake and the political climate. Usually, not more than half of the members are present.
 - 25 The ICSOP-IMSA (1986) survey revealed that 48 per cent of the Belgian MPs believe that an MP must adhere to the party line if he or she wants a safe place on the candidate list at the next election.
 - 26 For the role of parties, party presidents, parliamentary groups and their leaders in the formation, maintenance and collapse of Belgian governments, see De Winter, Timmermans and Dumont (1997).

- 27 When the SP group was led by Frank Vandenbroucke, his intellectual superiority within party leadership circles made him the real vice-PM of the SP. This also gave his parliamentary group more influence over SP ministers. PRL vice-PM Jean Gol was so predominant that the PPG and EPO did not have any significant policy impact.

8 A power centre in Danish politics

Lars Bille

In the first Danish constitution of 1849, and in later revisions, there is no mention of political parties. Indeed, it was explicitly stated and retained in the present (1953) constitution that MPs shall be guided by their personal convictions only and that they must not, in any way, be bound by any instructions given by their voters. The MPs and the Speaker of the House initially took this constitutional provision very seriously. With time, however, informal groups of like-minded MPs were gradually formed around prominent political personalities, leading to the emergence of *de facto* PPGs of the ‘club’ type.

In 1870, liberal fractions in parliament founded the Liberal Party (Venstre, V) and a few years later the conservative groups formed a more permanent PPG, the Conservative Party (Højre, renamed in 1915 Det konservative Folkeparti, KF). In this period, closer ties between the parliamentarians and their constituencies began to be established. The initiative came both from the parliamentarians themselves and from different associations of voters. The fact that these processes occurred simultaneously meant that the distinction between ‘internally’ and ‘externally’ created parties is only partly relevant here (although it does make sense to speak of a formal distinction between the PPG and an EPO).

The Social Democratic Party (Socialdemokratiet, SD) was founded in 1871 as a membership organisation independent of parliament and, having won representation for the first time in 1884, a PPG was created. The last of the four old parties, the Social-Liberal Party (Det radikale Venstre, RV), founded in 1905, put special emphasis on the distinction between the PPG and the EPO. A prolonged disagreement in the V ended in 1905 with the expulsion of twelve MPs who then founded a new PPG. At the same time a circle of voters who sympathised with the expelled politicians convoked a founding convention for a new party. Only after this meeting had agreed on a platform for the new party did the twelve parliamentarians attend the convention and announce their support for the programme and for the founding of the new party (Bille 1994a:134ff).

This mix of predominantly internally and externally founded political parties that characterised the founding of the four old and predominant parties,

as well as their formal distinction between the PPG and the EPO, also characterised the founding and organisational structure of the 'new' parties. The Socialist People's Party (Socialistisk Folkeparti, SF (1959)), the Centre Democrats (Centrum-Demokraterne, CD (1973)), and the Danish People's Party (Dansk Folkeparti, DF (1995)) were founded as splinter parties from the PPGs of the Communist Party, the SD, and the Progress Party respectively. In the case of the Christian People's Party (Kristeligt Folkeparti, KRF (1970)) and the Progress Party (Fremskridtspartiet, FP (1972)), they first founded an EPO and then ran for election. The Unity List, the Reds-Greens (Enhedslisten, de Rød-Grønne, EL) was, at the time of the election in 1990, technically a list of cooperative party organisations and groups on the extreme left wing and, only after gaining representation in parliament in 1994, did it speed up the process of transforming itself into a proper political party with a PPG and an EPO of its own.

With the emergence, expansion and consolidation of the mass party model, the free mandate in parliament gradually faded away. Parliamentary democracy developed into party democracy. The MPs considered themselves as representatives of a party and were perceived as such by the voters. This development was reflected in a step-by-step formal recognition of the PPGs in parliamentary rules and procedures. As early as 1898/99 the party affiliation of the MPs was noted in the yearbook of parliament; in 1918 the political spokesman of the PPGs was mentioned in the standing orders of the parliament; and in 1925/26 the names of the members of the executive committee of the PPGs were also printed in the yearbook (Thorsen 1950:211).

Although the entire parliamentary process gradually became based on the existence of PPGs, there is not and never has been, an explicit official definition of a PPG in the standing orders of parliament. Since 1915, however, the constitution and the standing orders implicitly presuppose the existence of PPGs since the selection of members of the committees in parliament was, and still is, based on proportional representation. One has to turn to the rules granting a state subsidy to the PPGs to find an explicit and official definition.

In 1965 a very modest state subsidy to the PPGs was introduced in the sense that parliament placed some secretarial assistance at the disposal of the parties. The scheme was amended in 1968 and, on this occasion, the PPGs was defined as 'those groups of members of parliament which at the last general election have been elected to parliament as representatives of a political party that fulfils the requirements of the electoral law for running at a general election' (Folketingstidende 1968/69; Tillæg B sp. 3457). The Danish electoral system is a list system of proportional representation. Of the seats, 135 are allocated to seventeen multimember districts. The remaining forty seats are allocated as compensatory seats by deducting each party's share of the 135 seats received in the multimember districts from the number of seats which the party according to the proportional nation-wide allocation is entitled to.

Table 8.1 Distribution of seats in the Folketing, 1971–1994 (election results)

	<i>SF</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>RV</i>	<i>KRF</i>	<i>CD</i>	<i>V</i>	<i>KF</i>	<i>FRP</i>	<i>DKP</i>	<i>VS</i>	<i>EL</i>	<i>DR</i>	<i>FK</i>
1971	17	70	27			30	31						
1973	11	46	20	7	14	22	16	28	6			5	
1975	9	53	13	9	4	42	10	24	7	4			
1977	7	65	6	6	11	21	15	26	7	5		6	
1979	11	68	10	5	6	22	22	20		6		5	
1981	21	59	9	4	15	20	26	16		5			
1984	21	56	10	5	8	22	42	6		5			
1987	27	54	11	4	9	19	38	9					4
1988	24	55	10	4	9	22	35	16					
1990	15	69	7	4	9	29	30	12					
1994	13	62	8	0	5	42	27	11			6		

Source: Statistiske Efterretninger.

Notes

The Danish parliament has 179 members. Two members are elected on the Faeroe Islands and two members in Greenland. These four seats are not listed in the table. In 1994 one seat was won by an independent.

SF, Socialistisk Folkeparti (Socialist People's Party).

SD, Socialdemokratiet (Social Democratic Party).

RV, Det radikale Venstre (Social-Liberal Party).

KRF, Kristeligt Folkeparti (Christian People's Party).

CD, Centrum-Demokraterne (Centre Democrats).

V, Venstre (Liberal Party).

KF, Det konservative Folkeparti (Conservative People's Party).

FRP, Fremskridtspartiet (Progress Party).

DKP, Danmarks kommunistiske Parti (Communist Party).

VS, Venstresocialisterne (Left Socialists).

EL, Enhedslisten (The Unity List).

DR, Danmarks Retsforbund (Justice Party).

FK, Fælleskurs (Common Course).

In theory, this means that the minimum size of a Danish PPG is one, since it is possible for a single person to be elected to parliament in one of the multimember districts. In practice, however, it has turned out to be a minimum of four due to the fact that one of the three thresholds in the electoral law which the parties most frequently have been able to pass is the one which requires that the party gets 2 per cent of valid votes to gain compensatory seats. This in practice means four seats.

In subsequent amendments of the state subsidy to the PPGs the scheme developed into its present (1997) form. The rules distinguish between the PPG and the individual MP. Each PPG regardless of size or status as opposition or governing party is granted a basic amount (DKr 198,000 per month) plus an additional amount per seat (DKr 31,000 per month). The amount is index-linked. It is further stated in the rules that the individual MP has a right (out of the amount per seat to the PPG), to receive a minimum of DKr 10,333 per month for hiring secretarial assistance (Bille 1997). This clause has been incorporated

Table 8.2 Total state subsidy to the PPGs, 1965–1995, in DKr

1965	1970	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995
57,262	1,743,654	6,704,862	8,253,068	24,081,371	42,614,501	56,598,137

Source: Folketingets regnskab, Folketingstidende tillæg B div. årgange.

to ensure that the PPG does not dispose of the total subsidy at the expense of the individual MPs, against his or her wishes. MPs who do not belong to a PPG (for instance some of the members elected from Greenland (2) and the Faeroe Islands (2) or an independent) are entitled to receive a subsidy, which must not exceed the amount per seat and has to be decided in each individual case by the Presidium of parliament.

Table 8.2 illustrates the substantial growth of the economic capacity of the PPGs during the last three decades.

Although the rules guarantee the rights of the individual MP to receive a subsidy, the net effect of the introduction of state subvention has been a further official recognition of the PPGs as groups and a strengthening of their already strong position in the parliamentary process.

Internal organisation of the parliamentary groups

Of the eight parties represented in parliament after the general election in 1994 (nine after the split of the FP in 1995 and the founding of the DF) only the SD and the FP have a written internal constitution. V also has written rules which date back to the 1950s. These have not been revised since and, according to the chairman of the PPG for the last fifteen years, they have never been used during the last couple of decades (letter from Ivar Hansen 9 January 1997). Hence this party, as well as the rest of the PPGs, conducts its affairs according to unwritten rules, tradition and *ad hoc* decisions.

Regardless of the existence of written rules, the organisational structure and the proceedings of the PPGs are similar to each other. The members of the PPGs elect—on the recommendation of the incumbent leadership at the beginning of each parliamentary session (which runs from the first Tuesday in October to the first Tuesday in October the following year, i.e. 12 months)—the chairman, vice-chairman, secretary, political spokesman and a number of ordinary members. They constitute an executive committee, the size of which varies from around twelve members (SD) to around three members (RV). The EL practises collective leadership. In addition to the election of these officers the PPGs also elect—on the recommendation of the leadership—members of the twenty-four permanent committees of parliament (finance, taxation, defence, agriculture, social affairs, etc.) and the party's spokesman in the subject area of the committees.

In the small parties, practically all members of the PPG, if not all, are members of the executive committee and they are all spokespersons of several policy areas. This makes the distinction between frontbenchers and backbenchers of less interest. In the large parties, competition to be elected to one of the influential positions is keen and success or failure is taken as an indication of one's rank and influence in the PPG and of one's prospects for a political career. For these parties, the distinction between frontbenchers and backbenchers is highly relevant. Therefore the process of constituting the PPG once a year is one of the clues to the actual strength of the various factions in the party. From time to time, intense negotiation and bargaining behind closed doors has to take place before the cabal comes out. Normally it does, but contested elections take place.

The executive committee takes care of daily business. It prepares and chairs the daily meetings of the PPG during the sessions of parliament. At these meetings of roughly one hour the day's agenda of parliament is discussed, party standpoints on bills decided, new policy initiatives presented, and reports submitted by the spokespersons of the various subject areas on how the legislative process is progressing in their respective fields. In general there is a stable division of labour inside the PPGs reflecting the twenty-four permanent committees of parliament. The political spokesman is responsible for expressing the general policy and position of the party and

one person within the group, the spokesman, is more or less responsible for the co-ordination of information and decisions on each policy area of a committee. Except for party groups in Government, where the spokesman will be second to the Minister in question, the spokesmen, though far from being autocratic, are generally the most influential single persons in the groups regarding the policy area of the committees.

(Jensen 1995:198)

The functioning of this kind of stable division of labour presupposes a high degree of party cohesion. Originally, the subordination of the individual MP to his PPG was for a long time a disputed issue. But after the *de facto* introduction of parliamentarism in 1901 (only constitutionally amended in 1953) and proportional representation in 1920, the proportion of final divisions in parliament in which voting discipline has broken down has been low, certainly since 1945 (Pedersen 1967; Damgaard 1973). Neither increased voter volatility, greater heterogeneity among the voters of each party nor the representation of a number of new parties since 1973 have caused any major decline in party cohesion (Svensson 1982:39). Neither has the introduction of the PPG finance system enhanced PPG splits. The percentage of breaks in the party line dropped from an average of 13.2 per cent in the 1970s to 7.1 per cent in the 1980s (Mikkelsen 1994:29).

Although the constitution stipulates that MPs are bound only by their conscience, they are very well aware of the fact that they are elected on party

lists as representatives of a party and would never have been elected without the nomination of their party (Jensen 1996). This fact is reflected in the unwritten and written rules of the PPGs. In the rules of the SD it is explicitly stated in §8 that if a member during a parliamentary reading wishes to express an opinion—either from the rostrum or at the division—which deviates from the party line this has to be discussed in a prior meeting of the PPG. It is further stated that no member, except the spokesman, can take part in the reading of a subject area without notifying in advance the chairman of the PPG or the spokesman in question. No member can propose a bill, a motion or an interpellation in parliament without the consent of the PPG.

Similar norms are in force in the other PPGs as well. Violation of these norms can lead to expulsion. Incidents of this kind are rare and are symptoms of a serious and major disagreement inside the party. The general picture is that MPs are very loyal to their respective PPG. Eighty-eight per cent are satisfied with the existing high level of party cohesion at divisions and 80 per cent are satisfied with the way in which the demand not to take initiatives without prior consent of the group is handled. Concerning the demand not to speak in public about the internal discussions of the party, 28 per cent actually want a stronger party discipline than prevails today (Table 8.3).

Not all bills are subject to the demand of party cohesion. In matters of great importance to a specific region—building a highway or a major public institution and the like—the MPs from that region may be granted a free vote, if the survival of the government is not at stake. A free vote may also be accepted in subject areas which are not related to the traditional left-right dimension of the party system or the fundamental social-economic cleavages, i.e. mostly ethical and moral issues of an essential personal character.

The stable division of labour inside the PPGs is a consequence of the increasing workload of the parliamentarians, the increasing complexity of law-making, and the reorganising of the committee system in 1972 introducing specialised and permanent committees. The effects have, among other things, been an increased specialisation of the individual MP and an increased segmentation of the PPGs (Damgaard 1977; Jensen 1995). The PPGs voiced the need for more information, specialised knowledge and secretarial assistance. Although data on the number employed by the PPGs three decades ago are scattered and not totally reliable, the number in 1965 can be estimated to be only around five in all (Bille 1997). Since the introduction of state subsidy to the PPGs in 1965, the number of employees has increased continuously, especially since the substantial growth during the 1980s and in 1995 of state subsidies. In 1995 the number of full-time staff employed by all the PPGs amounted to 158.

Most of the personal secretaries of the MPs are part-time employees, often undergraduate students of political science, economics and law. Besides this increase in the secretarial assistance of the MPs, one of the most significant developments has been the expansion of PPG-related agencies and the founding of new departments affiliated to the PPGs.

Table 8.3 Attitudes of MPs towards three different elements of group discipline (percentage)

	EL		SF		SD		RV		CD		KF		V		FP		Total							
	id	i d	id	i d	id	i d	id	i d	id	i d	id	i d	id	i d	id	i d	id	i d						
Ought to be much stronger	0	0	10	0	18	5	3	0	0	0	0	5	0	5	0	0	75	9	0	11	2	2		
Ought to be stronger	0	0	0	10	30	13	8	0	0	33	33	0	24	10	0	0	5	0	0	0	17	9	3	
Status quo	100	100	80	60	45	68	85	60	80	60	67	100	71	91	86	100	95	100	25	100	67	80	88	
Ought to be weaker	0	0	0	10	8	15	5	40	20	20	0	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	9	6
Ought to be much weaker	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
(N)	5	5	5	10	10	40	40	40	5	5	3	3	3	21	21	21	20	20	4	4	4	108	108	108

Source: Jensen (1996).

Note

id=internal discussions; i=initiatives; d=divisions.

Question: What is your attitude towards the demands concerning party cohesion and party discipline in your party as regards the following norms for parliamentary work?

Table 8.4 Number of full-time staff employed by MPs and PPGs, 1995

	<i>SD</i>	<i>KF</i>	<i>V</i>	<i>RV</i>	<i>SF</i>	<i>FRP</i>	<i>CD</i>	<i>EL</i>	<i>DF</i>	<i>Total</i>
MP secretaries	22	12	24	3	5	8	3	6	2	85
PPG secretaries and experts	23	12	10	5	10	4	5	3	1	73
Total	45	24	34	8	15	12	8	9	3	158

Source: The party's official accounts of state subsidy to the parliamentary groups in 1995 submitted to the Folketingets Presidium.

Since the beginning of the 1960s, the three major parties (SD, V, KF) have had their own press agency situated in Christiansborg (the parliamentary building), co-operating closely with their respective PPGs. Since then, these agencies have doubled their journalistic trained manpower. Furthermore, the other parties have hired at least one professional to handle the press (Bille 1997).

During the 1980s the SD, V and KF founded political-economic departments located at Christiansborg. The PE department of the SD was placed directly under the command of the leader of the 'party-as-a-whole'. Besides serving the leadership, the department also had to perform services for the PPG and central organs in the EPO. Its main functions were to undertake independent analysis of the economic and political situation, elaborate appropriate strategies, prepare major political initiatives and participate in the planning and implementation of election campaigns (Buksti 1989). In 1986 the PE department of the SD consisted of three full-time academic employees, one secretary and three students (Buksti 1989). In 1995 the staff had expanded to eight full-time academic employees plus some students (Bille 1997).

The PE department of V, which had similar functions and status to that of the SD, expanded from one full-time academic in 1986 to five in 1995. Precisely the same development took place in the KF. In the case of the RV, SF, FP, EL and DF their party secretariat is placed at Christiansborg. Hence it is more or less impossible to separate the work done by the staff for the PPG from the work done for the EPO and vice versa. These parties have not build up separate PE departments but hired professional manpower at the party secretariat instead.

As regards the internal organisation of the PPG the above-mentioned features and development point in the direction of a process of further specialisation, segmentation and professionalisation of the PPGs since the beginning of the 1970s.

Relation to the extra-parliamentary party organisation

All Danish parties have an EPO. This is obviously the case for parties founded outside parliament, but parties founded as a consequence of a split in a PPG have

at once invested a maximum of available resources in building up an EPO. Despite the sharp decrease in party membership since 1960, the parties' perception of themselves is still that of a representative party and they attach a lot of importance to political mobilisation and to having as many members as possible. It is part of the Danish conception of a proper political party to be structured as a mass party.

Since the mass party is the role model, all Danish parties have a formal relationship between the PPG and the EPO, a relationship which is not that different from party to party. In practically all Danish parties, according to their rules, the PPGs have a representation in the national executive (*forretningsudvalg*) and the national committee (*hovedbestyrelse*), and most frequently the chairman of the PPG is an *ex officio* member. The number of representatives is either fixed or stipulated as a maximum, but in both cases the PPG representation is and always has been relatively small: a maximum of three out of nine in the national executive of the SF, three out of seventeen in SD, two out of thirteen in RV, five out of fifty-eight in V, etc. (Bille 1992:234–43). The representation of the PPG is not mentioned in the rules of the FP, which on the other hand has not excluded MPs from being elected by the national conference to the leading organ of the party.

But the representation of the EPO in the PPG is not regulated by party rules. It is entirely a matter to be decided by the PPG. A few leading party officers (e.g. party secretary, press, PE department), and in the RV the chairman of the EPO, attend the meetings with no vote. Interest groups do not have a guaranteed representation within the PPG and it is only in the SD that representatives of an interest group, namely the trade unions, may attend the meetings. Apart from the FP in its first years in parliament, the meetings of the PPGs are held behind closed doors. They are strictly confidential, in principle anyway, since leaks to the press are becoming more and more usual.

The balance of power between the EPO and the PPG has to be measured by variables other than by the sheer reciprocal representation. One of them is to what degree, if any, the party rules establish a rank between the two sections of the party. The provisions in the rules of the SF and the CD can illustrate this. In the former it is explicitly stated that the PPG is not entitled to enter into any major written agreement with other parties in parliament without the approval of the national committee of the EPO. The same is the case in the EL. This of course gives the EPO a decisive influence on the policy of the party. The rules of the CD explicitly state that the PPG in every aspect is completely independent of the executive organs of the EPO and that the PPG presents to the national conference the policy of the party, a policy that the conference has neither to approve nor disapprove by a vote. The supremacy of the PPG is evident. According to their rules the rest of the parties are situated in between these two extremes with a declining formal influence of the EPO the more to the right the party is situated on the political spectrum.

A clue to a further clarification of the relative importance of the two party sections is to look at who actually is the political leader of the party-as-a-whole:

the leader of the PPG or the leader of the EPO? In the SD the formal as well as the *de facto* leader of the party is the chairman of the EPO. He (it has always been a male) is also elected as chairman of the PPG except during the period from 1987 to 1991 when a special arrangement was introduced in an effort to solve the rivalry between competing wings over the control of the party. He has always been the party's candidate for prime minister, and since 1920 the party has never participated in any government without heading the cabinet. When the party is in office, the leader continues as chairman of the EPO, but resigns as chairman of the PPG.

Historically, the parliamentarians of V have considered themselves as quite independent of the EPO: the chair of the PPG was considered the most important position in the party even though the party leader also holds the other chair. Since 1945, however, the importance of the EPO in the party-as-a-whole has gradually increased and since 1993 the chairmanship of the EPO and of the PPG has been divided between two persons with the former as the undisputed leader of the party. A roughly similar development has taken place in the KF. Until the mid-1970s the chairman of the PPG was the party leader and another person was elected as chairman of the EPO. A severe political and personal struggle over the leadership of the party caused a change in this arrangement. The dispute ended with the election of Poul Schlüter to both positions. During his period as Prime Minister (1982–93) he stayed as chairman of the EPO but 'handed over' the chair of the PPG to another person. When Schlüter resigned in 1993 from all formal positions, the party entered a period of changing leadership. At present (1997) the leader of the party is the EPO leader and another person is chairman of the PPG. As a logical consequence of the philosophy behind the way in which the RV was founded in 1905 (see above) the two positions have always been, and still are, split, with the chairman of the PPG as the political leader.

As regard the new parties the picture is less uniform. In the first decade after the founding of SF in 1959, the chairman of the EPO was also elected chairman of the PPG. This concentration of power in one person caused unrest in the party and after 1968 the two positions have always been in the hands of two persons with the chairman of the EPO as the undisputed leader of the party. In the KRF the practice has shifted. The question of predominance by the EPO or by the PPG has been disputed, but at present the chairman of the EPO is considered the leader of the party. In the CD this has never been a matter of discussion. The party conference elects on the proposal of the PPG the party leader and in addition to that the EPO and the PPG each elect a chairman. This is the only party that practises such an arrangement. The FP also deviates from the other parties. The founder of the party, Mogens Glistrup, was from 1972 to 1984 its undisputed leader, despite the fact that he was never elected chairman either of the EPO or of the PPG. He was honorary lifetime member of the national committee and titled himself as 'campaign leader'. During and after his imprisonment, the new leader of the party turned out to be neither the chairman of the EPO nor the chairman of the PPG but the political spokesman of the PPG. Charisma seemed to be more decisive than formal posts. The constant internal

conflict and personal animosity in the party culminated in a split in 1995. The FP continued its practice, i.e. the political spokesman is the political leader, while the undisputed leader of the new party, DF, interestingly enough chose to be elected as chairman of the EPO, leaving the post as chairman of the PPG to another member of the breakaway group. Due to its, in a Danish context, special organisational structure and the practising of collective leadership, it is not possible to identify the political leader of the EL.

The position of chairman of the PPG is and always has been a powerful position in Danish politics. The political leader of the party has traditionally occupied this chair and in many cases also the chair of the EPO. His or her legitimacy then rested both on election by party members and election by the MPs who owed their legitimacy to the party voters. During the last couple of years, however, the trend has been that the post of chairman of the EPO and the PPG has been divided between two different persons and that the political leader of the party has retained the chair of the EPO, not that of the PPG. The EPO, then, has increased slightly in importance compared to the PPG as regards the section of the party on which the legitimacy of the political leader rests.

A further indication of the relative importance of the PPG vis-à-vis the EPO is which section of the party controls the selection of candidates for national elections. Candidate nomination and selection has always been a matter for the party members at the local/constituency level of the EPO (Bille 1993) and attempts to interfere from the central party organs are normally met with resistance and perceived as an effort to diminish their autonomy. This yields some power to the individual MP, in the sense that he or she might act quite independently in the PPG as long as the local organisation backs its candidate. The more massive the local support, the stronger the bargaining position of the individual MP inside the PPG. On the other hand, the voters vote for a party or a person on a party list. Only once since 1945 (in 1994) has a member been elected to parliament without being a candidate of one of the political parties. This implies that if an individual MP is disloyal to the party, for instance by breaking the party line laid down by the PPG, he or she runs the risk of not being renominated by the constituency organisation. When an individual MP is considering whether to use his or her 'power' stemming from local support or to

Table 8.5 The political leader of the party and his/her formal position in the party-as-a-whole, 1997

	<i>V</i>	<i>KF</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>RV</i>	<i>SF</i>	<i>FP</i>	<i>CD</i>	<i>EL</i>	<i>DF</i>
Chair of PPG			(X)	(X)					
Chair of EPO	X	X	X		X				X
Minister			X	X					
Other						X	X	X	

(X), position when the party is not in government.

conform to the policies of the majority of the PPG, the latter clearly has been decisive in daily politics.

Much the same can be said concerning the influence of the party programme for decisions on policies in the PPGs. Although the influence of the party members on the drawing up the party manifesto has increased during the last couple of decades due to the introduction of a hearing procedure in the EPOs (Bille 1994a: 142), the initiative to issue a new manifesto, decisions on the main ideological elements of the programme, the phrasing of the draft and the final text is heavily influenced by the top politicians in the PPGs. When it comes to implementing the programme in the legislative process, the PPGs is almost sovereign, although this is so to a lesser extent in the extreme left-wing parties. Because no single party since the beginning of the twentieth century has had a majority in parliament, agreements have always required ongoing negotiations and compromises, and in this daily political process it is impossible for the PPGs to take orders from, or even consult, the EPOs. The MPs have to act autonomously on the basis of the principles of the party manifesto and the broad guidelines laid out by the executive organs of the EPO or even to act in conflict with these guidelines and only afterwards get the policy sanctioned by the EPO. National politics, then, has always been carried out by the PPGs without any significant interference from the EPOs, and this has increasingly been the case. The constant focus by the mass media, in particular TV, on the activities of the leading politicians in parliament has further fostered this development (Bille 1994a: 149).

Role of PPGs in cabinet formation and relation to the government

In Denmark, the process of forming the government is not regulated by detailed prescriptions in the constitution. The process is based on conventions that have developed gradually over decades. The essential element of this process is that the negotiations between the parties have to end up with a cabinet that will not be confronted by a majority when it presents itself to parliament, i.e. negative parliamentarism. These negotiations are conducted between very small delegations composed of the leaders of the 'party-as-a-whole' plus one or two from the executive committee of their respective PPGs. This core group has an intimate knowledge of the opinions, standpoints, aspirations and goals of the various factions inside their respective PPGs and of the general mood in the EPOs. They know how far they can stretch the limits of the not always explicitly formulated or detailed mandate given by the PPGs. When an agreement is reached on the party composition of the cabinet and the governmental programme, the subsequent procedure differs somewhat between the nine parties. But common to all of them is that the final agreement has to be confirmed by the PPGs and, in most of the parties, by the national committee of the EPO as well.

Appointing ministers is considered to be the prerogative of the designated Prime Minister. However, in the case of coalition governments, the number of ministers to be appointed by each of the parties entering the coalition and their portfolio is settled during the negotiations. The leaders of the 'party-as-a-whole' determine in practice who is to be appointed from his or her party. Normally it is members of the PPGs who are promoted but it does sometimes happen that someone outside the PPG gets appointed, much to the annoyance of the ambitious members of the PPGs. All in all, it is fair to say that the leaders of the 'party-as-a-whole' play the crucial role in the process of cabinet formation, followed by the PPGs, while the EPOs have a mainly legitimising role.

The relationship of the PPGs to the government depends on whether the government is a single-party government or a coalition government and on whether it is a majority or minority government. Because since 1982 Denmark has only had minority coalition governments (except from January 1993 to January 1994 when it was a majority coalition government (Bille 1994b and 1995)), the following description of the relationship of the PPGs to the government will concentrate only on this type of government.

It is evident that perpetual negotiations must characterise the situation of a minority coalition government. The parties in government have to negotiate a compromise on legislative initiatives among themselves. This takes place partly in weekly meetings between the ministers, partly in regular meetings between the minister and the parties' spokesmen of the subject area in question, and partly in regular and frequent meetings between the chairmen of the PPGs. After having reached an agreement among themselves, the governing parties have to negotiate with one or several of the opposition parties to form a majority in parliament. This new compromise has then to be discussed and confirmed or rejected by the PPGs both of the parties in office and in opposition. No legislation is passed without prior confirmation in the PPGs.

At this stage of the process, however, there is normally no room for the individual PPG to amend the agreement. To permit this would be to open a Pandora's box. In the small parties all, or practically all, MPs are engaged in the bargaining process. Inside the large parties this complex process has fostered a concentration of power in the hands of a few MPs: the leadership of the PPG, the spokesmen of the various subject areas, and last, but not least, the ministers, who keep their seats in parliament and stay as valid members of the PPG when they enter a government.

Although the role of the PPGs in the formulation of governmental policies becomes closer to that of approving than of steering, it is beyond any reasonable doubt that the work in government and in particular in the permanent committees of the parliament is strongly influenced by the PPGs.

the committee members are, first and foremost, representatives of different parties. Partisanship as a dominating factor to the decisions as well as other behavioural aspects of the committee members are also shown in the fact that recommendations in committee reports usually follow party lines and that

decisions in these matters are normally made beforehand and not during meetings...[the committees] are political institutions in which and through which the party groups and their representatives on committees pursue political goals.
(Jensen 1995:197ff)

A classification of the Danish PPGs

The following effort to classify the PPGs of the nine parties represented in parliament at present (1997) has to leave out the peculiarities of the individual PPGs and concentrate only on the main features characterising them. The three perspectives presented in the introductory chapter of this book are adopted as guidelines, that is the PPG alone, the PPG in the party-as-a-whole, and the PPG in parliament-as-a-whole.

Looking at the PPG alone and taking the degree of group cohesion and the availability of state funding as the two most important variables to discriminate between various types of PPGs, the type has changed from a 'fraction' to a 'parliamentary party complex'. Group discipline has, at least since 1945, always been high and has even increased slightly during the past decade (Mikkelsen 1994). Since no state funding existed prior to 1965, PPGs then must be characterised as a 'fraction'. It was only after the substantial increase of the state subsidy during the 1980s that the PPGs turned themselves into the 'parliamentary party complex' type. The increased economic capacity of the PPGs enabled them to hire staff, to build up professional departments, and to buy expertise to support the full-time MPs and the parliamentary politics of the PPGs. The larger the party, the more pronounced the development of specialisation, segmentation and professionalisation.

It is more complicated to embrace the nine PPGs into one type when we look at the PPG in the party-as-a-whole. In the case of the EL and SF the division between the PPG and the EPO is weak, and in the case of FP and DF it is strong, but since none of them has ever had governmental power it is not possible to determine the type. The conjecture is, however, that should they enter the cabinet, the type for the EL and SF would be 'dominated, party-oriented' while the type for the FP and DF would be 'dominated, government-oriented'.

The rest of the parties have all been in government and the interaction between the different sections of the parties have by and large demonstrated that in practice the type of 'the integrated PPG' is more adequate than the other types defined in the introduction. It becomes, however, even more problematic and complex to determine the type according to the subdivision of the 'integrated PPG'. Since the PPGs of these parties are neither clear-cut cases of 'ruling PPGs' (except in the case of the CD) nor of PPGs as 'voting machines' they have to belong to either the subtype of 'instrument of government' or 'instrument of party'. Which is the most adequate is certainly a delicate matter to settle. The location of the political leader of the party-as-a-whole, and the

personal unions differ from party to party (see Table 8.5) as does the degree of separation between the EPO and the PPG. Regular and frequent inter-party and intra-party meetings of the leading politicians of the coalition parties as well as the fact that ministers remain MPs make it extremely difficult to determine the direction of influence. However, leaving aside all reservations, it seems reasonable to claim that they lean more towards the type of 'instrument of government' than to the type of 'instrument of party'.

Looking at the PPGs in parliament-as-a-whole, it follows from the classification above that the adequate type is the 'inter-party mode'. The most important demarcation lines in the highly fractionalised Danish parliament are those between the parties-as-a-whole, i.e. a PPG and ministers of the same party, on the one hand, are opposed to the other PPGs and their ministers or the opposition PPGs, on the other.

Despite the problems of determining for sure which type the Danish PPGs belong to, it remains an empirical fact that they are very important actors in the political system. In 1970 an analysis of the parties in parliament was subtitled 'a power centre in the Danish political system' (Worre 1970). In 1987 this characterisation was still valid according to Mogens N. Pedersen (Pedersen 1987:3). In 1997 very few political scientists would disagree with these authors. I certainly will not.

9 Parliamentary party groups in the Swedish Riksdag

Magnus Hagevi

Parties are the main actors in the Swedish Riksdag. Both among electors and the elected, the parties serve as the central entity. When the daily life of party politics is presented in the media, parties are portrayed as unitary actors. Concepts such as party-as-a-whole indicate, however, that party members can be active in several party domains (Cf. Katz and Mair 1992:2–6). While significance of the party domains may vary, it is becoming increasingly clear that the importance of the Swedish parliamentary party groups is growing.¹ The purpose of this chapter is to describe the parliamentary party groups in the Swedish Riksdag (both the emergence and the modern structure), and their relationship to other party domains. We will then analyse the activity of the Riksdag members in four party domains: the local extra-parliamentary organisation domain, the central extra-parliamentary organisation domain (both of these domains belong to the extra-parliamentary organisation), the parliamentary party domain and the party-in-government domain.

Election and distribution of seats

The Swedish electorate is divided into twenty-nine constituencies. All parties that receive more than 4 per cent of the national vote will be proportionally represented in the Riksdag in accordance with their electoral strength. It is also possible for the candidates in a constituency to be elected if the party receives more than 12 per cent of the constituency votes. With some rare exceptions, all ballots are unique for each constituency and the candidates are mostly local party leaders.

Swedes focus on parties when they vote (Gilljam and Holmberg 1995:46–50). One reason for this can be found in the electoral system. Voters receive fixed party ballots that list the order in which the candidates will be elected if the party gets enough votes. As voters have no real opportunity to alter the order or choice of candidates, they are primarily concerned with which party to vote for and nothing else. Starting in 1998, the degree of personal voting will increase, as it will be possible to vote for an individual candidate using the otherwise traditional party list. Candidates that receive more than 8 per cent of the party

vote share in the constituency will be elected over all other candidates presented on the ballot. If no candidate receives 8 per cent of votes, the candidates are elected according to the order on the ballot. Between 1971 and 1994, the ordinary election term was three years, but since 1994 the term has been extended to four years.

For many years, the Swedish party system could be characterised as a frozen five-party, two-coalition system. The Social Democrats have been a dominating force in the Swedish Riksdag since 1917. In 1994 they comprised by far the largest parliamentary party group, with 161 members (Table 9.1). The Moderates assumed a clear second place with eighty members. All the other parties are small parties, a fact which the two parties in the centre of the party system—the Liberal Party and the Centre Party—both find particularly disturbing. Both parties have suffered considerable losses in recent decades and now find themselves among the growing group of small parties.

During the 1980s, the party system underwent a transformation. New parties managed to pass the 4 per cent threshold required for representation in the Riksdag. The 1994 Riksdag election brought in members from seven parties for the second consecutive time. The small party of Christian Democrats joined the bourgeois bloc—as the centre-right parties are called in the Scandinavian countries—in 1991, and the equally small Green Party

Table 9.1 Distribution of seats in the Swedish Riksdag during the unicameral period

<i>Party</i>	<i>Year of election</i>								
	<i>1970</i>	<i>1973</i>	<i>1976</i>	<i>1979</i>	<i>1982</i>	<i>1985</i>	<i>1988</i>	<i>1991</i>	<i>1994</i>
Left Party	17	19	17	20	20	19	21	16	22
Greens	—	—	—	—	—	—	20	—	18
Social Democrats	163	156	152	154	166	159	156	138	161
Centre Party	71	90	86	64	56	44	42	31	27
Liberals	58	34	39	38	21	51	44	33	26
Christian Democrats	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	26	15
Moderates	41	51	55	73	86	76	66	80	80
New Democracy	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	25	—
Total	350	350	349	349	349	349	349	349	349

Note

Swedish names for the parties are as follows:

C, Centre Party (*Centerpartiet*).

KD, Christian Democrats (*Kristdemokraterna*) (before 1994 *Kristdemokratiska samhällspartiet* (KDS)).

Greens (*Miljöpartiet de gröna*).

FP, Liberals (*Folkpartiet liberalerna*).

M, Moderates (*Moderata samlingspartiet*).

NYD, New Democracy (*Ny demokrati*).

S, Social Democrats (*Sveriges socialdemokratiska arbetareparti*).

V, Left Party (*Vänsterpartiet*) (before 1994 *Vänsterpartiet kommunisterna* (VPK)).

managed to pass the threshold in the elections of 1988 and 1994, but not in 1991. New Democracy, a right-wing populist party, won seats in 1991, but lost Riksdag status in 1994.

The formation of the government is mostly a struggle between two political blocs. The Social Democratic Party and the small Left Party (former Communist Party) form the Socialist bloc against the bloc of the bourgeois parties (Centre Party, Christian Democrats, Liberals and Moderates). The strength of the bourgeois parties has varied over time, but the number of parliamentary seats won by the bloc as a whole has been relatively stable.

For most of the post-war period, the Social Democrats have controlled the government. Although the Social Democrats have never managed to win a majority of their own, with the exception of 1968, they have not formed a coalition government since 1957. Instead they seek support among the parliamentary party groups in the Riksdag, and have been most successful in gaining support from the Left Party.

The Riksdag

Of the institutions analysed in this chapter, the parliament is the oldest. The Swedish Riksdag has its origins in the fourteenth century, but sessions did not assemble regularly until the seventeenth century (Schück 1987). Parliamentary democracy has not developed in a linear fashion. Periods of royal dictatorship were followed by more significant roles for the Riksdag and dialectic reactions towards renewed dictatorship. In 1917, the parliamentary principles were recognised, and the first democratically elected Riksdag gathered the year after the elections of 1921. In 1971 the bicameral Riksdag was reformed and replaced by a unicameral Riksdag. Today, the Riksdag consists of one chamber with 349 seats. A special feature of the Riksdag chamber is that the members are not seated by party, but according to their constituency.

Emergence of parliamentary party groups

The first contact with parliamentary party groups, or *riksdagsgrupper*, appeared in the early eighteenth century during the remarkable period called the 'Age of Liberty'. With power firmly vested in the hands of a sovereign Riksdag, a party system emerged that was advanced for its time. The legislative battles between the two parties of 'Hats' and 'Caps' determined the fate of the nation during most of the eighteenth century, but ended in a royal takeover in 1772 (Metcalf 1982:251–61; Hadenius 1994:79–107).

Modern parliamentary party groups did not emerge until 1900, when the Liberal Party (Liberala samlingspartiet) was formed (Thermænius 1935:157–63). Until then the franchise movement had supported liberal Riksdag members. This is one reason why a formal extra-parliamentary organisation was not

established until 1902. The Liberal Party of today is called Folkpartiet liberalerna.

A clear connection between Riksdag members and an extra-parliamentary organisation was established when the Social Democrats entered the Riksdag. They represented a party founded in 1889. The first elected Social Democrat was the party leader Hjalmar Branting in 1896.² Only when the number of Social Democrats had increased to thirteen members, in 1906, did the time come to formally organise the Social Democratic Riksdag Group (Thermaenius 1935:239–40; Edenman 1946).

The first two decades in the Riksdag were stormy for the Social Democratic Riksdag Group. After some time it became obvious that the Social Democrats would use reform as a political tool, and in 1917 the more revolutionary branch of the party left to form the Communist Party of Sweden (Edenman 1946). Gradually this party too underwent reform, marked by new party splits and name changes: the Communist Left Party in 1967 and the Left Party in 1990.

During the nineteenth century the most important party in the Riksdag was the Agrarian Farmers Party (Lantmannapartiet), founded in 1867 (Thermaenius 1935:27–30). There is a direct link from this conservative party to the Moderates of today. The early conservative party formations worked only within the Riksdag, with no external organisation. As other parties become more organised, the predecessors of the Moderates were forced to form an extra-parliamentary organisation (Carlsson 1992).

A party called the Farmers Union was established in 1913. In the elections of 1917 the party won its first seats and formed a parliamentary party group when the Riksdag session started in 1918.³ In an attempt to adjust to urbanisation, the party changed its name to the Centre Party in 1967 (Carlsson 1992).

Recently other parties have managed to gain representation in the Riksdag. With regard to the Greens in 1988 and the Christian Democrats in 1991, this happened after a period of struggle outside parliament. The story of New Democracy is the opposite. With hardly any organisation at all and a party formed only a year before the election of 1991, the two media-oriented party leaders managed to win twenty-five seats. However, as the party become more involved in Riksdag politics, it became difficult to hold the heterogeneous parliamentary party group together. In the end the group dissolved and the party lost all its seats in 1994. Today, New Democracy is not a political force.

Parliamentary party groups at work

The philosophy behind the Swedish legislation of party life is that there shall be as little legal control as possible. The only paragraph in the Act of Government mentioning party merely defines it as ‘any association or group of voters that appears in an election under a specific designation’ (Holmberg and Stjernquist 1985; Pierre and Widfeldt 1992:784). This means that it is only possible to use the party name formally in the Riksdag if it has been used in the election. A

single elected Riksdag member of an extra-parliamentary party can form a parliamentary party group. Even inside parliament, party activities are regulated with caution. The Standing Order of the Riksdag states that internal parliamentary elections are carried out through parties and that the Speaker shall confer with party group representatives in planning the agenda and certain procedures in the chamber (Holmberg and Stjernquist 1985:106–7).

Despite the lack of legal regulation, the parliamentary party groups are not totally 'lawless'. All parliamentary party groups have statutes (Holmberg and Stjernquist 1985:106). The structures of various parliamentary party groups are to a large extent similar. Each parliamentary party group holds meetings at least once a week. The main meeting tends to take place on Tuesday evenings between the committee meetings and the chamber deliberations. This is to ensure that members co-ordinate their actions and provide reassurance that they have the support of their party comrades.

The leader of the party-as-a-whole is usually chairperson of the party group. The only exception is if the Social Democratic Party leader is the Prime Minister, in which case the workload is considered to be too heavy. In the Riksdag, the parliamentary party group leadership is called the Trusted Council (*förtroenderåd*), except in the Green parliamentary party group where it is called the co-ordination group (*samordningsgrupp*). An exception to this common steering structure is that the Social Democratic Trusted Council, together with the Social Democratic Riksdag committee chairpersons and vice-chairpersons, constitute the crucial Group Board. This larger body functions as the steering committee of the Social Democrats.

In all cases all group members elect the leadership. The members of the Trusted Council acquire a great deal of influence. Their duties include suggesting the candidates for internal Riksdag elections as well as the parliamentary party group, preparing party group meetings, co-ordinating the parliamentary work done by the specialists, and initiating proposals for official party policy.

Table 9.2 presents characteristics of the individual parliamentary party groups. If we disregard the size of the parliamentary group, the number of members in the Trusted Council is about the same. This explains why the Trusted Council percentage in Table 9.2 becomes smaller as the number of party group members increases.

Each parliamentary party group elects a group leader, who is a key figure in parliament. The group leader is responsible for the parliamentary tactics of the party group and for inter-party negotiations. Actually, it is often the group leader who prepares the internal party group elections and the selection of party representatives for Riksdag assignments. He or she also chairs the party group meetings.

According to the statutes of the parliamentary party groups, the internal division of labour corresponds to the Riksdag committee system. This means that committee assignments have an impact on who is responsible for specific subject areas within the party group (Hagevi 1993). The jurisdiction of the

Table 9.2 Important characteristics of the parliamentary party groups of 1994/95

	<i>Left</i>	<i>Greens</i>	<i>Social Democrats</i>	<i>Centre</i>	<i>Liberals</i>	<i>Christian Democrats</i>	<i>Moderate</i>	<i>All Democrats</i>
Party group leadership: <i>percentage of members</i>	23	22	4	26	27	40	16	14
Internal subgroups: <i>number of groups</i>	4	4	16	7	16	4	16	—
Committee rank: <i>percentage of high rank</i>	0	0	10	12	12	0	12	9
<i>percentage of low rank</i>	100	100	90	88	88	100	88	91

Source: *Fakta om folkvalda. Riksdagen 1994–1998* (1995). Data about the internal subgroups are collected by each parliamentary party group.

Note

Party group leadership is defined as the *Trusted Council*, except the Greens when it is defined as the *Co-ordination Group*. High committee rank is defined as chairman or vice-chairman in the standing committee. All other Riksdag members are defined as low committee rank.

sixteen standing committees is regulated in detail by law, mainly corresponding to the ministries (Isberg 1984:32–8; Arter 1984:201–2). Positions in the committees are distributed proportionally between the parties. Each standing committee consists of seventeen members, including a chairperson and a vice-chairperson. The distribution of committee chairpersons and vice-chairpersons is usually an affair between the Social Democrats, Moderates, Liberals and the Centre Party (Table 9.2).

Although the party group specialists and the internal subgroups essentially correspond to the committee system, there is still some variation. It is primarily in large party groups that the sixteen internal subgroups exactly mirror the committee system, although this is also the case in the small Liberal Party. In other cases, party comrades from two or more Riksdag committees dealing with similar subjects work together to form an internal subgroup. This is the case in the Centre Party (seven subgroups), and in all other small party groups (four subgroups).

The actual roles of the internal subgroups depend on the party groups. In some party groups, the internal subgroups meet regularly to discuss and prepare current matters and therefore play an important role in developing the official party policy. As the size of the party increases, the internal division of labour becomes more important, as in the Social Democratic and Moderate party groups. The Centre Party has developed a strong operative tradition in organising its parliamentary work through the internal subgroups. The Left Party has also developed fully functional subgroups. In other parties, the importance of the subgroups can shift from one subgroup to another (Hagevi 1997).

The most important characteristic of the Riksdag members is party affiliation (Esaïsson and Holmberg 1996:51–3, 63). During the period of the unicameral

Riksdag, the members' norms, attitudes and behaviour have become more oriented towards the party than previously. Analyses of the well-known parliamentary roles of trustee, delegate and party representative show an increased role conception between 1969 and 1988 in favour of party representation. The strongest swing towards the role of party representative is among bourgeois members, especially the Moderates (Holmberg and Esaiasson 1988:50–1, 58). At the same time, the Moderate parliamentary party group showed a more homogeneous policy attitude in 1988 than in 1969 (Hagevi 1995a:88–91). This correlation is also connected to more coherent voting behaviour in all parliamentary parties, including the Moderates. According to Rice's index of cohesion, party cohesion during votes was 93 per cent in 1969 (Holmberg 1975). In 1994 this party cohesion had increased to 98 per cent in the 1994/95 session (Wetterqvist 1996).

On certain sensitive subjects, it is generally accepted that members will not always support the party line. Religious, ethical, and sometimes regional questions are areas where members may defect from the party line. However, these are informal norms. The parties avoid regulating party cohesion. Only the Moderate Party group governs what members should do if they want to depart from the official party line when voting: they must report their stance at the party group meeting (Isberg 1992:26–8). It is more common for party rules to dictate what members should do if they want to initiate private bills and how committee members should keep contact with the party group (Gahrton 1983:317–21; Isberg 1992:27).⁴ Indeed, many informal norms exist regarding the members' discipline as party representatives. These norms tend to be more stringent when the members belong to a party with government responsibility (Gahrton 1983:177, 322–5; Isberg 1992:28).

With strong norms of party cohesion, the question remains whether the individual members of the Riksdag are satisfied with their primary function as party representatives. How do the members perceive their situation? Are they satisfied with things as they are or do they want more or less party cohesion? Table 9.3 displays the Riksdag members' views on three important party cohesion norms as they were registered in a postal questionnaire: follow the party line during votes, wait for consent from the party before political initiatives are taken, and keep internal party discussions confidential vis-à-vis outsiders.⁵

Most Riksdag members are quite content with party cohesion. The members are most satisfied with party cohesion during votes (86 per cent), followed by the norms of no political initiatives without party consent (75 per cent), and keeping internal party discussions confidential (63 per cent).

The reasons for discontent are divergent. Some members want to be able to take political initiatives without the consent of the party (19 per cent). However, as regards the norm of keeping internal party discussions confidential, 33 per cent of the members want this to be stricter. What Table 9.3 does not show is that this view is especially strong in the Left Party (43 per cent) and the Social Democrats (45 per cent), but that few of the Greens agree with them (6 per cent).

Table 9.3 Riksdag members' views on norms of party cohesion in 1994 (percentage)

<i>Norm of party cohesion</i>	<i>Somewhat or much stronger</i>	<i>Good as they are</i>	<i>Somewhat or much weaker</i>	<i>Total percentage</i>	<i>N</i>
Follow the party line during votes	4	86	10	100	329
Wait for consent of the party before initiatives are taken	6	75	19	100	328
Keep internal party discussion confidential	33	62	5	100	329

Note

The question wording was: *What is your opinion on the demand for party cohesion and party discipline in your party regarding the following norms in the work of the Riksdag?*

These specifications followed: *Not reveal internal party discussion to outsiders, Not take political initiatives without the consent of the party, Follow party line during votes.*

The optional answers given were: norms should be much stronger; norms should be somewhat stronger; they are good as they are; should be somewhat weaker; should be much weaker.

The party differences regarding views on the norms of party cohesion during votes are usually small, but there is a different attitude between the Social Democrats and the Moderates. While only 5 per cent of the Social Democrats want more generous party cohesion norms during votes, the number among Moderates is 22 per cent.

During the last few decades, the resources of the parliamentary party groups have increased. Each Riksdag party group is provided with office space in the parliamentary building complex, depending on the size of its Riksdag representation (Olson and Hagevi 1997). State financial support for parliamentary party groups was introduced in 1975. It consists of a basic subvention (in 1994/95 a total of SEK 22.7 million, from SEK 1.9 million to SEK 5.5 million per party group) and seat-based financial support (in 1994/95 SEK 90,000 per seat). No funds are given directly to the individual Riksdag members (Pierre and Widfeldt 1994:348; Riksdagen i siffror 1995:21). There is no control whatsoever regarding how the Riksdag party groups spend their money.

The individual Riksdag members have become fully professional. The individual members receive a salary which in 1994 amounted to SEK 318,000 a year. Members also receive an annual allowance of SEK 70,400 a year. For purposes of comparison, an ordinary Swedish industrial worker earns about SEK 170,000 a year.

Extra-parliamentary organisations

The well-known party dichotomy of Duverger into mass and cadre parties does not really apply in the Swedish context. Usually all parties are categorised as

mass parties. Every Riksdag party group has a considerable extra-parliamentary organisation. Traditionally, the Social Democrats and the Centre Party are considered to be most similar to mass parties (Duverger 1954:171, 191–2; Pierre and Widfeldt 1992; Bäck and Möller 1995:139).

The extent to which the extra-parliamentary organisation statutes give consideration to representatives in parliament varies. The Moderates and Christian Democratic parties contain no reference to the parliamentary party group.⁶ The statutes of all other parties with representatives in the Riksdag state that some kind of report from the parliamentary party group is to be presented at the party congress. The statutes of the Social Democratic Party, Left Party and Green Party specify some ties between the extra-parliamentary organisation and the parliamentary party group, but stipulate no special sanctions to reinforce these demands.

A disagreement between the Social Democratic extra-parliamentary organisation and the parliamentary party group will illustrate the problematic relation between different party domains. The Social Democratic statutes declare that the parliamentary party group is responsible to the party congress. Despite this, between 1917 and 1972, the Social Democratic Riksdag Group refused to let the party congress scrutinise their protocols. The reason for the refusal was that occasionally confidential state matters were discussed in the protocols of the parliamentary party group (Edenman 1946:259–64; Pierre 1986:41, 70).

All party leaders are elected by the extra-parliamentary organisation. There are no formal rules that the party leader of the extra-parliamentary party shall be the leader of the parliamentary party group, but this is nonetheless always the case. When the extra-parliamentary congress elects a party leader, the Riksdag members of the party elect the same individual as the chairperson of the parliamentary party group. However, the members of the parliamentary party group have great influence when a leader is to be selected and their opinions are highly valued. In most cases it is important that a party leader have a position in the parliamentary party group. Still, there are exceptions. In 1983 and in 1994, the Liberals selected party leaders who had no seat in the Riksdag, and in both cases this proved to be a problem. In the first case, the liberal leader managed to get elected due to vacancies. In the second case, the party leader had problems gaining the acceptance of her parliamentary party group. Partly for this reason she resigned in 1997 and was replaced by the group leader in the Riksdag.

Double roles in the parliamentary party group and the central extraparlimentary organisation are not limited to party leaders. Of the 1994 Riksdag members, 18 per cent had extra-parliamentary appointments at central level and an additional 5 per cent had such appointments previously.

All members of the Riksdag must have some contacts with the local extraparlimentary organisation, or they cannot be elected to the Riksdag. The selection of candidates for the Riksdag election is made within the local extra-parliamentary organisation. National leaders do not control the nomination process in the constituencies (Brändström 1972).

The importance of the local extra-parliamentary organisations becomes clear when the number of Riksdag members with appointments in the local parties is studied. As many as 60 per cent of Riksdag members held a local party leadership position in 1994. An additional 23 per cent had done so previously. Only 17 per cent had never been appointed to a leadership position in the local extra-parliamentary organisation.

Important means of influence

Most members of the Riksdag (69 per cent) want to have more power as individuals (Esaiasson and Holmberg 1996:225-8). This means that power-seeking motives are to a large degree spread among the Riksdag members. Which party domains do the Riksdag members perceive as important for achieving influence? To answer this question, three relevant measurements of party strongholds are available. Unfortunately, they do not cover all possible party domains.

First, the members may believe that strong support from the extraparlimentary party opinion is important to gain influence. Our measurements do not tell us if the members put local extra-parliamentary organisation ahead of the central level, or vice versa. Second, some members view good contacts with the party leadership to be a power source. This is connected to the party-in-government domain: in a parliamentary democracy of the Swedish kind, a government party places its leadership in the cabinet (Isberg and Johansson 1993). Third, members may find the party group meeting to be a tool of influence. They find success during party group meeting debates important.

In Table 9.4, the members' opinions on the importance of three power-seeking means are presented: success during party group meeting debates, personal contacts with the party leadership and party opinion support. Apart from the Greens, all members of the different parties seem to share a somewhat similar view of the importance of success during party group meeting debates. About three-quarters of Riksdag members think that a successful debate is very or quite important for gaining influence. Among the Greens, only 44 per cent indicate that the party group meeting debate is of that weight.

Accompanied by the Left Party members to some extent, the Greens' opinion about the importance of personal contacts with party group leadership deviates from the other Riksdag members' opinions. Only one-third of the Greens and somewhat more than half of the members in the Left Party find leadership contacts 'very important' or 'quite important'. About 70 per cent of the bourgeois members say that such contacts are 'very important' or 'quite important' in order to gain influence, which is a little more than among the Social Democratic members (66 per cent).

Extra-parliamentary party opinion support is important in the minds of Social Democrats and Greens (70 per cent and 72 per cent 'very important' or 'quite

Table 9.4 Riksdag members' views on important means for influencing decisions in their own parliamentary party group in 1994 (percentage of members stating 'very important' or 'quite important')

<i>Means of influence</i>	<i>Left</i>	<i>Greens</i>	<i>Social Democrats</i>	<i>Centre</i>	<i>Liberals</i>	<i>Christian Democrats</i>	<i>Moderate</i>	<i>All</i>
Success during party group debate	70	44	77	73	80	80	69	73
Personal contacts with party leadership	55	33	66	69	72	73	72	66
Party opinion support	45	72	70	54	56	47	54	62
Smallest N	20	18	145	26	25	15	64	313

Note

The question wording was: *According to your own experience, how important are the following factors when it comes to influencing the decisions in your Riksdag party group?* These specifications followed: *Strong opinion in own party, Personal contacts with party leadership, and To succeed in debates during the Riksdag party group meeting.* The following answers were possible: *very important, quite important, not so important, and not important at all.* The table entries are the percentage of members who answered 'very important' or 'quite important'.

important' respectively). In other party groups, the party opinion is of smaller interest, particularly in the Christian Democratic Party (47 per cent) and the Left Party (45 per cent).

Party-in-government

In principle, every party leader is the candidate for Prime Minister of his or her party. When a new Prime Minister is selected, it is the parliamentary party groups, not the extra-parliamentary organisations that have the opportunity to approve or reject the appointment. When a new Prime Minister is to be appointed, all party leaders are summoned one at a time by the Riksdag Speaker. This is when the party leader can advise the Speaker regarding the most suitable candidate for the post of Prime Minister. The opinions of the party leaders are firmly anchored in the parliamentary party groups. If the standpoint of the party is not obvious, the Riksdag members deliver the opinions of their local extra-parliamentary organisation at the parliamentary party group meeting (see e.g. Gahrton 1983:128–40).

When the Speaker's decision is made, he or she proposes the candidate for Prime Minister to the Riksdag. Unless an absolute majority rejects the proposal, the Prime Minister is elected. The formation of the rest of the government is formally a matter for the Prime Minister alone. However, if the Prime Minister is leading a multi-party coalition government, the reality is different. In such cases, some ministerial offices are given away to be filled by other government parties.

The recruitment of these ministers is in reality delegated to the other party leaders of the coalition.

Ministers do not serve as members of the Riksdag. When Riksdag members are appointed ministers, they resign from the Riksdag and are replaced by substitutes during their government service. If the government service ends, the former ministers re-enter the Riksdag automatically.

It is not uncommon for ministers to be recruited from outside the Riksdag. In fact, the numbers of ministers recruited from the Riksdag have decreased since the unicameral Riksdag was introduced. The Social Democrats recruit the greatest number of ministers from outside the Riksdag. Only 33 per cent of the current ministers are recruited from the Riksdag. In some cases, a new minister may not even have been a member of the Social Democratic Party. The bourgeois parties show a greater tendency to recruit their ministers in the Riksdag, but the trend towards diminishing Riksdag recruitment is the same (Hagevi 1995b).

There is also an important difference between the Social Democrats and the bourgeois parties concerning government recruitment from the parliamentary party group leadership. In the most recent bourgeois government between 1991 and 1994, more than 80 per cent of the ministers who came from the Riksdag were also members of the leadership of their parliamentary party group. In the Social Democratic government of 1994, only 54 per cent of the ministers recruited from the Riksdag were leadership members of the parliamentary party group (Olson and Hagevi 1997).

Even if the ministers are not formally members of the Riksdag, they still take part in some of the meetings of their parliamentary party groups. They report their coming proposals during the meetings. At an earlier stage, the ministers or senior ministerial officials involve the corresponding specialists of the parliamentary party group in the preparation of coming proposals (Sundström 1994). They behave like members on the same team; both Riksdag members and government officials strongly identify themselves as members of the same party. There is no doubt that the line of demarcation is drawn between the government and the opposition parties, not between the Riksdag and the government.

Party activity

To understand the Riksdag members' activity in four party domains, we will examine the frequency of contact between members and their local extra-parliamentary organisation in their constituency, the central extraparliamentary organisation, and government ministers, and also speaking frequency during the parliamentary party group meeting. Table 9.5 shows how the members responded to questions about their party activity.

It comes as no surprise that most members maintain weekly contact with their constituency party (76 per cent), where they often hold leading positions in the local extra-parliamentary organisation.⁷ Weekly contact with the central extra-

Table 9.5 Riksdag members' party activity in 1994 (percentage of members)

<i>Party activity</i>	<i>Contact frequency</i>					<i>Total percent- age</i>	<i>N</i>
	<i>At least once a week</i>	<i>Once or twice a month</i>	<i>A few times</i>	<i>Occasionally</i>	<i>Never</i>		
Contacts with constituency party	76	22	1	1	0	100	326
Contacts with central party	22	39	27	10	2	100	323
Contacts with governmental ministers	26	35	23	9	7	100	322

	<i>Speaking frequency</i>					<i>Total percent- age</i>	<i>N</i>
	<i>Almost every time</i>	<i>Mostly</i>	<i>Now and then</i>	<i>Seldom</i>	<i>Never</i>		
Speaking during party group meeting	19	16	45	17	3	100	323

Note

The question wording was (regarding contact): *Disregarding how the contact was taken, how often have you in the past year, personally or by letter, been in touch with the organisations, groups or authorities below.* These specifications followed: *Government ministers, Local/regional party organisations in your own constituency, and Central party levels outside the Riksdag.* The question wording was (regarding speaking): *How often do you speak during the Riksdag party group meeting?*

parliamentary organisation (22 per cent) or ministers (26 per cent) is far less usual.⁸ According to the various party group statutes, all members are obligated to participate in the weekly party group meetings. However, not everyone participates orally. Only 19 per cent make contributions at every meeting. Most members specify their meeting activity with the 'now and then' alternative (45 per cent). Only 3 per cent of the members report that they never take the floor during the party group meeting.

There are clear differences in party activity between the Riksdag party groups. The party differences are not uniform, but change according to the party domain. Socialist members contact their constituency party most often: 85 per cent of the Social Democrats and 81 per cent of the members in the Left Party have high contact frequency. Only 58 per cent of the members in the Centre Party and 43 per cent of the Christian Democrats have high contact frequency with the constituency party.

Members of small party groups have easier access to the central extraparlimentary organisation, because that domain serves fewer Riksdag members than a larger Riksdag party group. Members with fewer party group colleagues tend to have the most frequent contacts with the central

extraparliamentary organisation. The highest contact frequency is noted for the Left Party (90 per cent) and the Greens (88 per cent). The lowest contact frequency is found among the large Social Democratic Party (49 per cent). However, the Christian Democrats deviate from the trend for small parties, as only 57 per cent of its members report high activity towards the central extraparliamentary organisation. It would seem that the Christian Democratic Riksdag members put a low priority on contact with the extra-parliamentary organisation at both the local and the central level.

Time is a scarce commodity in large parties, and this affects the members' ability to speak during party group meetings. Figure 9.1 describes the way party size constrains the members' urge to speak during the party group meeting. Members of small parties have a high speaking frequency while few of the Social Democrats and the Moderates demonstrate a speaking frequency on a similar scale. Half of the members visiting small party group meetings usually express themselves at every meeting. However, in the two largest Riksdag parties—the Social Democrats and the Moderates—the patterns are correspondingly more skewed towards a more reserved speaking frequency. Most of their members take the party group meeting floor only now and then.

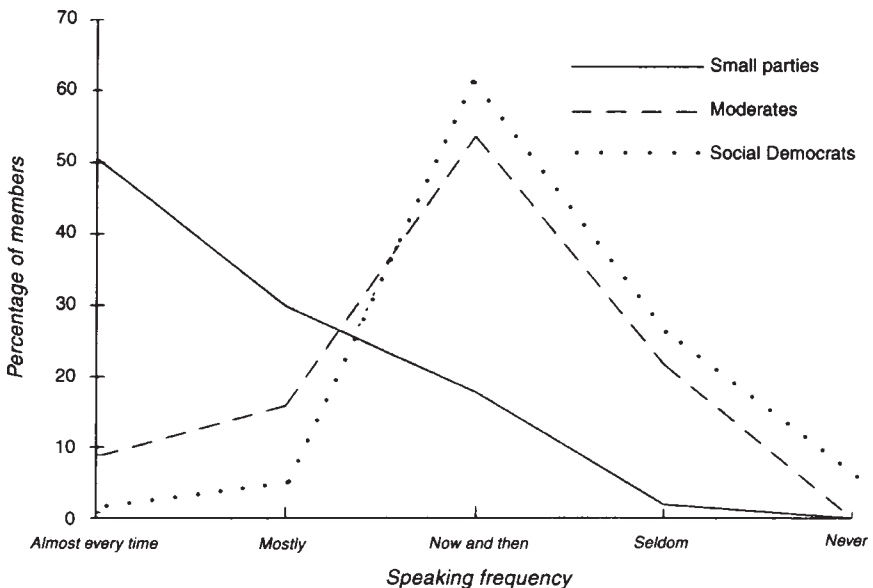


Figure 9.1 Riksdag members' speaking frequency during party group meetings, by party (per cent of members).

Note: The total numbers for the small parties are 107 members, for Moderates 69 members, and for Social Democrats 147 members. The question wording was as follows: *How often do you speak during the Riksdag party group meeting?* The possible answers were: *Almost every time, Mostly, Now and then, Seldom and Never.*

About a fifth of the members in large parties claim even more reserved behaviour, stating that they do not often speak during party group meetings.

The situation in large-sized party groups may create certain norms: among Social Democrats and Moderates it is regarded as bad behaviour to use the meeting floor of the party group too often (Hagevi 1995a:37).

A member wishing to contact a government minister finds it probably more rewarding and easier to do if the minister belongs to the same party. However, as not all parties are government parties, it stands to reason that not all members have the same opportunity to contact ministers. This affects the measurement of minister contacts. Fortunately, an accidental and helpful circumstance comes into play. After the Socialist bloc victory in the Riksdag election of 1994, the Social Democrats replaced the bourgeois parties in government. Hence, the members belonging to these parties have recent experience of party comrades being in government positions and a fairly good chance of contacting them. Only the Greens and members of the Left Party do not share this opportunity. This means that almost all Riksdag members are able to give their answers from an equal point of view. In this case, we would not expect any major effects on minister contacts due to the members belonging to the opposition or the government parties.

Small party groups with government experience are the most active in contacting government ministers. Members of the Christian Democratic Party (79 per cent), the Liberal Party (77 per cent) and the Centre Party (77 per cent) had high contact frequency. Few of the members in party groups with no government experience had high contact frequency with ministers. Only 18 per cent of the Green members and 38 per cent of the members in the Left Party have high contact frequency.

Conclusion

The party-as-a-whole can be divided into four party domains: the local and central extra-parliamentary organisation, the parliamentary party group, and the party-in-government. The Swedish parliamentary party groups are of great importance. During the last few decades, they have become more important at the expense of other parts of the party, like, for instance, the party-in-government.

For Swedish Riksdag members, party activities in all four party domains are important. Most important are the local extra-parliamentary organisation and the parliamentary party group, followed by the party-in-government. Least important is the central extra-parliamentary organisation.

The size of the members' party group has a clear impact on the party activities. In large party groups, time is limited, and members' share of that time become smaller as the party group becomes larger. During the party group meeting, a large number of Riksdag members result in lower individual activity.

The revival of the Riksdag party groups has developed without hampering party cohesion. Indeed, party cohesion is stronger now than during the 1960s. At the same time the level of state finance has increased, making it possible for the parliamentary

party groups to assist fully professional Riksdag members. According to the classification in Chapter 1, it seems correct to label the internal organisation of the parliamentary party groups in the Riksdag as a parliamentary party complex.

The division between a Swedish parliamentary party group that supports the government and the party-in-government is clearly weak. All Swedish Riksdag parties have extensive extra-parliamentary organisations with considerable resources. Even if the division between the parliamentary party group and the extra-parliamentary party generally is more distinct and varies somewhat between parties, they are still on the same team fighting their battle together. It is not possible to characterise the division between these two domains as strong, as it is described in Chapter 1. This means that the all Swedish parliamentary party groups are classified as an integrated part of the party-as-a-whole.

The parliamentary party group members have probably benefited from the generally close contacts between the different party domains in Sweden. With a high party activity in all four party domains, they are able to exercise quite an extensive influence on policy formulation.

Notes

- I wish to thank the editors of this volume, and also Kerstin Azam-Hagevi, Martin Bennulf, Ulf Bjereld, Staffan Darnolf, Marie Demker, Detlef Jahn and the participants of the workshop on parliamentary party groups at the European Consortium for Political Research Joint Sessions of Workshops in Oslo 1996 for their valuable comments on earlier versions of this chapter.
- 1 After an investigation of parliamentary power in Sweden between 1971 and 1988, one of the conclusions made by Swedish political scientist Mats Sjölin was the 'strengthening...position of the parliamentary party group' (Sjölin 1993:206).
- 2 In 1896 Branting was actually elected on a liberal ballot.
- 3 A more right-wing Agrarian Party won some Riksdag seats in the same election, and in 1922 they joined the Farmers Union.
- 4 Formally, the Riksdag members have quite extensive rights to speak, initiate, ask questions to ministers, etc. For example: During the 'General Period of Private Bills', all members can initiate private bills on any subject they want.
- 5 Data used in this chapter is collected within the project 'The Riksdag and Representative Democracy'. Shortly after the Swedish 1994 parliamentary election, postal questionnaires were distributed to all 349 elected members of the Riksdag. It was the third questionnaire since 1985 and, as before, the responding Riksdag members were promised anonymity. The response rate was 97 per cent (Esaiaasson et al. 1995).
- 6 The Christian Democrats formed their first parliamentary party group in 1991, two years after the last revision of the party statutes, which may explain why these do not mention the parliamentary party group.
- 7 The Riksdag members' correlation between leadership positions in local extraparlimentary organisations and contacts with local extra-parliamentary organisations is $r=+0.16$; $p<0.01$. (r is Pearson's measure of correlation; p is the level of significance.)
- 8 The Riksdag members' correlation between central extra-parliamentary organisation positions and contacts with central extra-parliamentary organisations is not negligible ($r=+0.28$; $p<0.0001$).

10 The partyness of the Finnish Eduskunta

Matti Wiberg

Parties dominate the parliament, and the Finnish parliament, the Eduskunta, functions as a network of parliamentary party groups (PPGs). It is an institution where the parties, not the individual representatives rule. *Partitocrazia* is the name of the game. The term *Fraktionenparlament* could also be employed. A non-partisan representative is almost a contradiction in terms. All politically important processes inside the Eduskunta are thus results of political actions by party groups: parties play the central role in formulating and deciding policy, but they also act as the key agents in mobilising public support for their proposals and actions, as well as reflecting different popular demands. The most important functions of the PPGs are the recruitment and nomination of political leaders, the determination of issue positions and political direction, and the organisation of the Eduskunta.

The strong *de facto* position of political party groups is naturally also reflected in the everyday organisation of parliamentary procedures and operations: for example, the party groups have their own offices in the parliamentary building; representative seating is ordered by political party; internal elections and various nominations inside the Eduskunta follow party lines; committee assignments and the chairperson nominations in the committees reflect the relative strength of each party; parliamentary party groups with more than one representative in a standing committee nominate one group trustee (*ryhmyri*) who reports to the party group and makes all politically relevant deals within the committee; group speeches in connection with the annual state budget deliberations and interpellation debates are allocated to the party groups in accordance with their size; the party groups receive money directly from the state budget; the preliminary stages of the formation of a new cabinet involve decisions of the party groups; and so on. The most important determinants of the control and use of power in the Eduskunta are thus the political parties.

This power is not just limited to inside the legislative assembly: Although the electoral system requires the voters to vote for one, and only one, individual candidate, elections are to a large extent a matter of voters choosing between

parties and not just between individual candidates.¹

Not much is known about the individual Finnish MP's relation to his or her party group or about the PPG's relation to its party organisation. There is actually only one Finnish study (Oksanen 1972) in the field, and it focuses not on the party groups as such but rather on the individual parliamentarians, and the understanding of their roles. The data was collected in 1969. Another study, Noponen (1992), attempts to provide an overall picture of how the Finnish legislative assembly is structured and how it operates.

This almost complete lack of knowledge makes it difficult, if not completely impossible, to understand *how* and *why* the Eduskunta operates the way it does. To get a better understanding of the way political issues are dealt with inside the Eduskunta, it is necessary to have proper insight into the everyday activities of PPGs. Along with the formal institutional requirements, the parliamentary political system provides incentives and constraints with respect to individual representatives. In a realistic understanding of parliamentary politics, parliamentary party groups cannot be ignored.

The research problem

The purpose of this chapter is to give a nuts-and-bolts presentation of the Finnish parliament in order to be able to describe and discuss the Finnish MP's role as party representative. How do the current Finnish MPs understand their role as representatives of a particular PPG? This main research question will be answered by answering the following sub-questions:

- 1 What is the relationship between an individual representative and his/ her party group on the one hand and between the representative and his/her party organisation on the other? What are the relations of the parliamentary party group with the extra-parliamentary party organisation?
- 2 What is the relative importance the representatives attach to various factors when they try to influence their own parliamentary party group?
- 3 How do MPs evaluate the internal functioning of their party group? What sense of cohesiveness do they feel the party has developed? What do they think of party discipline?
- 4 How do the representatives think an individual representative should vote in conflict situations where the representative's view differs from that of the party group or his/her voters?

The chapter is organised as follows. It begins with a brief description of the Finnish parliament as a political system consisting of party groups; second, the main settings of the parties in the legislative assembly and the relations between the party organisation and parliamentary party groups are presented; third, it discusses some of the main findings of a survey of current Finnish MPs. The chapter ends with a discussion and a few conclusions.

The Eduskunta: basic facts

The Finnish parliament, the Eduskunta, has 200 members who are elected by a direct and proportional ballot every fourth year at the same time throughout the country from fifteen electoral districts. The voters vote for one and only one individual candidate, and the seats are allocated according to the d'Hondt principle (see Nurmi 1990 and Kuusela 1995 for details). It should be strongly emphasised that the strictly personal electoral system sometimes produces quite awkward results for the leadership of the PPG. For instance, not all members of the Social Democratic PPG would have been elected if the party organisation had dictatorially selected the candidates for the elections. In electoral systems that highlight individual persons, the composition of the PPGs cannot be a result of careful design by party leaders, and the electoral system can produce conflicts inside the PPGs.

The Finnish parliament has consisted of ten parliamentary party groups during the post-war period. The distribution of seats in the period 1945–95 is shown in Table 10.1

Table 10.1 Distribution of seats in the Eduskunta, by party, 1945–1995

<i>Election</i>	<i>SDP</i>	<i>KOK</i>	<i>KESK</i>	<i>VAS</i>	<i>RKP</i>	<i>SMP</i>	<i>SKL</i>	<i>LKP</i>	<i>VIHR</i>	<i>Other</i>
1945	50	28	49	49	14			9		1
1948	54	33	56	38	14			5		
1951	53	28	51	43	15			10		
1954	54	24	53	43	13			13		
1958	48	29	48	50	14			8		3
1962	38	32	53	47	14			13		3
1966	55	26	49	41	12	1		9		7
1970	52	37	36	36	12	18	1	8		
1972	55	34	35	37	10	18	4	7		
1975	54	35	39	40	10	2	9	9		2
1979	52	47	36	35	10	7	9	4		
1983	57	44	38	26	10	17	3			5
1987	56	53	40	16	12	9	5		4	5
1991	48	40	55	19	11	7	8	1	10	1
1995	63	39	44	22	11		7		9	4

Source: *Parliamentary Elections, Statistics Finland* (1991:2, Table D, p. 17) and *Parliamentary Elections, Statistics Finland* (1995:3, 18).

Note

SDP, Social Democratic Party (Suomen Sosialidemokraattinen Puolue, includes also TPSL).

KOK, National Coalition Party (Kansallinen Kokoomus).

KESK, Centre (Keskusta, until 1962 Maalaisliitto).

VAS, Left Alliance (Vasemmistoliitto 1990–, Suomen Kansan Demokraattinen Liitto SKDL 1944–, includes DEVA (communists).

RKP, Swedish Peoples Party (Svenska folkpartiet).

SMP, Finnish Rural Party (Suomen Maaseudun Puolue, includes SKYP).

SKL, Christian League (Suomen Kristillinen Liitto).

LKP, Liberals (until 1948 Kansallinen Edistyspuolue, between 1951 and 1962 Suomen Kansanpuolue, Liberaalinen Kansanpuolue).

VIHR, The Greens (Vihreät).

Finnish post-war politics has to a large extent been politics of the five largest parties—the Social Democrats, the agrarian Centre Party, the Conservatives (KOK), the Swedish People's Party and the Left Alliance—which have together gained roughly 85 per cent of the available seats in fifteen elections (86.5 per cent in the most recent election in March 1995). The turnover of representatives has been quite stable with only a few exceptions for the whole post-war period. On the average, only one-third of the representatives elected each time are new.²

The distribution of seats is one thing, what can be achieved with them is another. The Shapley-Shubik and Banzhaf measures of voting power of the party groups in the Eduskunta has varied from 0 to 0.4. The Social Democrats have never been stronger than they were in the 1995 elected parliament; this fact is also reflected in their share of voting power. This means that no single party group alone has ever been able to control the voting outcomes in the Eduskunta (Wiberg and Raunio 1997a).

Finland is one of the most industrious law producers in the Western world: during the years 1945–93 13,196 new laws were passed (annual average: 264, low: 100 in 1952, high: 706 in 1994) (Wiberg 1994b, Wiberg and Raunio 1996). During the 1950s the Eduskunta produced an average of 125 laws per calendar year, and that number has increased steadily since then so that the average was 182 during the 1960s, 292 during the 1970s, 340 during the 1980s, and as many as 776 during the first five years of the 1990s.

The committee structure has been relatively stable since the time of independence. There were fourteen committees from 1945 to 1990 and one more has been added since then. The role of the Grand Committee has changed significantly, but otherwise there have been no major modifications in the structure of the committees or in their tasks and the division of labour. Three committees were abolished in 1990, and three new ones were introduced with new policy jurisdictions (Wiberg and Mattila 1997). Until 1992, the Grand Committee scrutinised all bills, but after September 1992 bills have been sent to the Grand Committee only as an exception, that is, only when the plenary session has changed the precise wording of the bill drafted by the special committee, or when the parliament for some other reason wants the Grand Committee's opinion. Since Finland joined the European Union in 1995, the Grand Committee has also served as the committee dealing with most EU affairs (see Jaaskinen and Kivisaari (1997) and Raunio and Wiberg (1997) for details).

Parties in the Eduskunta

The party system in Finland is characterised by polarised pluralism with a high degree of fragmentation.³ One distinguishing feature has been the permanence of the five main parliamentary parties, irrespective of the changes that have taken place on the left and the right. There have also been numerous mini-parties, most of which have been short-lived, with little influence, and unable to gain any seats in the Eduskunta.

The history of party groups, and more generally parties in the Eduskunta, can be summarised as follows (Borg 1982; cf. also Sundberg 1994; Rantala 1982; Nousiainen 1992; Mylly and Berry 1984; Wiberg 1991): the five major party organisations—the Social Democrats (SDP), the Left Socialists (SKDL/ VAS), the Centre (KESK), the Conservatives (KOK), and the Swedish People's Party (RKP)—were all established in the early years of this century, building on a heritage that dates back to the 1880s. All of these parties were originally organised around social and cultural cleavages.⁴

There is a curious double standard in the formal regulations concerning the parliamentary system: neither the Constitution Act nor the Parliament Act recognises political parties. The basic legal norms rest on extremely idealistic and individualistic notions of political representation. Formally, there is even a categorical denial of imperative mandate: 'In performing his duties a representative shall be bound to serve the interests of justice and truth. He shall be bound therein to comply with the Constitution, *and shall not be bound by any other regulations*' (Parliament Act 13 January 1928/7, §11, emphasis mine). But, in reality, it is the parties that run all politically important matters inside the popular assembly. In practice it would be impossible to understand the mechanisms and dynamics of political behaviour inside parliament without any reference to the political party groups. Only a very naive observer would look at parliamentary politics from a formal legal viewpoint and believe that to be the true picture of Finnish parliamentary politics.

Parties are crucial actors in the operation of the parliamentary system. They usually function as cohesive⁵ and disciplined (Wiberg 1989) building blocks of varying sizes in the process of majority formation. This is true both with respect to government formation or the working out of compromises in the legislative process. As a consequence, the Eduskunta should primarily be understood as a body effectively split into a number of autonomous and competing parliamentary parties (cf. Damgaard 1994b: 87). The dominance of party and partisanship in Finnish politics means that Finnish MPs vote in parliament as their party dictates: only on exceptional occasions do individual representatives have a free hand to follow their conscience. It is noteworthy that it is the group that usually makes the formal decision on whether or not the representatives can act independently. Cohesive parties are necessary for responsible government, but it is difficult to escape the conclusion that discipline is excessive at present.

Why are parties so central in all parliaments? One reason is obvious, but seldom explicitly stated: parties introduce effectiveness and predictability into the operations of a decision-making body such as a parliament. Parties aggregate and channel opinions. Parties reduce the complexity of political life. Parties ensure some degree of coherence: electors know what they are voting for—they may not know the individual candidates, but they understand party labels. In the Eduskunta there are 200 seats.⁶ This set of actors can form 199!/100! (199–100!) different winning coalitions with a simple majority (when all MPs participate in the decision making). This is a huge number of coalitions. No human being alone can comprehend and act on this enormous variety.

But if we focus upon PPGs instead of individual representatives, then the number of possible different successful coalitions is remarkably reduced. In the current Eduskunta there are ten party groups (the single representative for the Åland Islands is included here in the party group of the RKP since he also functions as part of that group in practice). These ten party groups can form ‘only’ 512 different minimally winning coalitions with simple majority rule, and when the left-right dimension is taken into account, only twenty-two minimally winning connected coalitions are possible.⁷ Party groups also contribute to effectiveness in the sense that they reduce negotiation costs, and thus help to overcome many kinds of co-ordination problems.

Finnish political parties have been explicitly regulated by four laws and one decree.⁸ The political parties became legally recognised for the first time in 1969 with the Party Act⁹ in which the political parties were given privileged status both in elections and in the distribution of public funds. One aim of the new law was to limit the number of parties. The net result, however, was the exact opposite: the regulations and benefits attracted new political hopefuls into the fellowship of the party system (Wiberg 1991, 1997). It is noteworthy that these legal regulations refer to the extra-parliamentary party organisations. The PPGs are not usually referred to at all. Since 1987, however, the Constitution Act has dictated the obligation to listen to the opinion of the Speaker and the PPGs (1987/575, §36, 2), but not of parties as such, when the composition of the acting cabinet (Council of State) is ‘changed essentially’. The PPGs have been formally recognised within the Eduskunta since the independence of Finland in the sense that the PPGs have always had their formal offices in the parliamentary building. In a stricter sense, the first formal recognition within the Eduskunta should be dated back to 1967 when public funding of the PPGs began.

Until 1969, the parties established the rules regulating candidate selection for parliamentary elections and election campaigns. The freedom from public regulation resulted in different party norms on how the organisations were run. In 1969 when the Party Act and the new Parliamentary Elections Act were adopted, the disparity between parties was radically reduced. Although in the Party Act all forms of non-democratic organisation were made illegal—the implication being that devotee party organisations based on cells and democratic centralism (the Communist Party¹⁰) would not be legally recognised (all forms of fascist party models were outlawed at the end of World War II). Thus all parties—independent of organisational type and politics—must follow democratic principles in their internal decision-making and organisational structure (Party Law 1969). According to the new Law on Parliamentary Elections (1975/319), candidates are to be selected in a secret and universal ballot from among those party members living in the constituency. Primary elections are not compulsory if the number of nominated candidates does not exceed the number that the parties have the right to nominate in each constituency (Sundberg and Gylling 1992:276–7). It should be mentioned that

the Finnish political party system is more regulated than the other Nordic party systems (Sundberg 1997).

The relationships between single MPs and their parties are intense and varied. One systematic way to try to get an overall understanding of these multifaceted relationships is to look at the various party regulations: written formal party rules and the rules of the parliamentary party group. There have been recent changes in regulations in all Finnish parties.¹¹ In general terms, party rules typically regulate the position of the PPG in at least the following respects (cf. Borg 1982: esp. 460–2):

- Whether or not the group or its members have particular rights in any of the decision-making bodies in the party organisation.
- Whether the group has any particular obligations, specific tasks or powers in the action field of the party organisation as a whole.
- How the activities of the group are controlled by the party organisation (for instance, how the annual report of the activities of the PPG is processed in the party organisation).
- Whether the leadership of the party organisation can influence the nomination of the leaders and other posts in the group.
- Whether the leadership of the party organisation can influence the activities of the group.

Parliamentary party groups have become more formally regulated during recent decades. Individual members now have more say in the extraparlimentary activities of the party organisation, and the leadership of the party organisation can, if only informally, influence in many ways recruitment to the PPG and its activities.

All PPGs report to their party congress about their activities. The party groups produce an annual report that highlights the main political processes inside the party group and in parliament. The reports are quite extensive but not very informative. They typically just refer to the most important legislative bills and report the party line with respect to the various political issues raised in parliament. It must, however, be kept in mind that *legally* the PPG is not strictly an organ of the party organisation. On the other hand, the PPG is the only party body that is assembled continuously. It is also a body in which the influence of the party supporters is registered, not only in its composition but also in the feedback from the rank-and-file members and other ordinary people (Halila 1991, 93, 106).

Some PPGs—SDP, KESK, KOK—have also written their own rules. (VAS,¹² RKP and VIHR do not have written rules for their parliamentary party group.) The written rules of the PPGs typically define the group's and its members' relations to the party in the following respects:

- Who is allowed to participate in decisions and who can be present in group meetings.

- Whether the group may select representatives for party tasks or represent the party in some respect.
- Whether the rules dictate that certain decisions be made by the party organisation alone or by the party and the PPG jointly.
- The kinds of sanctions available and under what circumstances they should be exercised.

Here, again, the relationship between the PPG and the extra-parliamentary party organisation has become more intense during recent decades.

This combination of public and private legal regulations affecting the parties is by no means straightforward. From the viewpoint of private law, a PPG has some resemblance to an unregistered ideological association. Party groups have their own rules with regulations governing membership, group leadership, decision-making, and disciplinary sanctioning. The group decides itself upon its rules; it is not a task in the hands of the party organisation. The group rules do typically stipulate that the group entitled to use the party's name must comprise who:

- Belongs to the local branch of the party.
- Has accepted the party's programme.
- Is accepted by the group as members.

Group membership is thus not automatic: the group must recruit its members. Note, however, that the minimum number of group members is just one representative. The groups act as associations in the sense that they can terminate the membership of a single representative and that a single member may leave the group. It is rather problematic from a formal legal point of view what kind of formal disciplinary sanctions the group is entitled to. It is quite clear that legally a group cannot, for instance, dismiss a member for a certain period of time without having formal recourse to such an action in its regulations. In practice, however, this has happened (Wiberg 1989), although there are no known cases where decisions made by a PPG have been disputed and taken to court (Halila 1991:90).

A parliamentary party group may sometimes be in a position where it must simply rubber-stamp decisions made elsewhere that formally belong to the jurisdiction of the group. An example may be the creation of a new government: it is generally the rule that the group selects its ministers, although there have been many known cases of *Realpolitik* in which the Agrarian group (KESK) simply had to adjust itself to the decisions made by the President of the Republic, Urho Kekkonen (1956–81). It is perhaps worth noting that the party rules regulating the parties' participation in government are minimal and unclear for at least SDP, KESK, KOK and VAS—thus brilliantly fulfilling the Napoleonic desiderata that a constitution must be short and ambiguous.

Finnish party leaders, that is, the formal leaders of the extra-parliamentary party organisations (EPO)—who are typically elected at the EPO party congress held every third or fourth year—are very seldom also leaders of their own PPG.

The personal union of EPO and PPG leaders has in Finland no practical importance. The chairperson of the EPO has simultaneously also been the chairperson of the corresponding PPG in only five cases during the whole post-war period.¹³ The PPG party leader is elected at the PPG annual meeting.

The large PPGs select one chairperson, at least one vice-chairperson, a secretary and a treasurer and may also have an executive committee that meets regularly at least once a week. The groups hire their own party secretaries, information secretaries, legislative secretaries and planners, as well as technical secretaries, with means allocated directly from the state budget in accordance with the parliamentary strength of the groups (Wiberg 1991) (see Table 10.2). The party groups have their offices in the Eduskunta building, where they are not charged rent and are given access to phones and fax machines free of charge, but they must pay postal expenses.

The remaining PPGs (VIHR, SKL, NUORS, SMP and EKO) each have one political and one technical secretary. Thus a total of forty-three (twentythree political and twenty technical) secretaries are employed by the Finnish PPGs.¹⁴ Since April 1997 individual MPs have had personal aides and technical secretaries. Some representatives share one aide, that is, a single aide may work as a technical secretary for several representatives simultaneously.

The large PPGs traditionally have their regular group meetings every Thursday afternoon, usually at 3 p.m. These meetings are kept behind closed doors, but quite often persons outside the PPG—for example, ministers, party functionaries or EPO party leaders—participate whenever their expertise is needed. The right of outsiders to participate in the internal PPG meetings is not formally regulated. The groups' executive committees usually meet at least once a week, usually on Thursday mornings at 10 a.m. Some PPGs' bureaucrats have regular meetings with their colleagues from the party central office. For instance, the well-organised KESK arrange a meeting for the political *apparatchiks* from the central office and the political secretaries of their parliamentary group on Monday mornings at 10.00 in order to coordinate the week's political agenda (Perttula 1989:80). The KESK group also arranges an internal meeting for the group secretaries on Tuesday mornings at 9.30, as well as producing a weekly bulletin. The KOK arrange a weekly office meeting on Mondays at noon and then hold a meeting for the leadership and the secretariat of the group on Tuesdays at 9.15. The KOK group executive meets half an hour

Table 10.2 Political and technical staff in parliamentary party groups

	<i>VAS</i>	<i>SDP</i>	<i>KESK</i>	<i>KOK</i>	<i>RKP</i>
Political	2	4	5	5	2
Technical	2	4	4	4	1
Total	4	8	9	9	3

Source: Compiled from Eduskunta (1995:73–7).

before the whole group has its weekly meeting. SDP and VAS arrange their group executive meetings before the whole group convenes. Both left-wing groups also publish their own internal bulletins.¹⁵

Government party group chairpersons meet every Wednesday morning—without the current ministers—to co-ordinate their groups' activities and especially to sort out various practical problems that might have evolved in the committees. This informal organ, which is not described either in the formal regulations or even the party groups' own rules, has a lot of practical power. If, for instance, one group is dissatisfied with the content of a particular bill proposed by the government, the chairperson of this particular party's parliamentary group may raise the issue in the meeting. The current government parties have informally agreed that a bill introduced by the government can be modified if and only if all government parties give their assent.¹⁶ Note that this gives each party a very strong veto power. In practice, however, some parties are more equal than others: some of the functionaries of the smaller party groups complained in the interviews that their power was insufficient to stop the modification of a bill if the majority of the government favoured the modification. If a minority of the government wants to defend the government proposal against the majority of the government, the majority wins. The government groups have also agreed not to introduce any initiatives that would deviate from the government's policy or vote in favour of any such initiatives. The content of the standing committee reports is formulated in the deliberations of the committee party groups representing the government parties.

The Finnish PPGs do not have any particular spokespersons—as a matter of fact, the word itself does not have a Finnish translation—although there are naturally many divisions of labour inside the various PPGs. There are representatives who have specialised, say, in foreign affairs or taxation, but they do not have any internally recognised status as even informal representatives of their PPG. But it is the party leadership who presents the party policy to the public and are the main speakers in the parliamentary debates.

Survey data and analysis

We turn now to some survey evidence concerning the attitudes of individual representatives towards their own PPG. The data is from the Nordleg survey,¹⁷ conducted as a postal questionnaire in October 1995-February 1996, on the role of Finnish MPs and their understanding of how Finnish representative democracy currently operates and the representatives' vision of the political future. The MPs' relationship with and attitudes towards various kinds of interest organisations and the media are also covered. The remainder of this chapter discusses some of the results of this survey.

Finnish representatives want to give the impression that they act independently both with respect to their voters' opinions and the party line in

Table 10.3 MP's attitudes towards party discipline (percentage) (N=119)

A) When the voters' views differ from the view of the party group	
According to the views of the voters	57
According to the view of the party group	43
B) When his/her own personal view differs from the views of his/her voters	
According to his/her own view	91
According to the view of his/her voters	9
C) When his/her own personal view differs from the view of the party group	
According to his/her own view	70
According to the view of his/her party group	30

Question: How do you personally think that an individual representative should vote in the following conflict situations?

Source: Kansanedustajakysely (1995).

situations where they do not feel that the party line is the justified one. It would be an interesting research task to see how far this claim holds true in real conflict situations. Unfortunately, there is no current research done in the field of actual voting behaviour. Another complication is, of course, that there is no self-evident indicator of those situations in which there actually is a conflict of the type in question.

Finnish representatives are quite confident in their abilities to influence the views of their own party group. The vast majority think that they can influence their own group's views and 77 per cent of representatives gave on the average a positive response to the three questions asked. Finnish MPs feel that they have a say especially in fields of their own speciality (58+36=94 per cent).

Finnish representatives believe that party cohesion (or party unity, *yhtenäisyys* in Finnish) is satisfactory as it stands or that it should be stronger (17+31=48 per cent). The vast majority think that party

Table 10.4 Evaluation of personal PPG power (percentage) (N=119)

	<i>Very good</i>	<i>Quite good</i>	<i>Difficult to say</i>	<i>Quite bad</i>	<i>Very bad</i>
Generally	22	60	10	7	1
In fields of your own speciality	58	36	3	3	1
In fields outside your own speciality	4	47	30	17	3

Question: What is your estimation of your own personal power to influence the views of your party group?

Source: Kansanedustajakysely (1995).

Table 10.5 Attitudes towards current party discipline (percentage) (N=119)

	<i>Cohesion</i>	<i>Discipline</i>
Should be . . .		
Much stronger than at present	17	0
Slightly stronger than at present	31	5
Satisfactory as is	49	73
Slightly weaker than at present	2	14
Much weaker than at present	1	8

Question: What is your personal opinion of the following norms concerning party cohesion and party discipline?

Source: Kansanedustajakysely (1995).

Table 10.6 Attitudes towards norms about party discipline (percentage) (N=119)

	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Difficult to say</i>	<i>Disagree</i>
Intra-group discussions should not be revealed to outsiders	63	17	20
Political initiatives should not be made without the consent of the party	2	4	94
The party line should always be followed in voting	11	20	69

Question: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following norms concerning party cohesion and party discipline?

Source: Kansanedustajakysely (1995).

discipline is satisfactory as it is, but a fifth believe that it should be relaxed (14+8=22 per cent). This question also received many spontaneous comments.

Finnish representatives like to keep intra-group discussions private. On the other hand, almost no respondents appreciate the idea of party censorship. They see themselves as free agents who can take all sorts of initiatives on their own. Two out of three do not believe that the party line should always be followed in voting; indeed, only one in ten thinks that this would be a good idea.

Finnish representatives believe that it is important to have strong opinion support both in their own party group and among the voters, as well as good contact with the media, to influence their own party group. Personal relationships and strong support among experts are also important. Strong support among those organisations/authorities concerned with the decisions or

Table 10.7 Importance of support in intra-PPG decision-making (percentage) (N=119)

	<i>Very important</i>	<i>Quite important</i>	<i>Difficult to say</i>	<i>Not very important</i>	<i>Not at all important</i>
Strong support in own party:	33	61	3	3	0
Strong support among the voters:	17	58	11	14	0
Good contact with the media:	15	56	17	11	1
Success in discussions in the group meetings:	17	49	17	15	2
Personal relationship with the party leadership:	24	42	13	20	1
Strong support among experts:	8	50	19	22	1
Strong support among those organisations/authorities concerned with the decisions:	7	45	28	20	0
Good contact with other parties:	7	44	17	30	2

Question: In your own parliamentary party group, how important do you believe the following factors to be to individual representatives' ability to influence the group?

Source: Kansanedustajakysely 1995.

good contact with other parties is not considered so important. To many representatives, however, all of these factors are considered important.

Discussions and conclusions

That political parties organise all essential aspects of the political workings of the Finnish parliament cannot be questioned. The status of the PPGs is not legally regulated, but in practice the groups have the most important role in decision-making inside the Eduskunta. There are many informal and voluntary regulations that direct the operations of individual representatives and their party groups. In addition, many strong norms regulate the incentives and constraints of individual representatives.

The main relationships of a Finnish MP to his/her party can be summarised in Figure 10.1

Despite the many changes, continuity is a dominant characteristic of the Finnish party map. Stability in party support, in turnover of representatives, in voting power of party groups, in the structure of party organisations, in legal

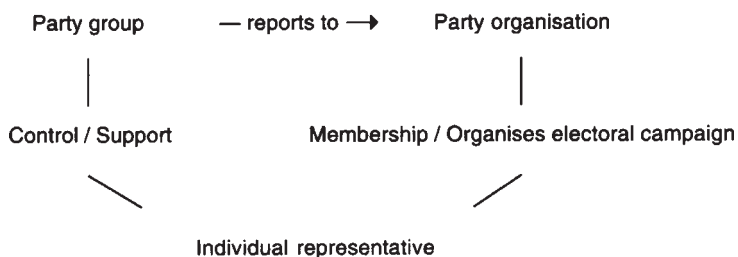


Figure 10.1 The relationship between individual representatives, his/her party group and party organisation.

regulations, and in internal party rules have all contributed to a political system that is fixed, permanent and predictable.

Individual representatives see themselves as representatives of their party, but in conflict situations they claim to be ready to vote in accordance with their own opinions against the party line. Representatives claim to be well able to influence the views of their party group. Finnish representatives are satisfied with the cohesiveness of their party, but think that it could be stronger than at present. Party discipline is considered to be satisfactory as it is. The representatives believe that intra-group discussions should not be revealed to outsiders, but oppose the ideas that political initiatives should not be made without the consent of the party and that the party line should always be followed in voting. Strong opinion support in the representative's own party is, according to the representatives, the most important factor in influencing their own parliamentary party group.

In order to get a proper overall view of the individual Finnish representative's relationship to his/her parliamentary party group, on the one hand, and to his/her party organisation, on the other, we need more information about the daily routines, procedures for conflict resolution, and motivations of individual representatives.

Notes

- 1 When potential voters were asked whether the *party* or the *candidate* was more important to them in Finnish parliamentary elections, the results were as follows

	1983 N = 993	1987 N = 994	1991 N = 1141
Party more important	52	32	51
Candidate more important	42	19	43
Both equally important	—	48	—
Don't know	6	1	6
Total	100	100	100

Source: Pesonen, Sankiaho and Borg (1993: 72, 74).

- 2 See Wiberg (1994a: Figure 11, p. 137) for details.
- 3 Measured by the *Rae-Taylor index of fragmentation* ($F=1/\sum p_i^2$, where p_i is the proportion of seats of the i -th party) (Rae and Taylor 1970) or by the *effective number of parties index* ($N=1/(1-F)$, where F is the Rae-Taylor index) (Laakso and Taagepera 1979), the Finnish Eduskunta has been and still is one of the most fragmented parliaments in the democratic world (Lijphart 1984:122; Lane and Ersson 1987:165).
- 4 For a short English presentation of the structure and development of political parties in Finland, see <http://www.vn.fi/vn/um/puoleng.html>
- 5 Pekka Nyholm and Carl Hagfors (1968:4–5) report the *Rice cohesion index*, which measures intra-party unity based on the percentage of group members who vote alike ($2 \times (100 \times M/A - 50)$, where M =the majority of the party group and A =the number of all members of the group who voted):

<i>Electoral period</i>	<i>KOK</i>	<i>RKP</i>	<i>KESK</i>	<i>SDP</i>	<i>SKDL</i>
1930–33	73.3	63.7	72.4	87.4	—
1936–39	92.1	67.4	76.1	89.4	—
1945–48	85.7	75.5	81.9	76.6	92.1
1951–54	85.5	81.3	82.6	81.7	94.9

Cf. Nyholm (1961:35 and 128) for the different party groups in a total of 397 votes during the electoral period 1948–51 and in 385 votes during the 1954 Diet:

	<i>1948–51</i>	<i>1954</i>
SKDL	95.1	95.2
KESK	87.3	87.8
SDP	86.6	88.0
KOK	84.0	84.8
RKP	74.5	76.5

In another study Nyholm (1972) reports roughly similar values for the 2,872 votes during the time period 20 September 1951–26 April 1958. Mellanen (1977) computed all votes during October–May ($N=83$) and got the following cohesion scores:

SDP	84.9
KESK	89.4
KOK	90.1
VAS	85.3
RKP	90.7
GREENS	88.5
SKL	91.5

There are, unfortunately, no newer results available on this interesting topic, but already casual observation suggests that during the last electoral period, when the government enjoyed strong support from the parliamentary majority, groups indeed were very cohesive in their voting behaviour.

- 6 Actually only 199 operative seats with the Speaker excluded as he/she is not allowed to participate in voting.
- 7 The parties are here assumed to place themselves on the left-right dimension as follows: VAS, VIHR, SDP, SMP, KESK, EKO, RKP, KOK, SKL, NUORS. This assumption is not indisputable.
- 8 The Party Law (1969/19), the Law on the Election of the President (1991/1074), the Law on Election of Parliament (1975/319), the Law on Election of Municipal Councillors (1972/361), the Decree on Public Party Subsidies (1967).
- 9 There were four main reasons for legislating the Party Act (Rantala 1982:38):

- There was an increasing acceptance of political parties as fundamental pre-requisites for democratic action; the party institution as a whole had become more and more popular since the war.
 - Parties had come to play an increasingly important role in the political system after World War II and this had to be taken realistically into account even in legislation.
 - The electoral laws were revised at the same time, and it was considered necessary to define in legal terms what a party actually is.
 - The system of public party funding needed some sort of legal status.
- 10 Note that the Finnish Communist Party (Suomen Kommunistinen Puolue), created in 1918 in Moscow and legalised in 1944, has never been formally represented in the Eduskunta although some MPs of the SKDL/VAS have also been simultaneously members of the Finnish Communist Party.
- 11 VAS 1991; SDP 1990; KESK 1990; KOK 1991; RKP 1991; SKL 1986; VIHRI 1991.
- 12 The group meeting of the VAS accepted, however, on 20 April 1995 a single-page set of 'procedural decision rules' after the group, together with the party organisation, had decided on 12 April 1995 to participate in the new government. These rules are very strict. They dictate, for instance, that all negotiation results reached within the government be considered binding for the PPG as long as VAS is in the government. The proposals for government bills are to be modified in the parliament only if there is a consensus among all government parties to do so. No member of the group is allowed to deviate from the government's policy in committees or elsewhere. No member of the group is allowed to vote in favour of any proposal that would directly or by inference mean a declaration of mistrust to the members of the Council of the State. All group members must refrain from filibustering of any sort if this should interfere with the processing of government bills. Individual members may on particular occasions have free rein at his/her own specified and motivated request. If a representative deviates from these regulations without permission, he/she will, on the first instance, receive a warning, and on the second he/she will be expelled from the group.
- 13 KOK 1945–47, 1958–59, 1965; KESK 1966; SDP 1962–64.
- 14 See Sundberg and Gylling (1992:290–1) for historical information.
- 15 Telephone interviews on 20 February 1996 with the following party functionaries: Tapani Katila (KESK), Heljä Misukka (KOK), Jyri Kuusela (VAS).
- 16 The six-item agreement has been signed by the chairpersons of the PPGs.
- 17 $N=120$. Given the facts that the acting cabinet (which includes sixteen representatives who are simultaneously also MPs) has decided not to respond to any surveys, that the Speaker (one MP) does not ever respond to any surveys, and that three representatives decided to leave the parliament during the period of the field work, this gives a response rate of 66 per cent. The non-response analysis did not show any particular biases. It may thus be concluded that the sample can be considered to be representative of the whole Eduskunta. See Essaisson and Heidar (2000) for details.

11 The limits of whips and watchdogs

Parliamentary parties in the Czech Republic

Petr Kopecký

This chapter analyses the functioning and cohesion of parliamentary parties (PPGs) in the 1992–96 Czech parliament.¹ Parliamentary party *cohesion* is defined as the extent to which, in a given situation, parliamentary party members can be observed to act together for party goals (Özbudun 1970). It is distinct from party *discipline*, which refers to a system of sanctions by which cohesion is attained. As the wording suggests, cohesion may not be a function of discipline, but may instead be spontaneous and voluntary. The chapter is divided into four parts. The first part provides the background information, and will be concerned with the position of PPGs in the Czech political system. The second part assesses the current level of parliamentary party cohesion, mainly using the analysis of voting patterns as an empirical indication. In the last two parts, these findings are discussed in relation to two independent variables—the internal organization of parliamentary parties, and the relationship between parliamentary parties and their extra-parliamentary party organizations (EPOs).

Origin and place of PPGs in the Czech Republic

When the Czechoslovak communist regime collapsed in the autumn of 1989, it was by no means certain that anything like political parties would play an important role in the politics of the country. The Czechoslovak communist regime, especially during the period of ‘normalization’ which followed the breakdown of the Prague Spring movement in 1968, was very efficient in destroying all forms of political organizations. Charta 77, an organization of Czechoslovak dissidents, was a small, select group of intellectuals remote from the depoliticized and oppressed society. As a result, and with the exception of the discredited Communist Party and some of its officially sanctioned satellite parties, the social foundations for party political structures were weak, at least in the immediate aftermath of the revolutionary changes. Moreover, the question of what precisely a political party is, what it should do, and what place it should occupy in an emerging democratic system, was a much disputed issue among the prominent post-communist politicians.

Although the first months of post-communism were characterized by an explosion of new political parties and groupings, the Czechoslovak political space was dominated by two broadly based and loosely structured movements—the Civic Forum (OF) and the Public Against Violence (VPN). Most of the new politicians, particularly Václav Havel and some of his associates, preferred diverse interests to be organized under one umbrella movement, thus emphasizing unanimity over party pluralism. The symbolic expression was the (in)famous electoral slogan of the Civic Forum: ‘Parties are for party members, Civic Forum is for everybody.’

This conception was in part functional. The unification of the opposition, indeed of society as a whole, was deemed necessary to get rid of the communist regime and to establish the legitimacy of the new political system. This was the argument of those who were not opposed to political parties *per se*, but saw their relevance primarily in a later stage of the democratization process, when freshly launched social and economic reforms would gradually allow the formation of parties on the basis of different socio-economic interests. Yet, for a fairly large group of new elites, the conception also reflected a much deeper concern: the general distrust of politics, based on a critique of political power. As Jørgensen (1992) points out, rather than a consistent ideology, this ‘anti-politics’ was more a mentality, emphasizing moral categories and downgrading the importance of the directly political in the traditional sense. Party politics is here a dirty word, associated with the disciplined and corrupt hierarchy of the Communist Party.

The results of the 1990 election, with the overwhelming victory of the OF and VPN, marked the achievement of the main goal of the mass movements. The old regime was overthrown, the parliaments were freely elected, and legitimate governments installed. The initial unifying meta-goal, to repudiate the communist regime, was replaced by the need to address specific economic, social, and constitutional issues which inevitably started to divide people in politics. For many new politicians it became clear that the eventual victorious pursuit of their visions and policies required stable and predictable support by organized followers, rather than by shifting majorities. Furthermore, lack of a clear organizational structure generated suspicions that the leaders of the amorphous movements, who quickly entered parliaments and governments, acted without constraints by the members on the ground or, in the case of cabinet members, of PPGs.

Under these two simultaneous pressures, the idea that broadly based movements could replace political parties as the primary actors in the democratic system largely dissolved. The OF and VPN started to disintegrate and transform into new organizational forms. Given that the struggle for political power was primarily focused in the parliament, most of the Czech parties began as projects of individual MPs. The term ‘clubs’ is appropriate for referring to both PPGs and parties-as-a-whole. Lacking both resources and experience, and suffering from frequent splits and mergers, PPGs acted more like groups of individual MPs, who met each other to exchange views and make decisions, but were often unable to agree upon common action. As Jicínský

(1995:6) writes: 'politics was understood quite individualistically. While being elected on the list of a party, many MPs felt more like independent individuals...rather than representatives of certain political ideologies, bearing responsibility for their execution.' Furthermore, most of the parties built their party organizations top-down, either from scratch or from the fragments of the grassroots network of their predecessors. At least in the first two years, therefore, the party life of these newly emerging parties was exclusively confined to PPGs and the parliament.

Although the formation of the party system reflected in part rapidly emerging and changing societal divisions (see Tóka 1996), new parties being formed on the remnants of OF and VPN, and other parties around them, continued to forge identities primarily on the basis of values concerning visions of the future, constitutional issues, historical issues, evaluations of the communist past and, crucially for the fate of Czechoslovakia, questions of national identity. This type of value-driven politics led to divisive, competitive and conflictual political bargaining which, combined with a complicated power-sharing institutional framework, resulted in the split of Czechoslovakia into two independent countries at the end of 1992 (see Henderson 1995; Kopecný 1999).

If the period between 1989 and 1992 could be seen as, first, the endorsement of the central role given to national social movements, second, their rapid disintegration and the development of 'properly constituted parties' and, third, the disintegration of Czechoslovakia caused (largely) by a volatile and competitive process of party formation, the period from 1992 onwards, at least in the newly established Czech Republic, could be seen as the definitive 'come-back' of political parties into the political process. On a general level, the formulation in the new Czech constitution (approved in December 1992), declaring that 'the country's political system is based on the free and voluntary establishment of democratic political parties and their right to compete freely' (Art. 5) is perhaps most striking. On a practical level, none of the MPs can enter parliament without being on a party list of candidates.² Consequently, (almost) all MPs are organized in one of the PPGs. In addition, the frequent modification of Parliamentary Standing Orders (most recently in March 1995) has not only changed regulations concerning the functioning of PPGs, but also serves as an indication of the growing weight ascribed to the PPGs within parliament. Agenda-setting is done by the PPGs in close cooperation with the Speaker, in the Organizational Committee. MPs without PPG membership (many of them defectors) are left out and have, therefore, little influence. Committee chairmanships as well as places on committees are allocated on the basis of PPGs' proposals, which must adhere to the written rule that committee chairmanships belong to the parliamentary majority and committee places are to be distributed on a proportional basis.

Somewhat paradoxically, the increase in the competence of parties in the political process has occurred despite their continuing organizational weaknesses: the fission and fusion, which negatively affected the work of the former Czechoslovak Federal Assembly, continued throughout the whole

Table 11.1 Czech parliamentary parties and number of seats, 1992–1996

Party	June 1992 (elections)	Jan 1993	Jan 1994	Jan 1995	Jan 1996	May 1996	May 1996 (elections)
ODS	66	66	66	65	66	72	69
KDS	10	10	10	10	6	—	—
ODA	14	14	15	17	16	16	13
KDU–ČSL	15	15	15	16	24	24	18
LB	35	35	35	24	23	23	—
ČSSD	16	16	18	21	24	22	58
LSU	16	14	13	—	—	—	—
SPR–RSČ	14	11	8	6	5	5	18
HSD–SMS	14	14	7	—	—	—	—
HSD–MS	—	—	8	—	—	—	—
KSČM	—	—	—	10	10	10	22
LSNS	—	5	5	5	6	6	—
ČMUS	—	—	—	15	15	15	—
Non-affiliated	—	—	—	11	5	7	—
Total	200	200	200	200	200	200	200

Note

Numbers on shaded background denote coalition parties.

ODS, Civic Democratic Party (Občanská demokratická strana).

KDS, Christian Democratic Party (Křesťanskodemokratická strana).

ODA, Civic Democratic Alliance (Občanská demokratická aliance).

KDU–ČSL, Christian Democratic Union–Czechoslovak People's Party (Křesťansko demokratická unie–Československá strana lidová).

LB, Left Block (Levý blok).

ČSSD, Czech Social Democratic party (Česká sociální demokracie).

LSU, Liberal Social Union (Liberální sociální unie).

SPR–RSČ, Association for the Republic–Republican Party of Czechoslovakia (Sdružení pro republiku–Republikánská strana Československa).

HSD–SMS, Movement for Self-Governing Democracy–Association for Moravia and Silesia (Hnutí za samosprávnou demokracii–Společnost pro Moravu a Slezsko).

HSD–MS, Movement for Self-Governing Democracy–Moravian Party (Hnutí za samosprávnou demokracii–Moravy a Slezska).

KSČM, Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia (Komunistická strana Čech a Moravy).

LSNS, Liberal Social National Union (Liberální sociální národní unie).

ČMUS, Czechomoravian Union of Centre (Českomoravská unie středu).

1992–96 period in the Czech parliament. As Table 11.1 shows, some PPGs split, new ones were formed, and a number of MPs either travelled from one PPG to another, or remained non-affiliated. This clearly reflects problems in building party identities and organizational bonds in the context of post-communist transformation, which is a general phenomenon across new party systems in the Eastern European region (see especially Gillespie *et al.* 1995).

However, the new rules of the game, designed largely as an answer to the problem of fragmentation, severely limited the freedom of individual MPs to set up wholly new parties. Most important in this context was the adoption of a more stringent rule on the minimum size of PPGs. In the 1992–96 period, only

PPGs with five or more members could register with the chair of the parliament and receive financial support from the state.³ This gave rise to the creation, even if only temporarily, of PPGs consisting of defectors from various parties who had little else in common beyond the desire to obtain financial support. Since 1996, however, the minimum size of a PPG has been increased to ten MPs.⁴ If a new PPG is to be established, it can only consist of ten MPs not belonging to the party for which they were originally elected. Moreover, such new PPGs are to be excluded from both the financial support of the parliamentary budget (though they will receive an equipped office) and, unless the floor decides otherwise, from participation in other organs of the parliament.

Simply put, the historically omnipresent tension of Czech politics—that between an MP being primarily a representative of, and directly accountable to the people, and an MP being primarily a member of political party—has been resolved, at least in institutional terms, and on the level of a large part of the political elite, in favour of the latter. This occurred in the post-communist period within a relatively short period of time, and deserves separate analysis. Suffice to say that the move away from more blatant forms of generalized anti-party sentiments and the recent institutional developments in Czech politics are mutually reinforcing. The country's institutional architects opted for a parliamentary system, in which the government cannot remain in office without the support of a parliamentary majority, and can be dismissed from the office by a parliamentary vote of no confidence. This makes the issue of PPGs' cohesion a crucial one: as Sartori (1994:94) noted, a parliament-based system 'cannot perform unless it is served by parties that have been socialized into being relatively cohesive and/or disciplined bodies'.

Cohesion of parliamentary parties

Table 11.2 summarizes the results of the main measurement of cohesion of the Czech parliamentary parties, i.e. voting cohesion on the floor of the parliament. The data show, in the first place, that voting cohesion was by and large higher within the coalition PPGs than within the opposition PPGs. The coalition PPGs scored higher than the average on cohesion as well as on participation. The exception is the Civic Democratic Alliance, with a relatively low average participation and somewhat lower average cohesion. A possible explanation is in the party's commitment to what it calls 'the principle of free consciousness' in parliamentary party work. This principle suits the party's organizational character, as the Alliance is a very small, elite-club-like party, dominated by a group of prominent personalities.

Second, compared to the other opposition PPGs, the Left Block and the Communists are more cohesive, scoring similarly on both measures to the coalition PPGs. This partly follows from their organizational origin, since both are direct successors of the Czechoslovak Communist Party, traditionally very disciplined and cohesive. Although the LSNS and the Republicans (SPR-RSČ)

Table 11.2 Average cohesion and average participation in voting of the Czech parliamentary parties (percentage)

	<i>Cohesion</i>	<i>Participation</i>
Coalition parties:		
KDS	93.98	75.24
ODS	92.49	74.40
KDU–ČSL	91.24	75.24
ODA	90.65	66.43
Opposition parties:		
SPR–RSČ	96.73	47.41
KSČM	91.28	76.00
LSNS	90.46	49.19
LB	90.06	74.03
ČSSD	85.75	64.20
ČMUS	86.87	64.22
No longer existing parties:		
LSU	86.91	63.84
HSD–SMS	86.67	57.45
ČMSS	86.14	63.27

Source: Kopecný, Hubáček and Plecítý (1996).

Notes

The figures for voting cohesion represent the average size of the majority of a parliamentary party voting one way or another. For instance: say over a given period three votes were taken. On the first vote party A was split 75–25; the size of the majority is then 75 per cent. On the second vote party A was unanimous: a ‘majority’ of 100 per cent. On the third vote the party was split 50–50; this counts as a ‘majority’ of 50 per cent. The average cohesion is thus $(75 + 100 + 50)/3 = 75$. Abstentions (not absence!) are calculated as no. The importance of the average participation figures stems from the way the preceding measurement of cohesion of voting was constructed. Because it takes into account only the votes of MPs who were actually registered to vote (by inserting a card into the electronic voting machine), the average participation in voting is an additional indicator of the parliamentary parties’ degree of cohesion. If these two measurements are considered together, it helps to avoid situations in which we would assert that, for example, party A with ten members is very cohesive due to an average cohesion of 90—a percentage made up only by, say, three MPs with the other seven never showing up during the votes.

All figures are calculated on the basis of twenty-seven sessions of parliament (between October 1993 and June 1996). The number of votes included in the final figure differ between individual parties, since some no longer exist or were established during the parliamentary term, and some did not have any MPs present on some votes. The total number of votes are the following: ODS and KDU–ÈSL 5,105; ODA 5,079; KDS 5,013; LSNS 3,769; ÈMSS 2,383; KSÈM 4,407; SPR–RSÈ 3,637; HSD–SMS 1,033; ÈSSD 5,094; LSU 2,421; ÈMUS 2,555.

also scored higher than average on cohesion, they cannot be considered highly cohesive due to low average participation. Given that both PPGs had no more than six members, of which about half permanently missed voting, the high average cohesion in voting is hardly surprising.

Third, if we compare measures of cohesion over a (short) time,⁵ the results would on the whole not show much fluctuation. The average voting cohesion in most PPGs has gone up only slightly, by about 1 per cent. This might relate to

the 'purification' of parliamentary party membership, in other words, to the restructuring of the PPGs. Yet, in most PPGs, the average participation has correspondingly decreased, by about 1 to 3 per cent. This does not necessarily indicate a lower cohesion. It may be that a lower average participation (combined with a somewhat higher average cohesion) result from a more precise management of coalition PPGs (simply just enough MPs to retain a majority), and the effect of hopelessness (voting does not make a difference) on the part of opposition PPGs.

All in all, the data indicate a fairly high level of voting cohesion among the PPGs on the floor. Coalition parties in particular achieved a high level of voting cohesion, with the exception of a less cohesive Alliance. On the other hand, the fragmentation of the opposition PPGs, indicated in Table 11.1, was accompanied by a relatively low level of voting cohesion. These findings characterize the Czech political scene between 1992 and 1996 quite well. The right-of-centre coalition government, consisting of four PPGs, managed to govern without major upheavals and it was the opposition which appeared disunited and hence largely lacking any significant influence. The reasons for this situation will be explored in the following section.

The available data on the distances between individual parties also demonstrate that there was an overall congruity between the coalition parties, a strong division between coalition and opposition PPGs, and divisions amongst the opposition PPGs themselves.⁶ In other words, at the level of inter-party conflict, the votes were by and large structured between two blocks of parties in the parliament. Cross-alliances between coalition PPGs and opposition PPGs, while existing, were rare. Rather, some opposition parties voted fairly regularly with the coalition, increasing its potential, and eventually substituting for the missing votes of defecting coalition MPs. And even when there was a wedge driven into the coalition parties, this did not lead to serious governmental crisis, as the opposition was usually too disunited to exploit such conflicts.

The evidence presented here obviously fails to provide for the relative importance of issues. Due to the inclusion of virtually all votes (procedural questions, amendments, final votes, votes on presidential suspensions) in the final measurement, the serious intra-parliamentary party divisions on crucial issues may be hidden by the smoothing effect of a high level of cohesion on a large number of relatively minor questions. Although this is true for all PPGs, and hence the figures retain their relative significance, we would certainly find bills which significantly divided individual parliamentary parties. Moreover, voting cohesion is merely an indicator of how individual legislators act together in the very last stage of an often quite complicated and lengthy legislative process. The voting cohesion is a result of parliamentary and intra-party decision-making processes, with many intervening interactions affecting the shape of the final product. While we cannot work on the assumption that voting cohesion automatically implies party pressure (discipline), low cohesion does not automatically indicate its absence. As studies on cohesion stress, however, a number of factors affect cohesion, but only a few can be treated simultaneously

(see Özbudun 1970; Olson 1980). In the following, we concentrate on two recurrent factors present in legislative and party studies—the internal organization of PPGs, and their relationships to their respective extra-parliamentary party organizations.

Inside PPGs⁷

In response to the question ‘If your parliamentary party makes a decision, where does the main point of decision-making lie’, 76 per cent of the Czech MPs stated that it is in the PPG meeting, as opposed to the PPG leadership, PPG experts, or somewhere else.⁸ This indicates that the PPG meeting is crucial for the functioning of Czech parliamentary parties, serving as a collective decision-making arena. There the PPG strategies are adopted, opposing views discussed, and eventually reconciled. PPG meetings are always held prior to the floor debates of the parliament (e.g. every fifth week), and it is not uncommon to see PPG meetings called during the floor sessions, or during the committee weeks, when controversial amendments or motions are introduced for voting.

On the whole, the PPGs’ decision-making is highly influenced by MPs specializing in a particular area, regardless of the generally low importance attributed to their role in our survey data. The expert MPs (given the small size of the PPGs, there is usually one expert in a given area) are responsible for a particular bill, act as party spokespersons on that bill, and defend it in the committees. The specialists are designated at the beginning of each parliamentary term by a selection process inside the PPGs. They are in a strong position to formulate party policies, being in a sense (particularly in the smallest PPGs) a functional equivalent to specialized intra-party committees which some larger PPGs (e.g. the Civic Democratic Party) have been trying to set up in order to parallel the internal structure of the parliament. Moreover, both the specialists of government parties, and government PPGs, are in close contact with their ministers, who regularly visit PPG meetings and are in (in)formal contact with individual MPs. This is to ensure that PPGs do not deviate from the governmental line and that the ministers take into account the views of their backbenchers.

It is important to note, however, that while a particular MP or a working group of MPs might have a concrete role in the decision-making process of a given PPG, and while even the PPG leadership or ministers might intervene, the meeting seems to have the final say. Normally, in the case of strong disagreement on an issue, the position of PPGs is established by voting, and (at least on important issues) MPs are supposed to conform to the party line. Particularly in the case of coalition PPGs, it has become a standard practice to have a coordinator on the floor who leads the voting on a specific bill, and the PPG leadership, elected by the PPG meeting at the beginning of legislative term, is expected to ensure that there are enough MPs to secure a majority.

It remains very difficult, however, to penetrate the system of sanctions covering individual MPs who have departed from the established party line. PPG meetings are not public and, moreover, most of the PPGs do not have formally written codes of conduct. Something about party discipline can be gleaned from survey data on the normative commitments of MPs. While the PPGs may seek to influence the opinions of individual representatives, deputies' formal freedom of choice (actually referred to in the Czech constitution) can limit the pressure party measures can bring to bear. The fact that only 11 per cent of the MPs surveyed thought that an MP should vote in accordance with the parliamentary party if his/her view was different indicates the difficulty of demanding complete obedience. As many as 50 per cent of the MPs considered voting according to one's own opinion the norm. Table 11.3 shows that, except for the republicans (SPR-RSC), in none of the PPGs were MPs particularly in favour of following PPG opinion. This said, the coalition MPs seemed to be less categorical about preferring their own opinion (59 per cent stated that it would depend) than the opposition MPs—which fits with the general tendency of coalition PPGs to be more cohesive than their opposition counterparts.

Hypothetically, the stance of individual deputies could vary with the issue on the agenda. The sixty-five MPs who, in answer to the question how an MP should vote in case of differing views, said 'it depends', were in our survey asked three follow-up questions.⁹ As expected, the results showed that the number of parliamentarians subverting their view to that of the PPG would increase when voting on economic and important constitutional issues. Moral issues would be decided on an individual basis. We also found that differences between coalition MPs and opposition MPs were not particularly great, and neither were the differences between MPs from different PPGs.

These findings on deputies' normative commitments bring us to an important point. In general, the experience of the Czech parties suggests that too much party discipline, demanded by either the PPG leaders or the executive leadership (see below), would lead to exactly the opposite effect—less cohesion and, even more often, fragmentation of PPGs. The extreme right republicans are a case in point here as the PPG split resulted from a crude imposition of discipline measures on their members. After the purges, the remaining MPs were much more willing to accept the leadership's standpoint which, as can be seen in Table 11.3, seems also to be reflected in their normative commitments. Only the republican MPs felt as a majority that in the event of a difference, the standpoint of the PPG should outweigh an MP's own opinion.

On the other hand, the Civic Democratic Party gradually developed a subtle intra-party mechanism of conflict management which made the PPG very cohesive without any apparent signs of discontent or disciplinary measures. The same could be said about the two Christian Democratic parties in the coalition. This is due not only to collective decision-making within these parties, but above all a sort of internal security they have gained from passing a certain threshold of party organizational and ideological development. Although it

Table 11.3 How should an MP vote in case of a difference of opinion with his parliamentary party (percentage, by party)?

	<i>All parties</i>	<i>Coalition parties</i>	<i>ODS</i>	<i>KDU-ČSL</i>	<i>ODA</i>	<i>KDS</i>	<i>Opposition parties</i>	<i>LB</i>	<i>ČSSD</i>	<i>LSU</i>	<i>SPR-RSČ</i>	<i>LSNS</i>
Opinion of parliamentary party	10.7	4.8	5.8	—	9.1	—	16.5	2.9	7.1	11.1	75.0	—
Own opinion	50.0	36.1	25.0	33.3	63.6	75.0	63.5	82.9	57.1	77.8	—	50.0
It depends	39.3	59.0	69.2	66.7	27.3	25.0	20.0	14.3	35.7	11.1	25.0	50.0
(<i>N</i>)	(168)	(83)	(52)	(12)	(11)	(8)	(85)	(35)	(14)	(9)	(8)	(4)

Source: see note 8.

would be perhaps too early to consider these parties as having a firmly established identity, it seems that on both ideological and organizational grounds, they have acquired a discernable face that encompasses individual members and links them together into a congruent whole. Party discipline seemed often to be of secondary importance, since there was a general consensus on party policies. Moreover, these parties significantly benefited from their position in power: this increased the potential for career advancement and, in turn, provided merits to reward party loyalty. Once again the carrots were more important than the sticks.

Two elements are important here. First, the PPGs are one of the means by which an aspiring politician can enter the government. In the years 1993 and 1994 there were three ODS cabinet ministers, one KDU-CSL, and one ODA recruited from the parliament. The figures were relatively small only because many ministers (i.e. top party politicians) were originally seated as MPs in the Czechoslovak Federal Assembly, thus not having a seat in the Czech parliament.¹⁰ The recruitment of government ministers after the 1996 election clearly confirmed the norm that the path to the cabinet leads through parliament.¹¹ Therefore, those who wish to get a cabinet appointment, or those who hold it and are entitled to vote in the parliament, can be expected to vote with the PPG and, moreover, to support consistently the party and government position. Second, PPGs are also one of the means to get appointments to high positions in the civil service. Civil service positions in the Czech Republic are strongly linked to party and government patronage, and MPs are among the recruitment reservoirs, particularly those with a good record of expertise in certain areas.

To be sure, this is not to say that selective benefits and ideological congruency are the sole factors behind the increase in PPGs' cohesion (or lack of it) and that no disciplinary measures are exercised in more stable PPGs. At least on the level of day-to-day parliamentary party management, it is clear that the measures of discipline (compulsory participation on voting and parliamentary party meetings) have been gradually developed and applied. But they have been implemented just as reasons for splitting and defecting have declined and just at the time that individual MPs' freedom has become institutionally far more restricted. Arguably, it is this combined effect which explains why Czech PPGs have emerged as highly organized, cohesive and complex organizations.

The indication of utmost importance in this respect is the way Czech MPs use state aid. Since the beginning of the second legislative term, in 1996, the state has granted significant subsidies for individual MPs to hire assistants (approx. US\$ 680 per month) and to establish offices in their constituencies (approx. US\$ 715 per month). Thus, apart from PPGs and parties as a whole (see note 3), it is also individual deputies who are financially assisted by the state. In the context of a relatively weak tradition of group loyalty and cohesion, such state aid could lead to the establishment of professionalized and self-sufficient deputies, independent of their PPG, whose unity would fall apart as a result. However,

judging from the short period since its introduction, it seems to work exactly the other way around. A number of deputies effectively support their own local party from constituency money, for example all the communist MPs. Moreover, the increased use of hired staff and other administrative resources by individual MPs makes decision-making inside PPGs more professionalized and possibly, in the long term, less dependent on the extra-parliamentary party organization.

PPGs and extra-parliamentary party organizations¹²

Looking at Czech parties during the last legislative term, there does not appear to be much pressure from the local EPO on the party representatives in parliament of a sort which could be consistently linked to the cohesion of PPGs. This relates to the general weakness of the majority of Czech parties if they are studied as membership organizations (see Kopecký 1995). Excepting the communists and one of the Christian Democratic parties (KDU-CSL), individual as well as collective party membership remains on rather a low level in the Czech Republic. Explanations are complex, ranging from the general reluctance of citizens to join political parties to the actions of party elites, preoccupied with high politics on the national level rather than with building grassroots party organizations. But the fact remains that, as a consequence, the input of ordinary party members to both the PPG and, where relevant, the PiG was negligible, at least until the very recent candidate selection process for the 1996 parliamentary election. Until the run-up to the election, when MPs engaged in the process of trying to win the nomination of local branches, PPG cohesion was a matter of intra-parliamentary party politics and the relations between PPGs, the PiG and the EPO-central.

The survey data assembled in Table 11.4 suggest that national party executive committees (e.g. EPO-central) do play a role *vis-à-vis* their PPGs. Although 'to instruct' (the wording of the survey question), may in reality mean a range of things—from soft signals regarding the general party policy to commands on how PPGs should vote—it gives us an indication of the importance of party executive committees, and on the differences between individual PPGs.

Basically, if we consider the influence of party executive committees on PPGs in the broadest sense, then they matter in all Czech parties for one thing: they determine the overall party policies. This point was largely confirmed by the answers of the MPs, 79 per cent of whom stated that the party's national executive committees, as opposed to the PPG, has the most say in party policy. This has something to do with a significant concentration of all party elites in the highest executive organs of the parties (see below), but it also in part reflects the changing nature of central offices. The central office of the parties provides a source of expertise and information needed by the PPGs. In the early formative period, particularly in the former Federal Assembly, parties relied predominantly on the expertise of their own parliamentarians, who employed limited resources offered by the staff of the parliament, or on the expertise of

Table 11.4 How often does it happen that your party's national executive tries to give instructions to your parliamentary party (percentage, by party)?

	<i>All parties</i>	<i>ODS</i>	<i>LB</i>	<i>ČSSD</i>	<i>KDU-ČSL</i>	<i>ODA</i>	<i>KDS</i>	<i>LSU</i>	<i>SPR-RSČ</i>	<i>LSNS</i>
Often	18.2	22.0	8.6	38.5	9.1	—	37.5	11.1	14.3	25.0
Sometimes	60.4	64.0	74.3	61.5	36.4	40.0	50.0	55.6	85.7	25.0
Never	21.4	14.0	17.1	—	54.5	60.0	12.5	33.3	—	50.0
(N)	(159)	(50)	(35)	(13)	(11)	(10)	(8)	(9)	(7)	(4)

Source: see note 7.

their own ministers (coalition parties), backed by the resources of the office. This has been changing with the expansion of the central office staff, in itself stimulated by the increase in state subsidies and, crucially, in the way the money is distributed.

Although PPGs receive a sum of money from the budget of the parliament, the party in the central office is the principal supervisor, and principal receiver, of the bulk of state subsidies for political parties in the Czech Republic. The subsidy to the PPGs is lower than the state subsidy to the central office, and is distributed according to the number of votes obtained in the parliamentary elections (see note 3). In most parties, particularly the stable and larger ones, the trend seems unmistakable even now: what was initially a small central office has been growing from merely a clerical staff into a larger bureaucratic machinery. While MPs themselves sometimes work in the analytical departments of the central office, the PPGs as a whole at least partly depend on the increasingly professionalized extra-parliamentary organization, which is headed by the national executives. For example, the Social Democrats (ČSSD) have been using a system of specialized working groups, affiliated to the central office, and producing policy recommendations for the whole party. The Civic Democratic Party has recently made a provision for the establishment of specialized intra-party groups, organized by the central office, which would at least in part direct policy-making from ministers and the PPG towards other outside experts and party members.

Taking into account what was said above about the growth of subsidies for individual MPs, which seem to be in practice subsidies for PPGs, it is obviously difficult to judge which way the wind will blow. On the one hand, the ever-increasing subsidies for the party as a whole provide a real opportunity to carry on with the professionalization of EPO-central, and to extend its work beyond the basic organizational tasks it has performed so far. Together with the pressures to which some parties have been subjected, primarily from the press and their own members, this might indeed strengthen its position within parties, for none of them wants to be portrayed as an elitist organization centred around a small group of MPs and ministers. On the other hand, the parallel increase in state aid for PPGs (or individual MPs) might help only to maintain the current

situation of PPG and PiG dominance within their parties, with the only difference being that the PPGs would become more and more professionalized, and hence establish themselves as true ‘parliamentary party complexes’ (see Koole 1993).

In fact, the way Czech PPGs have been integrated within their respective parties can best be seen if we inquire into how PPG cohesion is affected by the party executive committees, possibly by their role vis-à-vis party discipline. Looking at the formal rules of the Czech parties, these are either silent or stipulate nothing more than a close cooperation and mutual consultation on serious political matters. This is hardly surprising if we recall that, according to the constitution, MPs are responsible to their voters and not to their party—a fact which would make any formal guidelines from the party unconstitutional.

Notwithstanding this, the practice rather than principle shows that party executive committees played an active role when it comes to PPGs and, in fact, party statutes usually provide for representational overlaps between PPGs and the leadership. In some parties the party executive committee is represented in the meetings of the PPG, just as the PPG is very often represented on the party executive committees. The leaders of PPGs are, *ex officio*, integral members of the party executive committees in virtually all parties. On the basis of the last four years, one might say that the activity of party executive committees was particularly visible in the PPGs of the government parties, which actually seemed more pressured by the party executive committees than the opposition parties. Coalition parties, particularly the Civic Democratic Party, tended to use their executive committees as a tool for influencing the PPG in that the party executive committee served as a coordinating body between the ministers (PiG), the executive leadership and the PPG. Occasionally, the party executive committee issued recommendations to the PPG on both its voting position on certain issues and on legislative initiatives.

As indicated in Table 11.4, this was more true for the ODS and the smaller of the two Christian democratic parties (KDS) than for the rest of the coalition PPGs (ODA and KDU-CSL). The explanation lies in the different degree of personnel overlap between the two party units. In a comparative East European perspective, the Czech parties are not exceptional (see, for example, Szarvas, 1994): members of the party executives have often been seated in parliament, which was the case for virtually all coalition and opposition parties. Thus, there has not only been an *ex officio* link between the executive committees and the PPGs as envisaged in party statutes, but also a complete elite mix, which makes the study of ‘who influences whom’ very difficult. In some extreme cases (Left Bloc after its split), a huge overlap between the PPG and the party executive committee meant that the committee and the PPG were completely identical. The inseparability of the two party units has been particularly characteristic of small parties and the newly established ones.

Only in a few parties did party leaders, such as the chairperson and vice-chairperson, occupy positions simply in the EPO-central. As in the

abovementioned ministerial recruitment, this was due to the fact that their leaders were nominated in 1992 to the Czechoslovak Federal Parliament. The result was that in parties like the social democrats, the republicans, the Left Block, and partly the Civic Democratic Party, there was a more or less constant tension between the PPGs and the party executive committees, since the leaders, who were suddenly left without parliamentary posts, tried to make their presence felt in PPG matters. If we look again at Table 11.4, these were the parties whose MPs indicated most often that their PPGs are often instructed by party executive committees.

The outcome of these interactions nevertheless differed greatly between coalition and opposition parties. While in the coalition parties it led to the development of intra-party conflict mechanisms, often by incorporating MPs into party executive committees, the opposition parties fragmented as a result. During the last four years, the opposition deputies openly launched a rebellion against their own party national executive (social democrats and republicans). Also noticeable was the split of the Left Block in 1993, which in a sense assumed the form of a conflict between the PPG (more willing to play the political game with other political parties) and the more rigid, less accommodating party executive committee. As a result, the original PPG of Left Block split into the Left Block, representing the rebellious MPs, and the communists, epitomized by MPs linked to—and obedient to—the party executive committee outside parliament. Such cases again show that the intra-party conflicts, in this case between PPGs and EPO-central, are difficult to contain by disciplinary measures.

Conclusion

Voting behaviour analysis has shown that most Czech PPGs, and particularly those in the governing coalition, are cohesive. However, these findings may be misleading: a lack of cohesion may be reflected less in a low level of voting cohesion on the floor of the Chamber than in the fragmentation of PPGs. As soon as the individual MPs or a group of MPs continually deviate from a party policy, the parties split and PPGs are restructured. In addition, as the parties still lack strong collective identities, it is often the case that individual MPs no longer agree with the party they belonged to when elected and change their allegiances.

In an environment where many MPs do not strongly identify with their party, and can easily shift allegiance from one PPG to another, the enforcement of party discipline as a means to achieve high party cohesion tends to be of limited effectiveness, usually leading to party fragmentation. This applies to measures of discipline internal to parliamentary party organizations (first independent variable) as well as pressures from extra-parliamentary party organizations (second independent variable). With regard to PPG cohesion, the development of subtle ultra-party mechanisms of conflict management, underpinned by the

acquisition of party organizational and ideological identity, seems to be of crucial importance. As in the case of the Czech coalition parties, this can be significantly enhanced by the use of government patronage to reward that loyalty of party members.

To a large extent, these conclusions pertain to the formative period of post-communist Czech politics. As the above demonstrates, however, one of the major developments is that individual MPs have become more embedded in the collective mechanism of PPGs. More generally, the many institutional changes adopted after 1989 testify to the conscious efforts of Czech elites to establish a system where party strength plays a crucial role. On the one hand, this may provide a strong incentive for party cohesion: as the room for individual MPs is institutionally far more restricted, so may discipline become a more efficient tool for imposing the party line. On the other hand, the adoption of stringent rules may also lead to a paradoxical situation in which PPGs remain together out of necessity (no longer fragment) but, because of the lack of overarching loyalties of their members, become extremely uncohesive (for example in voting on the floor).

Clearly then, much of the future conduct of the (parliamentary) parties will depend on the increasing experience of the party elites, on their willingness to forge solid party loyalties and nurture vested career interests, and on their ability to mould party organizations in a way that makes them consistently less vulnerable to internal conflicts. At the very least, it is the changing position of PPGs within the party as a whole that provides evidence of the growing complexity of Czech parties. All of them endorse the model in which nearly the entire executive leadership participates in parliament and/or government (a situation which has intensified even more after the 1996 election), and thereby almost organically link the PPG with party executive committees and the party-in-government. Nevertheless, the hitherto dominant position of such integrated PPGs has partly been changed. To the extent that PPGs now also depend on the existence of a party on the ground, at least for their claim to be a legitimate representative, and to the extent that PPGs also depend on the fund-raising for the whole party, they have become dependent on the party in central office. For it is precisely activities such as organizing, coordinating, and communicating with the party on the ground, as well as organizing and supervising money donations and subsidies, that the often neglected bureaucratic face of Czech parties increasingly seems to perform.

Notes

I would like to thank participants of the 1996 ECPR workshop on Parliamentary Party Groups, as well as Tim Bale and Cas Mudde, for helpful comments on earlier drafts of this chapter.

- 1 The Czech parliament is bicameral. Here I use the term Czech parliament to refer to the Chamber of Deputies of the Czech parliament (lower house), consisting of 200 elected

- MPs. The Senate (upper house), elected under a different electoral system from the Chamber, has limited powers vis-à-vis the Chamber, and was not elected until the autumn of 1996.
- 2 The Czech electoral system is a PR list system, in which the voters must choose, in eight large multi-member districts between party lists of candidates, but are able to modify the order of the listed candidates through preferential voting.
 - 3 In the 1992–96 parliament, the support for a PPG entailed an office in the building, a car, CK 20,000 (about US\$ 606) per month, plus an additional CK 2,500 (about US\$ 75.7) a month per member. In addition, parties as a whole receive significant state subsidies, largely depending on their electoral results. The new regulations, which partly took effect in 1995 to provide parties with extra money before the 1996 electoral contest, grant state subsidies in several forms: firstly, each party polling at least 3 per cent of the votes nationwide receives CK 90 (about \$3) per vote as a reimbursement towards the electoral campaign costs. Second, each party polling at least three per cent nationwide receives an annual state subvention of three million CK (about \$100,000), plus an extra CK 100,000 (\$3,333) for each one-tenth of their vote above 3 per cent, allocated up to 5 per cent of the votes (the maximum per year is thus five million CK, that is about \$166,666). This is a subsidy for the functioning of the party. Finally, each party having a seat in the parliament receives an annual subsidy of CK 500,000 (about \$16,666) per seat, also as a form of subsidy for the functioning of the party. For ODS, the winner of the 1996 elections with 29.62 per cent of votes and 68 seats, this meant the party (not the PPG) was entitled to receive some \$10,584,000 for the period of four years (the parliamentary term). Thus, despite a marginal change in the number of obtained votes and seats between the 1992 and 1996 elections, ODS more than tripled its four-year income from the state.
 - 4 Roughly speaking, any party passing the 5 per cent electoral threshold will have at least twelve seats in the parliament. Ten MPs would be the equivalent of about a 4 per cent threshold.
 - 5 Identical measures of the cohesion of the Czech PPGs are presented in Kopecký (1996), but are based only on votes taken between October 1993 and July 1994.
 - 6 See various numbers of *Parlamentní Zpravodaj*, which provide an analysis of the distances between parties for each parliamentary session.
 - 7 Survey data presented in this chapter are part of a comparative research project on the Institutionalization of Parliamentary Democracy in Poland, Hungary, and the Czech and Slovak Republics, conducted by the Department of Political Science of Leiden University. The surveys were sponsored by the Foundation for Law and Government (REOB), which is part of the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research (NWO).
 - 8 The cross-tabulation by party did not reveal significant differences. Only coalition parliamentary parties, and the opposition LB, tended to say slightly more often that it lies with parliamentary party experts.
 - 9 The questions were: ‘How should an MP vote on economic issues? Should he vote in accordance with the opinion of the parliamentary club or should he follow his own opinion?’; ‘And what if there is a vote on important legislation concerning constitutional issues; should a MP then vote in accordance with the opinion of the parliamentary club or should he follow his own opinion?’; ‘And how should he vote on moral issues: in accordance with the opinion of the parliamentary club or should he follow his own opinion?’
 - 10 The Czech parliament was preceded by the Czech National Council, which was a legislative organ on the level of the republic in the former two-member Czechoslovak federation.
 - 11 Note that in the Czech Republic an MP who becomes a minister does not have to give up his or her parliamentary seat.

- 12 As outlined in the introductory chapter of this book, the analysis will draw on a distinction between the PPG, party-in-government (PiG), and EPO. The latter will be subdivided into EPO-local, referring to party membership and local organizations, and EPO-central, referring to party executive committees and central offices.

12 Parliamentary party groups in Slovakia

Darina Malová and Kevin Deegan Krause

In Slovakia a party's seats in parliament are notable not only for how many there are but also for where they are located within the parliamentary chamber. How MPs choose to arrange seating indicates a great deal about how those MPs expect parliament to function. During the communist era, MPs were seated in parliament in alphabetical order. After the 1990 elections, seats were grouped according to party and parties were ranged from the largest to the smallest. After the 1994 elections, seating arrangements continued according to party size but within blocs representing the governing coalition and the opposition. Simultaneous with these changes, Slovakia's parliament as a whole has changed from an environment where party membership could be ignored to one where party membership played a decisive role. As with seating, party position in parliament has subsequently been shaped by sharp divisions along government-opposition lines.

This chapter documents these changes by focusing on three important aspects of Slovakia's PPGs: their institutional framework, their internal organisation and cohesion, and their position within the party-as-a-whole, including both the external party organisation and the party-in-government. We argue that all of the major parties which survive in Slovakia emerged first within the parliamentary arena or quickly adapted to orient themselves around parliamentary competition. As a result, the development of the party system within Slovakia has depended largely upon developments within parliamentary party groups (PPGs) and the leadership of the party-as-a-whole has become inextricably bound to the PPG. In recent years, however, the strong parliamentary position of the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS) and its solutions to the problem of PPG cohesion have shifted the focus of leadership from parliament to government both within the party and within the country as a whole.

The institutional framework of PPGs

The fall of the Communist Party of Czecho-Slovakia (KSCS) from its leading role did not topple most of the political institutions which the party had once occupied. Free from communist domination, these institutions gained the actual

use of the powers to which they were constitutionally entitled. Among the most powerful of these institutions were parliaments at both the Czechoslovak level and at the level of the separate Slovak and Czech republics. The parliament of the Slovak Republic of Czecho-Slovakia—formally called the Slovak National Council—came into being during the communist-era federalisation of Czecho-Slovakia as a 150-seat unicameral legislature with authority to set policy within the Slovak Republic. With the end of Communist Party dominance in 1989 and subsequent decentralisation in late 1990, this body obtained significantly more control over the use of its powers and acquired even wider prerogatives (see Siváková 1994b; Wolchik 1991). The passage of a new constitution for Slovakia and the republic's independence in 1993 further increased the powers of Slovakia's parliament. As before, the parliament retained the exclusive rights to approve legislation, to remove a government or an individual minister through a vote of no confidence, to call early parliamentary elections, and to make a variety of other legally binding decisions. New provisions reflected Slovakia's new status as an independent state. These included the power to approve treaties and the right to amend Slovakia's new constitution and to appoint and recall individuals to the new position of President of the Slovak Republic.

As the key to virtually all political power in Slovakia, membership of the parliament became extremely attractive for the politically ambitious in Slovakia. Electoral law ensured that this ambition would be channelled through political parties by establishing a system of proportional representation with a 5 per cent national threshold which effectively excluded independent candidates. Slovakia's system of party funding achieves the same effect by providing substantial per-vote subsidies only to parties gaining more than 3 per cent of the vote. Smaller parties have gained seats in parliament in coalitions with other parties, but these parties remain highly dependent on the co-operation of their larger partners.

Institutional structures ensure that parties retain some usefulness for members of parliament after elections. This is in part because members who hope to be re-elected must retain ties to a party organisation, and in part because crusades by lone individuals influence outcomes much less than efforts within larger groups. Party membership in parliament also remains attractive in part because of certain institutional benefits. PPGs, called 'MPs' clubs' (*poslanecké kluby*), receive a small office within the parliament building as well as a yearly per-MP subsidy. According to the Christian Democratic Movement—one of few parties willing to declare its finances in detail—this subsidy amounted to 18,000 SK (approximately 600 US\$) per MP in 1995. Given the amount of work expected of MPs, this subsidy is not particularly large, but it allows most parties to support one or two full-time support staff and provides a convenient, if cramped, space from which to co-ordinate party parliamentary activity. Other small advantages are available only to MPs within PPGs. For example, MPs speaking as official representatives of a PPG receive twenty minutes of uninterrupted speaking time during floor debates as opposed to only ten minutes for other deputies. Furthermore, unaffiliated MPs are in practice excluded from

certain important committees whose membership is ordained according to proportional representation of PPGs.

The new rules of order for Slovakia's parliament approved in 1996 (Act no. 350/1996) tighten the conditions for establishing PPGs. Where the previous rules allowed any group of five MPs to form a PPG, the new rules raise this number to eight (§64.1), approximating the minimum number of MPs that can be won by a party which surpasses the five per cent electoral threshold. The new rules also restrict the possibilities of so-called 'clubs of independent MPs' by requiring parliamentary approval for any PPG which does not correspond to an elected party or coalition or does not result from a formal party split or merger (§64.1–3). The new regulations also implement a procedure for monitoring the spending of the PPG subsidy (§65.3–4) and delegate enforcement of this and a variety of regulations to the Chairman of Parliament (§65.1–4).

While the electoral and parliamentary framework offers a variety of incentives for members to establish formal PPGs and remain members, the broader constitutional framework of Slovakia does not provide PPGs with many mechanisms to ensure that MPs remain loyal. Although Article 29.2 of the Slovak constitution guarantees citizens the right to 'form political parties and political movements and associate therein', a party-based electoral system is by contrast not established in the constitution and can be changed by a simple majority of MPs. Furthermore, according to Article 73.2 of the constitution, members of parliament 'shall be the representatives of the citizens, and shall be elected to exercise their mandates individually and according to their best conscience and conviction. They are bound by no directives.' Without recourse to such directives, no party can legally compel a member of its PPG to remain a member, to resign, or to vote according to a party line. In building a PPG which functions cohesively and reliably, a party can rely only on the amorphous power of peer pressure, ideology, the small rewards of PPG membership, and the distant threat of exclusion from future electoral lists. Parties have done their best to assemble these incentives into workable combinations. Those unable to find an effective balance did not remain long on Slovakia's political scene.

PPG organisation and cohesion

The legal framework instituted after the revolution made establishing a PPG a simple affair but ensuring that such a group would work together, much less vote together, proved more difficult. Potential solutions appeared gradually and spread unevenly across the party system.

Cohesion in voting

Since most parliamentary parties come into being to pursue at least some common interests, the question of co-operation on legislative efforts is

extremely important. As if in response to the imperative mandates and unanimous party-line voting of the communist era, MPs after 1989 often exercised their freedom to vote according to their conscience regardless of the opinion of their party (Malová 1994), but this phenomenon lasted for only a few years. Unfortunately, the change is difficult to document, since not even Slovakia's Parliamentary Department of Information and Analysis has access to computerised records which would permit basic assessments of party-line voting, and since requests by researchers for raw data have encountered political resistance. There are, however, other techniques for estimating cohesion, and these indicate that the parliaments elected in 1990 and 1992 showed a marked lack of cohesion in party voting. During these periods significant pieces of legislation proposed by individual members and opposition parties often found their way through the committee system to floor sessions, sometimes with substantial support from members of the governing parties against their own leadership. Individual MPs outside the context of a PPG (Malová and Siváková 1996) submitted one-quarter of all legislation enacted during this period. These MP-proposed bills were often joint proposals whose sponsors included both coalition and opposition MPs. In a similar lack of party cohesion, MPs from parties in the governing coalition occasionally voted against ministers of their own party in no confidence votes. In a 1993 series of formal interviews with Slovakia's parliamentary MPs, 52 per cent of interviewed MPs reported that their decision on draft legislation was determined by the position of party clubs, while 27 per cent reported that they decided for themselves on such issues (Malová 1994). Asked in a separate survey how they *would* vote if they disagreed with the decision of their PPG, only 17 per cent of MPs claimed they would vote with the PPG anyway, while 26 per cent claimed they would vote against it and 57 per cent felt their answer would depend on the case (Brokl and Mansfeldová 1993). Yet while demanding the freedom to vote according to their conscience, MPs also seemed concerned about the consequences of all MPs behaving in the same way. Only 3 per cent believed that the 'demands of party discipline' were too great while nearly half (47 per cent) believed that discipline should be stronger (Malová 1994).

Those who expressed these desires in 1993 received their wish in the following years. In the absence of access to official records, voting cohesion for this period can be approximated on the basis of high-profile votes for which results have been recorded by outside sources. Party-line voting on such issues shows a dramatic increase over time. The successful vote of no confidence in the government in early 1994 marked the beginning of a period of increased partisanship, and voting along party lines on many key issues has approached 100 per cent, with the small numbers of absences and abstentions regularly exceeding the number of MPs dissenting from fellow party members. Abstentions and absences could themselves represent a problem of cohesion since they provide a lower visibility method of avoiding the party line, but the parties of the governing coalition consistently appear able to ensure sufficient

cohesion in attendance as well as in voting. In fact, party-line voting on the part of coalition parties has been so strong since December 1994 that only one major government initiative has failed to gain majority support on a floor vote and this occurred because of intra-coalition rather than intra-party disputes. Major government initiatives, of course, are not the best standard by which to judge party cohesion, since they are rarely introduced before the sponsoring party—or the sponsoring coalition—has reached internal agreement. Nevertheless, the ability to reach such accommodation is itself a sign of a reasonably high degree of cohesion. By any of the measures available, cohesion around party legislative goals has increased dramatically since the early days of Slovakia's democracy and has reached quite high levels.

Cohesion in organisation

With the exception of the Communist Party of Czecho-Slovakia (KSCS), the first PPGs in Slovakia's parliament after the revolution of 1989 were little more than informal groups of like-minded MPs. Some of these MPs, drafted into parliament to prepare the legislative basis for free elections, took steps toward establishing formal structures, and several of these became political parties capable of competing at the electoral level. The seven parties elected to parliament in 1990 included five with origins in these informal parliamentary groups, and only the Slovak National Party (SNS) had no prior parliamentary presence. In many cases, however, the broad agreement about ending communist rule which had united the members of these groupings gave way to differences on other issues, and the weak internal problemsolving mechanisms of most PPGs proved unable to maintain unity. As Table 12.1 indicates, by April 1992 the original number of eight PPGs had increased to eleven. In some cases peacefully, in other cases with enmity, all PPGs except for those of KSCS and two Hungarian parties lost MPs between the elections of 1990 and 1992. In some cases the losses were severe. As Figure 12.1 shows, the PPG of Public Against Violence (VPN) split into three separate groups, while the PPGs of the Christian Democratic Movement (KDH) and the Slovak National Party (SNS) both lost members to a new PPG called the Slovak Christian Democratic Movement (SKDH). In fact, *every* new PPG—as well as several newly independent MPs—went on to establish separate party structures at the electoral level, encouraged by a still open electoral market which offered the hope of victory even to a new party.

The 1992 elections disappointed most of those hopes. Just six parties were returned to parliament, only one of which could be considered a splinter party. PPGs during this second electoral period became more visible and influential through changes in the internal organisation of parliament and through increases in the PPGs' own organisational capacity. A survey of parliamentary MPs taken during this period found that MPs claimed to spend an average of 4.2 hours per week in meetings with their PPG, less than they spent working for the party at

Table 12.1 Seats in Slovakia's parliament by parliamentary club after elections and key periods of parliamentary re-organisation

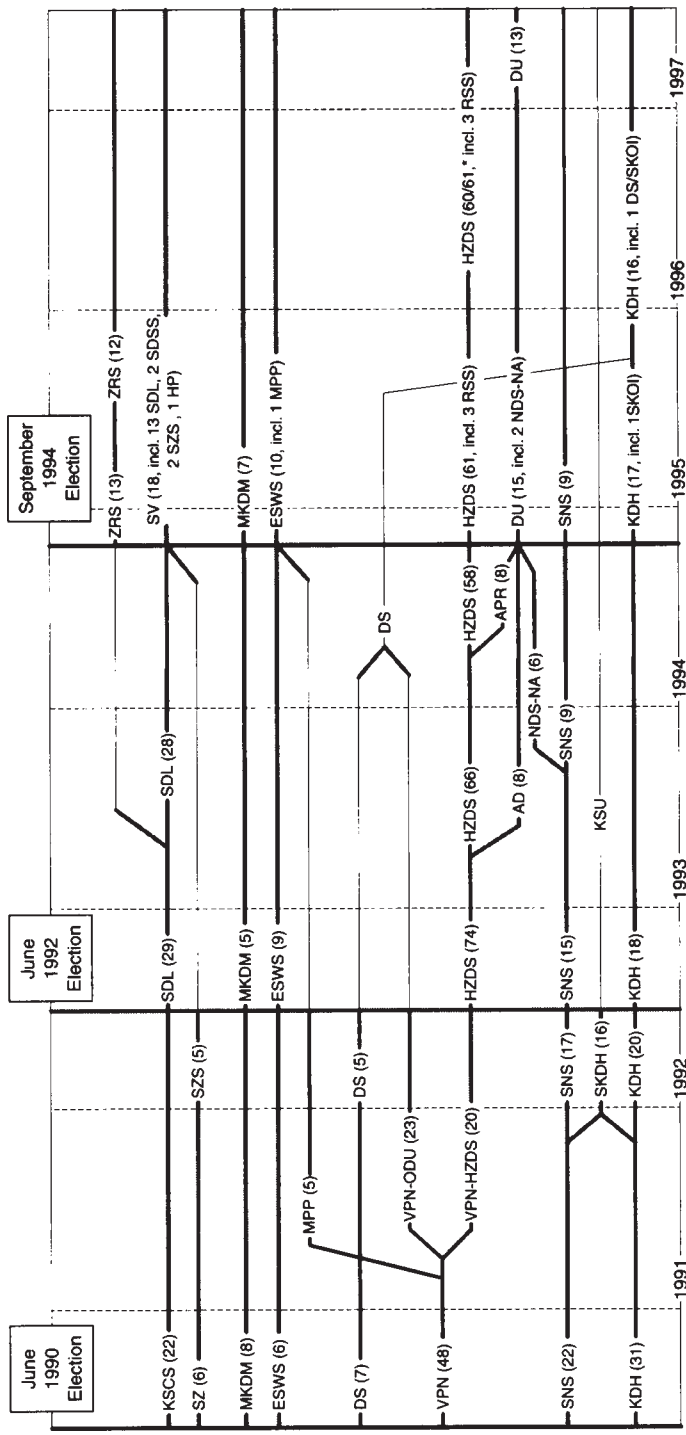
Party/Movement	1990	1992	1992	1993	1993	1994	1994	1994	1997
	June Elec- tion	April	June Elec- tion	May	Dec.	Feb.	June	Sept. Elec- tion	June
AD Aliancia demokratov (Alliance of Democrats)	—	—	—	8	8	8	see DU	—	—
APR Alternatíva politického realizmu (Alternative for Political Realism)	—	—	—	—	—	8	see	—	—
DS Demokratická strana (Democratic Party)	7	5	—	—	—	—	—	—	see KDH
DU Demokratická únia Slovenska (Democratic Union)	—	—	—	—	—	—	18 (incl. AD and APR)	15 (incl. 2 NDS/ NA)	13
ESWS Együttélés (Co-existence)	6	6	9	9	9	9	9	10 (incl. 1 MPP)	10 (incl. 1 MPP)
HP Hnutie poľnohospodárov (Movement of Agriculturalists)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	see SDL	see SDL
HZDS Hnutie za demokratické Slovensko (Movement for a Democratic Slovakia)	—	20	74	66	65	56	54	61 (incl. 3 RSS)	60/61 (incl. 3 RSS) ^a
KDH Kresťansko demokratické hnutie (Christian Democratic Movement)	31	20	18	18	18	18	18	17 (incl. 1 SKOI)	16 (incl. 1 SKOI DS)
KSCS Komunistická strana Česko-Slovenska (Com- munist Party of Czecho- Slovakia) SD Strana demokratickej avice (Party of the Democratic Left)	22	22	29	28	28	28	28	18 (incl. 13 SD, 2 SDSS, 2 SZS, 1 HP)	18 (incl. 13 SD, - 2 SDSS, 2 SZS, 1 HP)
SV Spoločná voľba (Common Choice)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
MKDM Magyar Kereszténydemokrata Mozgalom (Hungarian Christian Democratic Movement)	8	8	5	5	5	5	5	7	7
MPP Magyar Polgári Párt (Hungarian Civic Party)	—	5	—	—	—	—	—	see ESWS	see ESWS

Table 12.1 (continued)

<i>Party/Movement</i>	1990	1992	1992	1993	1993	1994	1994	1994	1997
	<i>June Elec- tion</i>	<i>April</i>	<i>June Elec- tion</i>	<i>May</i>	<i>Dec.</i>	<i>Feb.</i>	<i>June</i>	<i>Sept. Elec- tion</i>	<i>June</i>
NDS/NA Národnodemokratická strana-Nová alternatíva (National Democratic Party–New Alternative)	—	—	—	—	6	5	6	see DU	see DU
ODÚ Občanská demokratická únia (Civic Democratic Union)	—	23	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
RSS Rolnícka strana Slovenska (Farmer's Party of Slovakia)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	see HZDS	see HZDS
SDSS Sociálno-demokratická strana na Slovensku (Social Democratic Party of Slovakia)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	see SD	see SD
SKDH Slovenské Krest- anskodemokratické hnutie (Slovak Christian Democratic Movement)	—	16	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
KSU Krestanská sociálna únia Slovenska (Christian Social Union)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	see KDH	see KDH
SKOI Stála konferencia Občianskeho inštitútu (Permanent Conference of the Civic Institute)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	see KDH	see KDH
SNS Slovenská národná strana (Slovak National Party)	22	17	15	14	8	9	9	9	9
SZ Strana zelených (Party of Greens)	6	5	—	—	—	—	—	see SD	see SD
SZS Strana zelených na Slovensku (Party of Greens of Slovakia)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
VPN Verejnost proti násiliu (Public Against Violence)	48	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
ZRS Združenie robotníkov Slovenska (Association of Workers of Slovakia)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	13	12
Independent	—	3	—	2	3	4	3	—	4/5 ^a
Total	150	150	150	150	150	150	150	150	150

Sources: Krejci (1994) (for June 1990, June 1992, June 1994); Siváková (1993) (for April 1992); Meseznikov (1996) (for May 1993); Malová (1994) (for February 1994); Siváková (1994a) (for September 1994).

a indicates the still pending controversy over former HZDS MP Gaulieder.



Notes

- 1 Party/PPG abbreviations can be found in Table 12.1.
- 2 Numbers in parentheses represent the number of seats held by a PPG. Independent deputies are not counted here.
- 3 Thick lines mark periods of representation in parliament.
- 4 Thin lines mark relevant changes in parties occurring outside PPGs.
- 5 Asterisk denotes still pending controversy over the expulsion of HZDS deputy Gaulieder.

Figure 12.1 Chronology of PPG size and cohesion in Slovakia's parliament, June 1990 to June 1997.

the national (11.3 hours) or regional (9.0 hours) levels, but it was still significant and greater than the amount of time spent with non-party organisations and groups (3.7 hours), with government representatives (2.0 hours) or with state administration (2.5 hours) (Brokl and Mansfeldová 1993). For four of the six parties, this period proved to be one of relative cohesion as well. Neither the Christian Democratic Movement (KDH) nor either of the two small Hungarian parties lost any MPs. The Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (KSCS), newly reorganised and renamed as the Party of the Democratic Left (SDL), lost only a single MP during this period. Only the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS) and the Slovak National Party (SNS) lost their organisational cohesion. Because of severe conflicts between MPs and the party leader, HZDS lost eight MPs in each of two splits between early 1993 and early 1994, reducing its strength in parliament by over 20 per cent. During the same period, an abrupt change of leadership within SNS led to the departure of the former party chairman and four other of the party's original fifteen MPs. As with previous splits, the MPs departing from HZDS and SNS established not only new PPGs but also new electoral parties. A similar effort, without a PPG, was made by the lone departing member of SD, who formed the Workers' Association of Slovakia (ZRS).

The 1994 parliamentary elections introduced a new challenge to PPG cohesion in the form of increased numbers of coalitions gaining entry to parliament. The eight electoral lists which passed the 5 per cent threshold actually contained representatives of sixteen different parties. Only nine of these parties held the five seats necessary for a PPG, so the remaining seven small parties were forced to choose between going without a PPG and remaining within the PPG of their electoral coalition. All chose the latter option. Although this increased the complexity of intra-PPG co-ordination, it does not appear to have overwhelmed the groups' capacity. In fact, the difference between the most recent term of parliament and the previous two is striking. Between the elections of 1990 and 1992, forty-four parliamentary seats out of 150 changed hands from one PPG to another. Between 1992 and 1994, the number of seats changing hands was twenty-eight out of 150. Between 1994 and mid-1997, only five seats changed hands. None of these five joined another PPG and only one attempted to establish a new electoral party, so far with little success. The three-year period without a single major rupture of a PPG is by far the longest such period in Slovakia's post-revolution history.

Explaining increased cohesion

The notable shift in Slovakia's party system toward cohesion and discipline beginning in 1994 reflects a decline in motives for departing from PPGs combined with an increase in mechanisms for enforcing cohesion. The rapid formation of PPGs and their electoral machinery in 1990 produced a variety of ungainly alliances between political elites who often knew little about their new

partners. Four years of high parliamentary volatility helped to sort out many of the personal and ideological conflicts which resulted. Contrasting relatively small and well-defined parties with large, broadly defined movements can show the role of this slow sorting process. PPGs with stronger identifying characteristics faced fewer internal strains. Between 1990 and 1997, the PPGs of the Hungarian parties did not experience a single defection. The Party of the Democratic Left (SDL) with its former Communist Party core lost only one MP. The Christian Democratic Movement (KDH) experienced a significant loss in 1992 over emphasis on national issues but has since remained quite cohesive. The Slovak National Party (SNS) also experienced a significant break over continued emphasis on national issues once the party's main goal—Slovak independence—had been achieved. These PPGs together held over half of all parliamentary seats between 1990 and 1994, but they were responsible for less than one-third of those seats which changed hands during this period. Together their ratio of stable to changing seats was almost six to one.

By contrast, almost two-thirds of seats changing hands between 1990 and 1994 belonged to the PPGs of the Public Against Violence movement (VPN) or the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS); their ratio of stable to changing seats was less than two to one. Most of the prominent personalities of VPN in 1990 remained prominent at the end of 1997, but by then they were split between five different parties. With little to unify its members except opposition to communism, VPN's PPG soon separated along ethnic lines and over issues of personality and commitment to democracy. Personality conflicts and mutual accusations of authoritarianism continued within HZDS's PPG, leading to the departure of MPs who later formed the Democratic Union (DU).

With each departure the heterogeneity of PPGs declined, reducing the likelihood of further splitting. The splits within Public against Violence (VPN) and its successor Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS) helped to create a fuller political spectrum with more coherent and more cohesive parties. Yet this factor alone does not explain all of the increased cohesion among Slovakia's PPGs, particularly the increased cohesion within HZDS after mid-1994. Participants in the splits of both VPN and HZDS have attributed them to both the movements' broad goals and to the difficult personal style of Vladimír Mečiar, a leader of VPN and chair of HZDS. Yet even though these conditions continued—the party continued to define itself as 'a movement of the wide centre', and Mečiar remained party chair—departures from HZDS's PPG dropped to almost zero after the 1994 elections.

The leadership of the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS) has not left future cohesion to chance. By 1994 HZDS found itself able to compensate for personality conflicts and the lack of programmatic coherence through mechanisms for *imposing* cohesion. Other parties had tried such mechanisms before, but they always encountered the constitutional prohibition against binding MPs by 'directives'. Before the 1992 election, Slovak newspapers reported that parties had asked candidates to promise to sign 'letters of commitment' as a condition of their candidacy (Malová 1994). These letters

were dismissed as merely symbolic statements, however, because their provisions violated the constitution and would thus be legally unenforceable. By finding means of enforcement outside of contractual obligation, HZDS achieved a significant advantage over other parties. One of the new methods required HZDS candidates to pledge payment of SK 5,000,000 (approximately US\$ 166,000, a sum more than ten times the annual salary of an MP) should they leave HZDS while still remaining in parliament. While no more legally enforceable than the letters of commitment, the *financial* risks and other costs involved in making a legal challenge added a tangible burden to the risks of defection (Constitution Watch 1995).

Were this not sufficient, events in November 1996 revealed the party's other disciplinary mechanisms. The decision of Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS) MP Frantisek Gaulieder to leave the party's parliamentary club evoked a wave of sharp personal criticism in the HZDS daily newspaper, *Slovenska Republika*. It also resulted in a murky affair in which parliament's Immunity and Mandate Committee received a letter of resignation signed by Gaulieder, a letter which Gaulieder claimed he signed before the 1994 elections at the insistence of HZDS leadership who kept it on file for such an eventuality (Národná Obroda 1996). Although the validity of this letter was thus highly questionable, and although Gaulieder countered with repeated letters of non-resignation, the Immunity and Mandate Committee—on which HZDS held an absolute majority—voted to accept Gaulieder's 'resignation' and to remove his mandate. This move was later confirmed in a floor vote after which, despite Gaulieder's vehement protestations, another member of HZDS filled his newly vacant seat. Gaulieder has since submitted his case to Slovakia's Constitutional Court which, according to Article 129 (1) of the constitution, has final competency on questions of parliamentary mandates. Even if Gaulieder wins his case and the return of his mandate, the ease with which HZDS could remove him and the difficulties of his court challenge combine to send a strong warning to any other HZDS member who might wish to follow suit.¹ Should Gaulieder lose, HZDS's would be able to raise the cohesion of its PPG to 100 per cent merely by expelling from parliament any MPs who might try to leave the party.

HZDS is not the only party to introduce techniques which encourage MPs to vote with and remain within a PPG. Many of the other parties have established procedures for monitoring their MPs' performance in such areas as party-line voting, general participation, work on committees, and activity on the floor. The results of these reviews can serve as a mechanism of social pressure and can be used as clear internal standards for determining the position of a current MP on future party election lists (Malová, 1994). But because these sanctions come only from within the party and not from parliament as a whole, they cannot affect MPs who expect to switch to another party or to found their own. For most of these parties the threat of mass exodus appears to have declined with the homogenisation of parties in the early 1990s and the filling out of the political spectrum. It is HZDS which has continued to face the largest threat of such splintering, but it is precisely HZDS which has also obtained sufficient votes in

parliament to use formal *parliamentary* mechanisms for enforcing *party* cohesion. While HZDS's disciplinary tools do not hold up to legal or constitutional scrutiny, they do have the backing of a parliamentary majority. In an environment of weak institutional balances, this appears to provide enough deterrent.

PPGs and the party-as-a-whole

Most of Slovakia's current major parties began in parliament or quickly found their way into parliament. As they built and rebuilt organisations capable of competing in mass elections, PPG leaders extended their leadership role to the sphere of party organisation as well. In almost all parties the same leaders dominate both the parliamentary and organisational domains of the party. In the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS) a dominant and cohesive PPG has actually allowed a shift in overlap away from the party-in-parliament toward the party-in-government.

The overlap of leadership

The parliamentary origins of Slovakia's parties reflected the conditions of the new democracy after the revolution. Leaders of the anti-communist movements entered parliament in early 1990 to replace Communist Party MPs. These new members quickly learned to take advantage of prestige and visibility offered by a seat in parliament. MPs who distanced themselves from the umbrella VPN movement and participated in the creation of new electoral parties found that their ties to parliament helped their parties to prevail over other, similar parties in the crowded political scene of the time.² When these parliamentary figures transformed their PPGs into parties, they did not resign from parliament but rather added the role of party leader. In many cases this reflected not only a desire for control but also a simple absence of personnel who were qualified to fill leadership positions in either the PPG or party leadership. Communist rule in Slovakia did not excel in producing charismatic political figures—either communists or dissidents—who were capable of organising a party and attracting public support. When split among the twenty-five parties and movements which campaigned for election in 1990, this shortage forced MPs into roles in both the PPG and the external party organisation (EPO).

The Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (KSCS) and Public Against Violence (VPN) were the only two major parties which attempted to sustain party leadership separate from the parliamentary delegation. Not coincidentally, both possessed a long list of well-known politicians. Both had origins outside parliament, emerging not among the political elite but out from social struggle. Both tended, therefore, to regard parliamentary politics as peripheral to a more important fight. Before the 1989 revolution, KSCS

concentrated its most influential leaders in party structures and government and exerted control over parliament largely from afar. This division of labour continued to some degree after the revolution. Public Against Violence (VPN) organised itself along similar lines. In the 1990 elections many of the party's leaders, including its chairman, Fedor Gál, did not stand for election to parliament, preferring instead to focus attention on the development of VPN as a social force on the assumption that party representatives in parliament and government would respect the decisions of VPN's executive council.

By the summer of 1990, both Public Against Violence (VPN) and the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (KS CS) faced challenges to their model of leadership. Despite decades of using parliament as a rubber stamp, it was KSCS which acted earlier and more effectively to take its PPG seriously. A post-election party congress chose most of the party's new leadership from among those elected that year to the Slovak and federal parliaments (Kubín et al. 1992:59). In VPN, by contrast, the division of labour led to intra-party conflict as VPN appointees in the government and the party's PPG refused to accept the authority of the party's executive council. In early 1991, the council mustered enough votes to remove its own appointee to the prime ministership, Vladimír Mečiar, citing his disloyalty to the party. But even though Mečiar lost his position, it was the VPN leadership which suffered most in the long run, losing half of its PPG and nearly all of its public support to Mečiar's Movement for a Democratic Slovakia.

By mid-1992, every major party had adopted the model of overlapping PPG and party leadership—including not only the former Communist Party and the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS) but also the anti-HZDS faction of Public Against Violence which had previously resisted this model. All of these parties placed party leaders at the top of their electoral lists in the 1992 elections. In the 1994 elections the roster of elected MPs included the chair of each major party in Slovakia and well over half of all party vice-chairs. During this period numerous mechanisms emerged to bind the PPG with the leadership of the party-as-a-whole. As of 1997, five of the seven largest parties in Slovakia's parliament provide PPG MPs with automatic membership in the party's executive council.³ The remaining two—the Christian Democratic Movement (KDH) and HZDS—guarantee at least some degree of PPG representation in this body. Similarly, five of the seven largest parties also provide automatic membership for at least one PPG member on the party's powerful standing executive committee.⁴ Other statutory mechanisms provided these executive bodies with final veto over the composition and order of party electoral lists, thus providing party leaders with the means for ensuring their own prominent placement on those lists. The effects of these mechanisms are quite significant. A survey of party organisation conducted in 1996 found that members of the PPG comprised between 25 per cent and 71 per cent of the membership of parties' highest executive bodies. The share of PPG members was even higher in the category of party chairs and vice-chairs (Krause and Malová 1996).

In fact, the degree of intertwining and overlap between the PPG, the EPO and the leadership of the party-as-a-whole is so significant that it is difficult in many cases to isolate the direction of influence. A 1993 survey of members of parliament found a similar lack of clarity in responses to questions about influence over PPG decisions. When asked whether the PPG or party leadership held the final say in resolving differences between the two, 29 per cent of MPs surveyed chose the PPG while 16 per cent chose the party leadership. More than half (55 per cent) could not identify a more dominant side. When asked who had the most influence over important decisions taken by the PPG, MPs split their votes widely between 'club leaders', 'club experts', 'the club chair', 'party functionaries', and 'a majority within the club'. Of these, club leaders received the most votes (33 per cent) followed by club experts (23 per cent) (Brokl and Mansfeldová 1993). The lack of a clear response on both questions may reflect weaknesses in their formulation. With regard to the first question, since most members of party executive councils were at the time also parliamentary MPs, distinguishing between 'PPG' and 'party leadership' may have proven extremely difficult. The second question does not remedy this difficulty directly, but it does help to identify certain influences which are less important than others: the chair of the PPG and the party functionaries. Influence in PPGs in 1993 lay not with the EPO, nor with the PPG's own chair but with a group of 'club leaders' and 'experts', many of whom participated in the highest executive bodies of the party-as-a-whole.

The situation has not changed appreciably. In late 1996, the chairmanship of a PPG remained a largely administrative position without great prestige. Fewer than half of the largest parties included the PPG chair or even a vice-chairman of the party-as-a-whole. The managers of the EPO were more likely to be rewarded with vice-chairmanships in the party-as-a-whole, but they remained outnumbered within the party leadership by those who held seats in parliament. Power within parties resides neither in PPG nor EPO as such, but rather in a relatively small group within the executive organs of the party-as-a-whole, most of whom retain both a seat in parliament and a voice in matters of party organisation. Although the organisational structures of Slovakia's political parties have increased significantly in complexity since the early 1990s, and although the reservoir of capable leadership has expanded, the initial model of overlapping leadership is still crucial to a characterisation of Slovakia's party organisation.

Over time this model has become institutionalised both through the statutory methods mentioned above and through less formal means. More than half of Slovakia's major parties have had the same party chair since the founding of the party. As these chairs and their vice-chairs have become identified with the party itself, their positions have become increasingly entrenched. Within PPGs, rivals to party leadership have more often responded by forming their own PPGs and party structures than by remaining and challenging the party status quo. Within the EPO, the absence of active party members and the dependence of local and regional structures on party central offices diminish the opportunities for

leadership challenges from below. Local and regional party organisations almost without exception give their support to leadership-sponsored initiatives and their endorsement to party leaders who are nominated for parliament. Only in the Slovak National Party (SNS) has a party leadership been successfully dislodged by a party congress, and even this reflects not so much the triumph of a grass-roots rival as an intra-PPG struggle in which one faction gained victory through the strategic use of EPO mechanisms. PPGs and EPOs have developed their own structures and procedures in Slovakia's parties but remain largely dependent on the decisions of the groups of leaders who founded the parties and who continue to run them.

PPGs and the party-in-government (PiG)

Virtually all of Slovakia's party leaders run for parliament, but not all of them remain in parliament for very long. The overlapping leadership which ties together PPGs and EPOs cannot legally be extended in the same way into government because Article 109 of Slovakia's 1992 constitution forbids the same individuals from serving in parliament and government at the same time. Parties which gain the opportunity to participate in governments find themselves also facing the question of how to distribute party leaders between the PPG and the PiG. The relative strength of PPG and PiG within governing parties has differed according to the needs of the parties involved.

The Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS) provides the most prominent, almost the only example of relations between PPG and PiG. It has remained the single strongest party in Slovakia from its inception and has occupied the prime ministership and a majority of ministerships for all but nine months of Slovakia's first four and a half years as an independent state. HZDS has responded to the problem of forbidden PPG/PiG overlap by shifting most party leaders from its PPG into government. In its 1992 government, fourteen of nineteen appointments made by HZDS came from the ranks of elected MPs, including the top-ranked candidates in most electoral regions and second—and third-ranked candidates as well. In its 1994 government, eleven of twelve appointments made by HZDS came from among elected MPs and again the list included the top-ranked candidates in three of four regions along with a scattering of second-, third- and fourth-ranked candidates. This list included the party's chair along with two of the four vice-chairs. In both 1992 and 1994, HZDS left a number of party leaders among the ranks of parliament, but this included few of the party's most prominent faces.

A vote of no confidence ended the first Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS) government in early 1994, bringing to power the only non-HZDS cabinet to govern Slovakia since independence. Although marked by very different beginnings, the coalition cabinet of DU, KDH and SDL came to resolve the PPG/PiG relationship in ways analogous to those of HZDS. Originally, however, the coalition government of the Democratic Union (DU),

the Christian Democratic Movement (KDH) and the Party of the Democratic Left (SDL) appears to have been designed to function largely as a government-level delegation of a coalition based in parliament. The government initially included none of the chairs of the constituent parties and met only after sessions of the *parliamentary-level* Coalition Council had formulated the government agenda. Within several months of the inception of the coalition government both of these conditions had changed: Jozef Moravcik took advantage of his position as prime minister to become chair of his own party, the DU, a move which caused consternation among the other coalition partners whose chairs were not similarly represented in the government; and Coalition Council meetings were rescheduled to take place *after* cabinet meetings and re-oriented to co-ordinate parliamentary voting on government-proposed bills. After the 1994 election, these parties returned to the opposition and again focused their attention on parliament, the one realm of national public office to which they had regular access. But the establishment of shadow governments composed of prominent party leaders indicate that these parties would follow the example of HZDS and shift their leadership into government should the opportunity present itself.

The strategies adopted by both the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS) and the opposition coalition show how the PiG can come to overshadow the PPG. In comparison to parliament, government offers parties and individual party leaders a more dynamic and visible vantage point from which to pursue goals and provide patronage. But an internally divided government or one without a reliable majority in parliament may prove more hazardous than no government at all. Hence parties and leaders, while desiring access to the executive, have sometimes continued to concentrate their leaders and their efforts within the PPG in an attempt to ensure cohesion of a party or a coalition. The continued focus on parliament in some cases reflects a desire to limit conflicts caused by too many leaders of too many parties in the same small government, as was the case in the Democratic Union (DU), Christian Democratic Movement (KDH), and Party of the Democratic Left (SDL) coalition. The focus on parliament occasionally also reflects the desire of a party to preserve its options by not becoming too closely identified with a particular government. This seems to be the case not only for the parties of the DU-KDH-SDL coalition but also for the Slovak National Party (SNS) and the Association of Workers of Slovakia (ZRS) in their coalition with HZDS.

Only the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS) has been successful in overcoming these factors that prevent a shift of emphasis to the PiG. HZDS's dominance in parliamentary elections and its ability to ensure cohesion within its own PPG since the elections of 1994 (combined with its apparent ability to compel co-operation from its smaller coalition partners) have allowed the party to use both parliamentary mechanisms and government resources to enhance its hold on power. Although parliament was the birthplace of most of Slovakia's current parties and played a crucial role in their development, this privileged position is threatened by the emergence of a cohesive PPG of a party whose

leaders have become concentrated in the PiG. These developments do not relegate parliament to a completely inconsequential position, because HZDS must still struggle to obtain parliamentary support from its coalition partners and must still win sufficient parliamentary seats to keep its dominant position. Meciar has frequently proposed changes to the electoral law (Sme 1997), and these seem designed primarily to enhance his party's tally of parliamentary seats (Krivý, Feglová, and Balko 1996). Should these or similar efforts succeed and provide the party with a majority, the cohesion of the PPG enforced through disciplinary measures similar to those used against Gaulieder could make not only the PPG of HZDS but the entire parliament subordinate to the decisions of the HZDS PiG. In such a case, it would not be surprising to find an HZDS proposal that MPs once again be seated in alphabetical order.

PPGs and typologies

Evidence concerning the role of PPGs is essential for understanding not only developments in Slovakia but also the interplay of political institutions in almost any democracy. Volumes such as this one provide the opportunity to compare and contrast political institutions across political boundaries. For this purpose, the typologies developed by Heidar and Koole in their introduction are extremely useful, and it is important to show how the issues discussed above affect the classification of Slovakia's PPGs.

A classification of PPGs' internal organisation in Slovakia depends on the time period under study. In the early years after 1989, a combination of low cohesion and lack of resources prevented most PPGs from becoming anything more than 'clubs' in the sense used by Koole and Heidar. Over time, the PPGs' increased cohesion—without a significant increase in resources—made the 'fraction' model increasingly applicable. Slovakia's PPGs, however, do not correspond closely to the common understanding of a fraction as a parliamentary arm of a mass party, organised to express party views but lacking the resources to shape party policy. A PPG's resources must be understood not only in absolute terms but also relative to the resources of the party as a whole. In Slovakia, many opposition parties lack financial and technical resources in *all* aspects of their operation. In these parties, the relatively small subsidy received by the PPG and the human resources literally embodied by MPs are often enough to ensure that PPGs do not merely represent a party's views in parliament but also play a major role in the formulation of those views. In the context of the party-as-a-whole, therefore, many opposition PPGs in Slovakia exhibit aspects of a 'parliamentary party complex' despite the lack of resources which keeps such complexes limited in size and scope.

Koole and Heidar ask related questions in their classification of the role of PPGs within the party as a whole. In Slovakia the extremely wide overlap of leadership between PPG, EPO and PiG in every major party translates easily into the classification of 'integrated PPG'. Legislation which prevents MPs from

simultaneously serving as ministers does forbid formal overlap between PiG and PPG, but it does not in practice inhibit close co-operation between these two bodies. Furthermore, key members of these bodies also work together within the executive bodies of the EPO and participate in frequent, informal meetings of party leaders. In almost every party in Slovakia such a core group of leaders, each wearing several hats, ensures that not only the PPG but also the PiG and the EPO operate as 'integrated' parts of the party.

It is for this reason that identifying subtypes of integrated PPGs is a complicated affair. In cases where the relationship between PPG and EPO *can* be disentangled, evidence suggests that it is extremely rare for an EPO to impose its will on a reluctant PPG. The classificatory scheme thus restricts options for Slovakia's parties to 'ruling PPG' and 'PPG as instrument of government'. Further classification depends on the relationship between the PPG and the PiG. Within the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS), party chair Vladimír Mečiar has consistently surrendered his parliamentary mandate in favour of the prime ministership, thus giving the PiG a clear edge and relegating the PPG to a role as the government's instrument. Similarly, the brief experience of coalition government by the Democratic Union, the Christian Democratic Movement, and the Party of the Democratic Left was characterised by the success of PiGs at overcoming the efforts of PPGs to control them. Only the smaller parties have shown a tendency to focus on their PPGs at the expense of PiGs. For these parties, emphasis on the PPG offers a way to compensate for barriers which prevent the party from playing a significant role in government. Were such barriers removed, it is likely that even these parties would transfer their prominent MPs to ministerial posts and transform their PPGs into the instruments of party leaders in government.

Notes

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- 1 Shortly after Gaulieder's removal from parliament, his home was severely damaged in a bomb attack. Opposition MPs claimed this was a further example of means used to coerce HZDS members and deter other defections. Coalition MPs characterised the

explosion as an attempt by Gaulieder or others to capitalise on his resignation and gain public sympathy for the opposition.

- 2 The only party to gain seats in Slovakia's parliament in the 1990 election without strong previous ties to parliament was the Slovak National Party (SNS). Although SNS began its existence outside parliament, its organisational structures reflect an clear orientation toward parliamentary representation. Beginning in 1990, party leaders appeared at the top of electoral lists, and in 1994 three of the top eight ballot positions were occupied by the party's chairman and two of its former chairmen.
- 3 These councils exist in all major parties in Slovakia. Depending on the party they are variously called 'statewide', 'republic', or 'central' councils, contain between 25 and 125 members, and meet four to twelve times per year.
- 4 These standing committees also exist in all major parties in Slovakia. Depending on the party, they are variously called the 'Presidium', 'Political Board' (*Gremium*), 'Executive Committee', or 'Political Committee', contain between ten and thirty members and meet nearly every week.

13 Parties and parliamentary party groups in the making

Hungary, 1989–1997

Gabriella Ilonszki

Although parties have been central actors in the democratic transition process in Hungary (Ågh 1994), parliamentary party groups have not yet been analysed in a complex way. Thus, the aim of this chapter is to examine the institutionalisation process of PPGs in the context of party formation. We shall see that, initially, PPGs and parties mutually strengthened each other's development. Later their interrelatedness became manifest in party splits and new party formations. Finally, we shall conclude that the evolving strong parliamentary party groups have formed the basis for the professionalisation of new party elites and the PPG 'environment' has always had a certain impact on the 'fate' of parties. By introducing the development and the organisational characteristics of PPGs we shall strengthen the hypothesis that parties in Hungary, as in other post-communist countries, mainly exist as elite frameworks and they are weak in their representative and linkage functions (Kopecký 1995).

The institutionalisation of PPGs in democratic transition

Before 1989, there was only one organised body for MPs, that is for the members of the Communist Party, who constituted about 75 per cent of the House and formed a single party group. In the summer of 1989, however, the first opposition PPG was formed after many Communist Party MPs had to resign under electoral pressure, from by-elections won by opposition candidates. After the Communist Party conference in October 1989, the Communist Party group was divided into two: the reformers of the Hungarian Socialist Party (MSZP) and the hard-liners of the Hungarian Socialist Workers Party (MSZMP) established two distinct PPGs. A separate PPG was formed by independent MPs, but about a quarter of the MPs did not belong to any of these groups. These were the first steps towards institutionalising different political tendencies into working units. While these quasi-PPGs did not have any special rights, they symbolised political change, and in a way helped political thinking become accustomed to the idea of proper PPGs and parties as well. The Standing Orders in the communist period did not even use the term 'parliamentary party group'.¹

Throughout 1988 and then in 1989, there were several modifications introduced to the old Standing Orders to adjust it to the new environment. The most significant change was brought about by a Parliamentary Resolution in March 1990 when concrete measures appeared with regard to PPGs. Article 16 ruled that:

Representatives of the parties in parliament or representatives with no party alignments are entitled to set up a parliamentary party group [i.e. a PPG] to harmonise their activity. At least ten MPs are necessary to establish a PPG. The foundation and the name of the PPG, as well as the name of its leader and the list of members must be presented to the Speaker.

Thus, while PPGs began to develop spontaneously in 1988–89, they were formally accepted by the last ‘communist’ parliament in face of political as well as functional changes. Party and PPG developments were closely intertwined.

PPGs in the new environment

During the transition process, new democratic institutions were decided upon in the negotiations taking place in the summer of 1989 between the old and new elite groups. The negotiation talks resulted in an agreement to establish a parliamentary system of government with a relatively strong parliament. After the first democratic elections in April 1990, this notion was somewhat modified when the two largest parties agreed upon the positive no confidence vote, thus increasing the significance of the cabinet in contrast to the parliament. The role of PPGs, however, remained largely unaffected due to the general party and personnel environment. The new electoral law (also agreed upon at the negotiations) combines 176 direct seats in a majority run-off ballot and 210 list seats from twenty regional lists and a compensation national list. This mixed electoral system created two types of MPs with somewhat different role perceptions (Judge and Ilonszki 1995) but without influencing the institutionalisation of PPGs in the new system.

Aside from this general framework the nature of party formation had a major impact on how PPGs developed. From the perspective of PPGs three features of party formation warrant particular attention. First, in some cases parties were initially formed as movements and upholders of the ideals of direct democracy, a view which was necessarily challenged when leading party bodies had to be formed outside and within parliament. Formalisation was most successful in parties that were able to get rid of their ‘movement wing’ relatively early, which facilitated unification of the PPG. This was the case with the Alliance of Young Democrats (Fidesz) where those who wanted to keep the movement character of the organisation were forced to leave. In contrast, in the Hungarian Democratic Forum (MDF), the leading force of the first coalition, controversies about the movement’s ideals remained a source of conflict well into 1996 and, as we shall

Table 13.1 The political map of the first and second Hungarian parliaments

PPG	2 May 1990	7 April 1994	28 June 1994	January 1997
MDF	165	136	38	19
SzDSz	94	83	70	68
FKGP	44	36	26	25
MSzP	33	33	209	209
Fidesz ^b	22	26	20	21
KDNP	21	23	22	23
Non-affiliated ^a	7	28	1	6
MIÉP	0	12	0	0
FKGP breakaway party ^a	0	9	0	0
MDNP	0	0	0	15
All	386	386	386	386

Notes

a Not a PPG according to the regulations of the Standing Orders,

b The party changed its name from Fidesz to Fidesz-MPP in 1994.

MDF, Magyar Demokrata Forum (Hungarian Democratic Forum).

SzDSz, Szabad Demokraták Szövetsége (Alliance of Free Democrats).

FKGP, Független Kisgazda és Földmunkás Párt (Independent Smallholders' Party).

MSzP, Magyar Szocialista Párt (Hungarian Socialist Party).

Fidesz-MPP, Fiatal Demokraták Szövetsége—Magyar Polgari Párt (Alliance of Young Democrats-Hungarian Civic Party).

KDNP, Keresztény Demokrata Néppárt (Christian Democratic People's Party).

MIÉP, Magyar Igazság és Élet Pártja (Party of Hungarian Justice and Life).

MDNP, Magyar Demokrata Néppárt (Hungarian Democratic People's Party).

see in detail, concluded in two major party splits. Second, the background of new party elites affected PPGs. Since elite groups initiated many new parties and had an elite character it was hard to convince top intellectuals to accept an environment where discipline and clear-cut institutional forms must prevail. These intellectual attitudes contributed to the 'activism' and the activist views of the individual member within parliament and in PPGs as well, particularly in the first legislative term. Paradoxically, the socialists had a comparative advantage in this respect because party bureaucrats were dominant in their ranks as opposed to the newcomer intellectuals in some of the new parties. Third, the amateur background of the new party leaders influenced PPG formation. Although this amateur background within the PPG prevailed until the end of the first legislative term, it gradually began to change in face of the need to pursue politics as a profession.

Very soon, it was accepted by large groups in the new party and parliamentary elites that formalisation, institutionalisation and professionalisation should be encouraged and, in fact, PPGs played a crucial role in bringing this change about. *PPGs turned out to be the engines of learning and pursuing professional politics*: publicity and the democratic parliamentary environment as well as the added weight of concrete policy-making gave them

the opportunity to assume a key position in party organisation and party politics. Moreover, due to weak partisan alignments the external parties could not yet become the forums of party professionalisation. As a result, while it is generally assumed that the extra-parliamentary organisation is stronger than the parliamentary PPG in cases where parties were formed outside parliament (Duverger 1964), in Hungary the importance of PPGs grew considerably in the extra-parliamentary-launched parties immediately after the first democratic election.

For example, in a political agreement by the newly formed PPGs on 28 May 1990, the PPGs suggested the committee structure, decided on the party division of committees and divided the posts of parliamentary officials. Then Act LVI (23 July 1990) about MPs incorporated regulations regarding the role of PPGs and their relationship to committees and individual MPs: financial resources were transferred to PPGs (and not to committees or individual MPs); PPGs were given the right to hire experts up to the amount of the honorarium of twenty MPs and, in addition to that, 25 per cent of the honorarium in government PPGs and 50 per cent of the honorarium in opposition PPGs for each member above twenty. PPGs were also granted office and secretarial resources. Thus the committees were set as ‘inferior’ to PPGs although functionally committees were ‘well equipped’, for example given the right to initiate legislation.

PPG organisation

PPGs, as we have seen, were ensured organisational resources from the beginning. Although their financial support has never been exorbitant, they can hire a small secretarial staff, and pay experts. Written PPG constitutions were drawn up, and regularly amended according to the new demands. These rules, at least formally, described the PPG’s working environment. Working procedures for PPGs were established, and the obligations of PPG members and the methods of how best to pursue legislative work were clarified. PPG meetings became regular weekly events. PPG leaderships were organised: three to seven PPG spokespersons or members of the PPG presidium constitute the PPG leadership.

In some parties, these positions were given different functions from the very beginning, i.e. certain members were assigned responsibility for certain spheres of legislation. In addition to the functional differentiation at the leadership level, all PPG members are divided into working groups, which were set up and given responsibility within the PPG to draft legislation and monitor voting behaviour. The members of the working groups became the contact persons for committees, so in a way they combine party politics and parliamentary policy-making. The importance of the working group system is demonstrated by the socialists’ case: in the new government after the 1994 elections, four of the six working group leaders were given ministerial portfolios in the Socialist Party.

A secretarial-managerial post was introduced in most PPGs, clearly in response to growing managerial demands and workload. The leader of each PPG acquired a strong position as a member of the House Committee, which is responsible for the House agenda and for other important areas related to the general working conditions in the House (for example, the House Committee transfers the legislative motions to committees). In addition, PPG leaders are also entitled to 'speak' on the plenary sessions or comment on speeches before the official agenda begins, which gives them extra publicity.

The success of PPG organisation is reflected in the fact that despite splits and other movements, PPGs tended to vote with discipline in parliament. Nevertheless, especially the first parliamentary term produced an exceptionally high rate of successful motions put forward by individual MPs,² rooted in their activist role perceptions. In the background of general voting discipline, survey findings suggest that MPs do not see themselves as bound by the party in their voting behaviour (Judge and Ilonszki 1995). They also report giving low priority to the opinion of the PPG in making a decision (Table 13.2). The MPs' autonomy and independence are ensured by the constitution, and they are entitled to salary and extra benefits. At the same time, however, their appointments to committees as well as their position in government are decided within the PPG. This explains why voting behaviour and self-perception do not necessarily coincide.

Interviews focusing on policy-making clearly prove the importance of the PPG, particularly the working group within the PPG (Ilonszki 1997 and see also Tables 13.3, 13.4). Members of the same PPG constitute the most important 'consulting body' before making a decision.

PPG organisational matters are most often initiated in the parties, but the new Standing Orders (enacted on 20 September 1994) in the second legislative term proposed some modifications, which also had an impact on PPG activities and

Table 13.2 When you have to make a decision in Parliament, which of the following factors do you consider (1=most important, 8=least important)?*

	1992	1995
The interest of the whole country	2.1	2.2
Own conscience	1.8	2.4
The need for political stability	3.2	3.8
Opinion of constituency	3.6	3.8
Opinion of PPG	3.8	3.9
Government's policy stance	4.9	4.5
Interest of a social stratum	5.3	5.9
Opinion of interest group	6.9	6.9

*Based on two surveys, the first conducted in the first parliament in 1992, the second in the second parliament in 1995. The number of responses was 119 and 132 respectively.

Unfortunately, there were fewer questions in the first survey regarding PPGs; otherwise the surveys and the questions were virtually identical

Table 13.3 Who do you consult with before making a decision (1=most often, 5=most rarely)?

	1992	1995
Members of own PPG	2.3	2.3
Leader of own PPG	3.6	3.7
Members of (other) government PPGs	3.9	3.7
Members of (other) opposition PPGs	4.0	4.1
Government representatives	3.7	4.0
Representatives of interest groups	3.7	3.5
Experts of own party	3.0	2.9
Independent experts	3.4	3.3

Source: see Table 13.2.

Table 13.4 How important is the PPG meeting in your parliamentary activity (percentage of respondents, 1995)?

	All	Direct MPs	List MPs	Government MPs	Opposition MPs
Very important	22	12	31	16	50
Important	68	74	62	75	36
Not important	10	12	8	9	14
No response	—	2	—	1	—

Source: see Table 13.2.

organisation. The Standing Orders first of all aimed to improve the efficiency of parliament and the stability of PPGs. As a result, the importance of the committees began to grow in comparison to individual MPs. Nevertheless, due to the distribution of parliamentary resources, which remained unchanged, i.e. stayed with the PPGs, and with the help of the working group system, the role of PPGs has not decreased at all in comparison to parliamentary committees, while PPGs have become stronger in relation to the individual members. In harmony with the intention to increase stability, the membership requirement for PPGs was changed from ten to fifteen MPs to inhibit potential splits. An MP who leaves the PPG or is expelled from it can join another parliamentary party only after spending six months on the ‘independent’ benches. In parallel with this, party leaderships also ensure that MPs do not leave the party and particularly the parliamentary benches: before the second democratic elections the candidates had to sign various (non-public) agreements concerning the acceptance of party discipline.

The level of PPG institutionalisation is demonstrated by the high percentage of attendance at PPG meetings (absences are monitored): close to 100 per cent of the members report that they often or very often attend the meetings. Some internal weaknesses are obvious, however, since the importance of PPG

Table 13.5 How active are you at PPG meeting (percentage of respondents, 1995)

	<i>All</i>	<i>Direct MPs</i>	<i>List MPs</i>	<i>Government MPs</i>	<i>Opposition MPs</i>
Very active	28	18	37	22	64
Not very active	55	62	48	59	32
Not at all active	16	20	12	19	4

Source: see Table 13.2.

meetings and, more importantly, the activity of parliamentarians at PPGs meetings are not always reported favourably (Table 13.5). PPG leaders and working group leaders dominate the scene while backbenchers feel underprivileged. This has been the case particularly in the second cycle in large PPGs where government pressures and a diversity of interests placed some PPG groups in a peripheral position.

The paradoxes of stability

Hungary is exceptional in the group of new democracies in that after both the first and the second democratic elections (1990 and 1994 respectively) the same six parties were elected into the parliament, and then six PPGs were formed. As Table 13.1 demonstrates, in addition to the two large PPGs (Hungarian Democratic Forum, MDF, and Alliance of Free Democrats, SZDSZ) four smaller party groups (Independent Smallholders' Party, FKGP; Christian Democratic People's Party, KDNP; the Socialist MSZP; and the Young Democrats, Fidesz) were established in 1990. Eventually the Forum, the Christian Democrats and the Smallholders formed a coalition government. After the second democratic elections in May 1994, the Socialists received an absolute majority of seats and its PPG dominates the parliamentary arena. The second largest party and the junior member of the coalition, the Free Democrats, is somewhat smaller in size than in the first democratic parliament.

The relatively stable and consolidated character of the party and parliamentary scene, at least in comparison to other new democracies, needs some modification, however, in view of the changes during the two legislative terms. Table 13.1 reveals that by the end of the first term substantial changes had occurred. Two breakaway parties were established, the Party of Hungarian Justice and Life (MIÉP), rooted in the Forum, and the new Smallholders, although the latter could not form a PPG because it had only nine members. In the second legislative term, after a party split in 1996, the ex-government Forum PPG was again split into two, with the establishment of the Hungarian Democratic People's Party (MDNP). Then, during 1997 the Christian Democratic PPG disintegrated amidst bitter fights between the two leadership

groups. The opposition party PPGs suffer equally from the lack of clout because the two governing PPGs together can pursue any decisions they wish with their 72 per cent majority. These changes might illustrate the paradox which prevailed between the stability of the two post-electoral parliamentary frameworks and the instabilities in between elections.

Another paradox between the stability of the electoral arena and the intra-parliamentary changes resides in the individual movement of MPs, since instabilities and PPG changes did not result from party splits alone. Due to the nature of the new elites (who mainly regarded themselves as 'independent intellectuals') and a political tradition which thought highly of the individual MP anyway, members sometimes looked for a new place outside the party organisational framework. A total of fifty-two MPs had changed their seats in the House by the end of the first legislative term (Szarvas 1995). As Table 13.1 shows, after leaving the PPG, many became non-affiliated representatives. It is possible that they wanted to distance themselves from the parties, who were 'compromised' by power. In addition, several new parties emerged in the House because MPs formed or joined new parties. By the end of the first cycle there were seventeen parties in the House, only seven of which had a PPG, due to the membership requirement. We must emphasise, however, that these changes mainly occurred in the last period of the term when, facing the upcoming elections, many hoped that a party change or independence would bring electoral success.³ In the second cycle, except for the splits, individual moves have been much less common, which clearly illustrates that the MPs do not believe in individual political strategies.

Just to add to the paradoxes, one must note that although PPGs played a crucial role in party and policy formation they showed a poor record in some concrete and major events. For example, PPGs and even PPG leaderships were initially left out of major decisions. When, for instance, the leaders of the Forum and the Free Democrats signed the agreement about the introduction of the constructive confidence vote, the PPG and party executive committee were not consulted at all. The decision was based purely on the personal agreement of certain party leaders. Furthermore, the coalition talks between the Forum, the Christian Democrats and the Smallholders in 1990 did not involve the PPGs, a fact that later proved to be a source of conflict within and between PPGs, and between PPGs and EPOs. Things only improved in 1994 because the second coalition formation was preceded by PPG participation.

The above analysis explains why the national party scene was not challenged from the electoral but from the parliamentary arena, which further strengthens our argument that PPGs have been the major terrain of doing and learning politics. There were two cases both in the first and the second legislative term which concluded in a partial or total disintegration of a PPG and then the party (the Forum and the Smallholders, then the Forum and the Christian Democrats).

In the Hungarian Democratic Forum a radical right, a moderate national conservative, and a populist-national trend were combined. The Prime Minister and his circle, as well as the vast majority of the PPG leadership, belonged to the

moderate conservative group, while within the broader PPG the moderates and national populists represented a majority. The radicals always referred to the EPO, including elected party bodies. After an extended crisis in 1993, four right-wing radicals were expelled first from the PPG, and then from the party as well. Eventually, more than twenty MPs left the PPG and twelve of them established a new PPG and party, the Party of Hungarian Justice and Life (MIÉP), based on a radical right programme. The expulsion of the right-wingers, however, did not eliminate all the divisions, which again grew in significance when, after the death of the Prime Minister and Forum president, József Antall, in December 1993 a new leader had to be elected. While his successor was chosen from the populist-nationalist wing, the moderates (Punnett and Ilonszki 1995) retained the PPG leadership. The fight between the populists in the EPO and the more established group in the PPG continued well into the second cycle. In February 1996, after his failure in the contest for the post of party president, the PPG leader with some followers from the 'established' group formed a new PPG, and then a new party, the Hungarian Democratic People's Party (MDNP). Thus, the Forum, the largest party of the transition and the leading force in the first governing coalition turned into one of the relatively small opposition PPGs. Aside from the leadership conflict, these changes can be explained from the party's movement-like beginning, which gradually developed into a PPG-EPO conflict. Different characteristics of the PPG and the EPO can be demonstrated by the fact that the core of the PPG always tended to be more settled while the EPO was more radical. It was not surprising that in the PPG-based breakaway people's party one can find the high-ranking officials of the previous government—in contrast to the rank-and-file background of the new Forum's leadership.

In another case, in the Independent Smallholders' Party, the tension between the PPG and the extra-parliamentary party eventually resulted in the disintegration and then the remaking of the party. A majority of the PPG members undertook to preserve the party's historical continuity⁴ and moderate centre position, while the party leader (a newcomer) decided to turn the party towards the radical right, and opposed the party's participation in the governing coalition. First he expelled his rivals from the party leadership with the help of the EPO and then left the PPG with some of the MPs. The party itself was thus 'stolen' from the majority Smallholder's PPG, who were formally expelled from the party and carried out several aborted attempts to establish a new-old party for the PPG.

The disintegration of the Christian Democratic PPG by the autumn of 1997 mirrored some of the problems mentioned above, such as leadership conflicts and the tensions between the more radical external party and the more established PPG. Upcoming elections intensified the conflicts because the two groups could not agree on potential partners: while the radicals sought to establish close links with the right-wing Smallholders, the moderates wanted to form a partnership with the parties on the centre right, either the Forum or the Young Democrats. Conflicts peaked when the Christian Democratic Party

executive expelled several members of the PPG from the party, and in return the PPG leadership expelled several members of the party from the PPG. Disintegration had become total and clearly threatened electoral failure at the 1998 national elections.

The Forum, the Smallholders and the Christian Democratic cases examined above reveal much more than PPG instabilities. In the Forum, the political and policy differences were clearly reflected among PPG members, and different political tendencies necessarily led to splits. In the Smallholders, the disintegration was largely due to personal political ambitions. Quite specifically, in the last phase of the first parliamentary cycle the party did not have a proper PPG, while the Smallholder PPG did not have a party behind them. In the Christian Democrats, controversial electoral considerations strengthened political and personal conflicts because the party could not identify its proper political space on the political spectrum. On the whole, given the conditions of stability and instability, PPGs were important from the perspective of the entire party formation: they *contributed to party institutionalisation; established standards of professional party politics; helped the clarification of party policies in parliament; and became the training ground for new party politicians who could not learn political skills before.*

PPGs and EPOs

The importance of the relationship between PPGs and EPOs is obvious in Hungary. Although important events and party splits were triggered at the PPG level, references were made to EPO views and interests in all the cases that concluded in party splits or disintegration. PPG regulations or party manifestos are not always clear-cut about the connections, and the Hungarian parties and PPGs follow diverse practices, with PPG dominance remaining the dominant feature.

In a Hungarian context, the separation between PPGs and EPOs can be analysed from three perspectives: (a) structurally: how their separation or interrelatedness are institutionalised; (b) in terms of personnel: who are the actors in the two types of bodies; and (c) from a policy perspective: how the two bodies participate in the policy-making process.

Structural connections

There are few written rules about the structural dimension. PPGs have autonomy in nominating their leaders and deciding on their agenda, but occasionally party manifestos rule that the PPG must discuss issues at the request of EPO party authorities. PPG leaderships, as we have seen, are functionally divided: along the lines of *PPG management* on the one hand and *policy management* (working groups) on the other. Party executive committees are similarly complex bodies, and although they are selected by party congresses they are dominated by PPGs.

Functional separation within party executive committees are not as obvious as within PPGs, and when they are, such divisions follow from the PPG position of the members of the party executives.

At the end of 1997, the overlap between the two bodies is revealing: in the fifteen-member Socialist executive and the eleven-member Free Democrat executive committees (the two parties currently governing) all the members are MPs with one exception. On the opposition side, the Smallholders' seven-member executive committee includes only one non-MP, the Young Democrat ten-member executive committee two non-MPs, the Forum eighteen-member executive committee five non-MPs, and the People's Party seven-member executive committee three non-MPs. The mere size of the executive committee is not directly related to the parliamentary power of the party, it rather reflects the organisational strength of the party among the electorate: the Socialists and the Forum can claim the largest party membership figures. The number of non-MPs in the party executive committee is the highest in the Forum, which tends to refer to the electorate most often anyway, and thus hopes to regain its political influence and power position it had during the democratic transition process and in the first legislature.

Personnel

While there is an obvious overlap between the PPGs and the party executive committees the non-parliamentary members of the executive committees often embody special (like corporate or regional) interests. Nevertheless, several leaders are 'colourless', and one or two dominant figures embody the party for the wider public. Since PPG splits were often rooted in personal conflicts, and moreover since in the majority of these cases, due to the hierarchical organisation of the parties, a few leaders dominated party developments, it is essential to examine the most important leadership positions and their particular connections.

Leading party positions are spread differently in the Hungarian parties. In two parties the leader of the PPG and the party president are identical: the Smallholders and the People's Party follow this practice, while in the Socialists, Forum and Young Democrats the PPG leader is simply a member of the party executive committee. The Christian Democrats provided a unique case before their disintegration because the PPG leader was not present in the party executive at all, although PPG rules required him to 'keep contact and report regularly' to the committee. Another important party position in the external party is the leader of the national party council. In the Socialists and Free Democrats a member of the PPG occupies this position, and while a non-member does in the Young Democrats and Forum, it is not considered a leadership position in the Smallholders' and the People's Party at all.

The case of the Free Democrats deserves particular attention. The two posts were united for a long time—until April 1997, when the party and PPG leader resigned from both of his posts and the two posts were separated. This happened

in the face of the party's decreasing popularity but also had a symbolic meaning: in contrast to the ideals that were left behind by the democratic opposition, a party needs a party leader (and obviously a list leader) who is willing to undertake government obligations. The resigning leader, although his party participates in the coalition government, did not want to have a government position. With this decision a long tradition of uncertainty with respect to leadership positions ceased to exist in the party. For example, the first Free Democrat party president, a leading figure of the democratic opposition, did not run at the first democratic parliamentary elections, and thus was not a member of the PPG at all; later, for some time the two positions were separated, and the actual position of the two contenders influenced where real power lies within the party—in PPG leadership or in party presidency; in fact the post that became the stronger was the one occupied by the 'old' opposition party figure and not by a newcomer (Punnett and Ilonszki 1995). Understanding the importance of governance, the decreasing significance of the leaders' political record in the communist period, as well as functional challenges all explain the current transformation.

Uniting the two posts necessarily gives extra authority to the PPG party leader. In the newly formed break-away People's Party this is a must; in the Smallholders the situation follows from the personality of the party leader. In contrast, the division between PPG leader and party president reflects the controversies regarding persons and policies between the extra-parliamentary and intra-parliamentary party in the MDF, where the controversy between the two party branches, as we have seen, concluded in two splits. Party leader-PPG leader separation represented a serious conflict between the EPO and the PPG in the Christian Democrats, where the PPG leader was not a member of the party executive at all. With political and policy differences and then diverse coalition orientations in the background, the PPG leader even launched a legal suit against the party president when he was re-elected in December 1996, on the grounds that the party congress was convened unconstitutionally. PPG and party disintegration followed in 1997. The case clearly demonstrates how deep and detrimental to party unity these conflicts can become.

The separation of the two posts does not necessarily lead to conflicts between PPGs and EPOs, however: while the posts are divided in the turbulent Forum and Christian Democratic cases, they are also divided in the Young Democrats and the Socialists without a hint of conflict. Lack of unity causes conflicts only under special circumstances, i.e. when obvious political and policy differences prevail and the contending persons can hope for support neither in their own party nor in other parties. Nevertheless, the unification of the posts contributes to unproblematic PPG-EPO connections and gives more authority to the party president.

Policies

Following from the institutional and personnel framework we can argue that policies rest with the PPGs. Party congresses are not the real forums for policy

discussions. Low membership figures and the vague representative connection between the electorate and the 'professional' parties strengthen the position of PPGs in this respect, as opposed to EPOs.

The relatively short experience of democracy shows that government positions fundamentally influence the policy environment for the PPG. In Hungary, MPs can fill ministerial positions, and in a majority of cases the members of cabinet are drawn from the PPGs. It seems that government somewhat diminishes the overall position of the PPG, however, because then the power centre and the centre for decision-making is transferred to the strong prime minister-party leader. This was the case in both parliamentary terms. The prime minister-party leader can pull the strings in the EPO hierarchy, through the ministers in the PPG, and he has extra-party authority as the leader of the country in the Prime Minister's office. Paradoxically, the PPG might feel *underprivileged when in power*. This was the case in the first legislative term when a group in the Smallholders rebelled and then split on the grounds that the Prime Minister and the largest coalition partner did not let Smallholders' policies and political views appear in government programmes. Even in the Forum, the actual leader of the coalition, backbenchers complained that they could not have an impact on policy-making. Currently, in the second cycle, the picture is no less complicated, since the leader of the coalition, the Socialist PPG, is very large and divided on many lines. Moreover, the Prime Minister favours his closest advisers from the party hierarchy. On some important issues such as the draft of the new constitution the Prime Minister and some influential members of the cabinet voted against the Socialist PPG, an unprecedented phenomenon in parliamentary democracies.

As far as the strength of PPGs over EPOs is concerned, the Hungarian parties seem to belong to the following categories. On the opposition side in the Young Democrats, the People's Party and the Smallholders, the PPG undoubtedly dominates the EPO because the parliamentary party organisation and the parliamentary politicians virtually overwhelm the entire party. In the Forum and, until its recent collapse, in the Christian Democrats, the EPO and the party president (although in parliament) personally seek to gain power over the PPG. The outcome is dubious, particularly in the medium term, i.e. in the context of the third democratic elections in 1998, because otherwise splits and party uncertainties further undermine weak alignments. In the two governing parties, occasional tug of wars occurs between the PPGs and EPOs. In the Socialists, the PPG lives under strong governmental pressure. The strong prime minister-party president (also a member of the parliamentary party group) and other current or ex-government members have a major impact on the Socialist PPG and the party-as-a-whole. For example, in the fifteen-member party executive committee eight persons hold or have held ministerial positions.

Two governing parties: failure and success

The Forum, the leader of the first democratic coalition, suffered several splits while the otherwise divided Socialist PPG, the leader of the second coalition, shows a high level of stability. This difference makes us consider the two cases more deeply. The size of the Socialist PPG alone (209, i.e. 54 per cent from the 386 seats) suggests diversity of interests at first glance. Besides trade union leaders we can find professionals with liberal economic and social views, representatives of powerful new business interests and regional interests in the group. Why does the Socialist PPG stay intact, while other PPGs and parties eventually face splits with seemingly less significant political differences? There are at least four broad areas in which the Socialist PPG (and party) and the Forum PPG (and party) showed considerable differences: *party legacies, leadership issues, the nature of their political space, and organisational matters.*

The Socialist Party, as a post-communist party, still has the tradition of party discipline among its members. Although the membership of the party has undergone substantial changes, at the elite level and at the regional level continuity prevails. This contributes to party discipline. In contrast, the Forum's movement-like beginning underpins organisational flexibility and lack of discipline.

Regarding leadership, the parties are also different. Among the Socialists, no political actor has been able to challenge the authority of the party president. He has been in leading party positions for decades, possesses considerable political skills and is a typical representative of a generation which was able to survive, occasionally bring about change, and under the pressure of events even managed to adapt to change. This type of leadership authority has never existed in the Forum where leadership debates (elections and conflicts on elections) were kept wide open, again in contrast to the Socialists, who were able to solve possible leadership problems behind closed doors.

Party split and PPG split seem more plausible when the breakaway groups cherish the hope that they can easily find their place in the political arena, particularly when they see the political space on their side empty. Some politicians in the centre-right Forum in case of both splits (1993, 1996) assumed that the political space on the right was not yet filled in Hungary: the large block on the left and centre-left has no equivalent on the right. This might explain why the Forum went through two splits. In contrast, no potential breakaway group originating in the Socialist PPG can conceive of any opportunity to find a place on the left, which is crowded with the huge Socialist Party.

Last but not least, the internal logic of the two parties has been entirely different with respect to splits. The trends within the Forum represent political tendencies, different and distinct views on political aims, even on ideologies. Paradoxically, the groups within the Socialist ranks are tied to interests (either organised or not), and as such they cannot 'behave' politically, they would not launch a new party or initiate a party split, but would rather stay in the old party group and continue their interest-representation activity there.

Considering the past histories of PPGs and party splits, it seems possible to draw some conclusions regarding their interrelatedness. PPG unity was challenged on three *grounds:personal* (per) (when personal conflicts emerged in the leadership), *political* (pol) (when political views and programmes were the major source of controversy) and *institutional* (ins) (when the conflicts appeared in the form of institutional challenge as well, for example between PPG and EPO). In Figure 13.1 the relative importance of these dimensions is marked by the size of the letters. The years 1992 and early 1996 were chosen for the illustration: the middle years of the two parliamentary terms and also the years before the actual split. In the upper half of the figure, we can find the parties with relatively highly unified PPGs.

Broadly speaking, in the first legislative term three PPGs showed stability: the Socialists, the Christian Democrats and the Young Democrats. The Free Democrats struggled with personal conflicts, the Forum mainly with political and institutional conflicts, while the Smallholders had a bad record in all three fields. As a result, both the Forum and the Smallholders split. In the second legislative term, the Smallholders, the Young Democrats, the Free Democrats and even the Socialists were stable, while the Christian Democrats and the Forum suffered from conflicts in the three areas. Eventually, both PPGs split. It seems that when conflicts culminate in all areas, they will be detrimental to the fate of PPGs and parties.

Conclusions

This chapter attempted to follow the processes of PPG institutionalisation in the Hungarian parliament while arguing that in this formative period PPGs have been obviously tied to the wider political environment.

Level of PPG unity	1992	1996
High	MSzP KDNP Fidesz SzDSz (PER, pol, ins) MDF (per, POL, INS)*	FKGP Fidesz–NPP SzDSz MSzP (POL) KDNP (PER, POL, INS)*
Low	FKGP (PER, POL, INS)*	MDF (PER, POL, INS)*

* Party actually split

Figure 13.1 Connection between the unified nature of the PPG and party split potential (capital letters indicate high split potential).

We have found that PPGs institutionalised quickly; they developed to become parliamentary party complexes after the first, founding election. The institutionalisation trends show the signs of ‘parliamentary party complex’ (Heidar and Koole, Figure 1.1). This is so despite the short period of time and despite occasional splits and individual moves in the PPGs, particularly in the first legislative term. The explanation lies in the fact that they have received organisational resources from the beginning, which although not exorbitant certainly exceed those provided to committees or individual MPs. Also, discipline prevailed from the beginning. They were already well-structured, well-organised and highly disciplined working units in the first parliamentary term. This was partly a genuine process, urged by functional needs, partly a result of conscious decisions. Nevertheless, as the major fields of professional party politics, PPGs reveal the weaknesses of the new party system, particularly weak party linkages and lack of democratic policy-making, especially at the leadership level.

The PPGs, on their way to becoming ‘perfect’ parliamentary party complexes became more and more distinct from the external party organisation. As we have seen, this largely resulted from the characteristics of the transition process when parties were formed from above and party elites soon became parliamentary elites and were forced to become professionals at that level, that is in PPGs. Thus, divisions between the PPGs and the EPOs became marked. On the other hand the division between the PPGs and the government are not so marked. Thus, PPGs are not really integrated into the party-as-a-whole. With marked divisions between the PPGs and the EPOs and with less marked divisions between the PPGs and the government they fall into the government-oriented group. This category contains diverse cases, however. In the first parliamentary term, all the three coalition PPGs were dominated by the government, and this partly explains the turbulent coalition history of that period: opponents within the Forum, the largest coalition party, forced a split, while the second member of the coalition, the Smallholders’ PPG weakened considerably when the party leader left the PPG and the coalition on the grounds that the prime minister and the government did not let them have a say in government policies. In the second legislative term, the two coalition parties, the Socialists and the Free Democrats responded differently to weak government-PPG connections: the large Socialist PPG is clearly dominated by its government while the Free Democrat PPG, due to its more unified nature and also its more straightforward policy preferences, certainly has a larger impact on government decisions. In addition to the diversity of the Socialist PPG, the party’s traditional discipline and PPG size explain why the PPG is weak in its position.

In broader terms, we have found that the evolving strength of PPGs largely depends on (a) the *functions* that they were able to acquire (or reclaim) from other actors; (b) on their internal, *organisational* potential; and (c) on their *government position*. Functionally, they have been important from the start and their position remained unchallenged by the EPOs; organisationally, they underwent substantial changes and responded to external demands; as we have

seen, however, the government position does not necessarily strengthen the PPG as a whole, but rather the position of some of its members (those in ministerial or personal advisory positions closer to the Prime Minister).

Despite the successful institutionalisation of PPGs, we could still witness major changes that partly emerged from and partly affected the working of parliamentary party groups in 1996–97. Both a party split (the breakaway People's Party from the Forum) and a party disintegration (Christian Democrats) were the result of conflicts between the PPG leadership (the PPG leader being the major actor on one side) and the party leadership (the party leader being the major actor on the other side). Concrete events and the overall analysis equally prove that PPGs continue to deserve special attention because most current political developments in Hungary are reflected in or are actually taking place at the parliamentary party group level.

Notes

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- 1 The Hungarian equivalent of 'parliamentary party group' is *frakció*, a word regularly used in the pre-communist parliamentary framework.
- 2 Forty-two per cent of all proposals were introduced by MPs, and their success rate was 21 per cent. Committees put forward only about 13 per cent of all proposals.
- 3 This proved wrong, however, because of those who had changed their seats only seven achieved success at the 1994 elections.
- 4 A strong FGKP existed between the two World Wars, and after the war the FKGP won the first elections before the communist takeover.

14 Second-rate parties?

Towards a better understanding of the European Parliament's party groups

Tapio Raunio

The European Parliament (EP) is seen as the institution providing that crucial link between the citizens and the decision-making apparatus of the European Union (EU). As the only directly elected EU institution, the Parliament is indeed directly accountable to all EU citizens.

The EP and its transnational political groups operate in a very different institutional environment from the parliamentary parties in national legislatures analysed in this volume. The biggest difference is the lack of a European government accountable to the Parliament. The Maastricht Treaty (1992) strengthened the EP's role in the appointment of the Commission by making the latter subject to a vote of approval in the EP. The Amsterdam Treaty (1997) further consolidated the EP's role by making the European Council's candidate for Commission President subject to a similar vote, thus making legally binding the procedure used in 1994 when Jacques Santer made his nomination conditional on the opinion of the Parliament. The EP can also force the whole Commission—but not a single commissioner—to resign through a vote of no confidence. However, the European Council chooses the President and the members of the Commission. Thus the composition of the Commission is not based on the outcome of the Euro-elections.

The Parliament has very limited means to control the two most powerful EU institutions, the European Council and the Council of Ministers. The Parliament has the right merely to hear statements from the Council. Importantly, changes to the Union's 'constitution', the founding treaties, do not require ratification by the EP, nor is the Parliament represented at the Intergovernmental Conferences (IGC) convened for the purpose of changing the treaties. Control over the Council of Ministers is limited to the EP's legislative powers. While the Parliament participates in drafting EU legislation through the assent, consultation, co-operation, and co-decision procedures, its legislative influence is still far from the level enjoyed by EU member state parliaments. Regarding the annual budget of the Union, the Parliament has the final say on non-compulsory expenditure and on the whole budget, but the Council decides on compulsory expenditure, including funding for agriculture, which makes up almost half of the Union's annual expenses. However, various inter-institutional agreements have increased co-operation between various EU institutions, and

have thus given the Parliament added weight in the agenda-setting and legislative bargaining process of the Union.¹

Although members of the European Parliament (MEPs) are elected from individual member states, the Parliament has based its internal organisation on the principle of trans/supranationalism since its very beginning. The inter-institutional dynamics of the EU places demands on both the Parliament as a whole and its transnational party groups. The functional efficiency of party groups is significant in two respects: it enables the Parliament to perform its role in the EU's inter-institutional decision-making system, and it enhances the credibility and influence of the Parliament and its political groups. But are EP party groups fragile alliances prone to internal dissent? Are comparisons with PPGs in national legislatures meaningful? Should EP party groups be treated as second-rate PPGs?

The purpose of this chapter is to analyse the development, internal organisation, cohesion and operational context of the EP party groups. The chapter is organised as follows. In the next section the emergence of party groups is explained. Then the formal status and powers of political groups are analysed. The following section deals with the internal organisation of the groups. The roles of group leadership, national parties, group meetings, committee-based division of labour and group discipline are explored. The importance of consensus-building and national party delegations is emphasised. After that the cohesion of the groups is examined. Then coalition behaviour is investigated, with particular emphasis on legislative majority requirements followed by a brief analysis of the relationship between EP party groups and the Europarties. The chapter ends with a discussion on the future problems and challenges facing the party groups in the European Parliament.

Setting national interests into a European context

The first meeting of the Common Assembly of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) took place in Strasbourg in September 1952. Three months later, in January, members agreed that the composition of the Assembly's committees should reflect political tendencies as well as the balance between nationalities. Party groups were organised by March, and were officially recognised in the standing orders of the Assembly in June 1953. At the same time the groups were allotted a financial allowance from the Assembly's budget to cover their administrative expenses.

The members took the decision to form transnational groups themselves. While this choice may in hindsight seem self-evident to us, as the oldest party groups have existed now for almost half a century, the decision to form transnational party groups was by no means the only organisational alternative. The members saw the establishment of co-operation based on ideological groups instead of on nationality as being necessary in order to avoid the dominance of national viewpoints.²

Accordingly, the work of the Assembly was to be influenced by the existence of ideological groupings, which were to discuss the general problems of European integration to a much greater extent than the practical arrangements for implementing the ECSC Treaty or the interests of a particular country. Naturally, national interests were not forgotten; but the Members were concerned to set them in an overall context.

(Gerbet 1992:13)

The nominated members originally sat in alphabetical order, but when the Parliamentary Assembly replaced the ECSC Common Assembly in 1958, the seating order was rearranged so that members sat with their own party groups. The three groups formed back in 1953—Christian Democrats, Liberals, and Socialists—are still present in the current Parliament and have been joined by other party groups. Table 14.1 on the following page shows the distribution of seats between party groups in the directly elected Parliament of 1979–1997.

The picture that emerges contains elements of both continuity and change. The consolidation of the ‘core’ groups in the political centre and the number of groups represent continuity; change by the emergence and disappearance of smaller groups. Throughout the years the political groups—in particular the Party of European Socialists (PES) and the European People’s Party (EPP)—have developed their internal organisations and consolidated their positions inside the Parliament. Yet these groups differ from their counterparts in national parliaments in terms of their composition, internal division of labour, and their role in the decision-making system.³

Party groups and the rationalisation of parliamentary work

Political groups form the backbone of the EP’s internal organisation. Their existence is officially recognised in Rule 29 of the Parliament’s rules of procedure:

- 1 Members may form themselves into groups according to their political affinities.
- 2 The minimum number of Members required to form a political group shall be twenty-nine if they come from one Member State, twenty-three if they come from two Member States, eighteen if they come from three Member States and fourteen if they come from four or more Member States.⁴
- 3 A Member may not belong to more than one group.
- 4 The President shall be notified in a statement when a political group is set up. This statement shall specify the name of the group, its members and its bureau.
- 5 The statement shall be published in the Official Journal of the European Communities.

Table 14.1 Party groups in the 1979–1997 European Parliament

	1979	1981	1984	1987	1989	1993	1994	1995	1997
PES	113	123	130	165	180	198	198	221	214
EPP	107	117	110	115	121	162	157	173	181
ELDR	40	39	31	44	49	46	43	52	41
EDG	64	63	50	66	34				
EDA	22	22	29	29	20	20	26	26	
COM	44	48	41	48					
CDI	11	11							
RB			20	20	13	16			
ER			16	16	17	14			
V					30	28	23	25	28
EUL					28				
LU					14	13			
GUE–NGL							28	31	33
EN							19	19	
FE							27	29	
ERA							19	19	20
UPE									55
NA	9	11	7	15	12	21	27	31	54
Total	410	434	434	518	518	518	567	626	626

Party group abbreviations:

PES, Party of European Socialists.

EPP, European People's Party.

ELDR, European Liberal, Democrat and Reform Party.

EDG, European Democratic Group.

EDA, European Democratic Alliance.

COM, Communist and Allies Group.

CDI, Technical Group of Co-ordination and Defence of Independent MEPs.

RB, Rainbow Group.

ER, European Right.

V, The Green Group.

EUL, European United Left.

LU, Left Unity Group.

GUE–NGL, Confederal Group of the European United Left (since 1995 the group has had the sub-group Nordic Green Left added to it).

EN, Europe of Nations.

ERA, European Radical Alliance.

FE, Forza Europa.

UPE, Union for Europe.

NA, Non-attached.

Please note that the names of the groups have changed over the years.

Dates: 1979, after the European elections (EE).

1981, following the first EP elections in Greece on 18 October 1981.

1984, after the second EE.

1987, situation on 31 December 1987. First European elections in Spain were on 10 June 1987, and in Portugal on 19 July 1987.

1989, after the third EE.

1993, situation in January 1993 following the mergers between EPP and the EDG in May 1992 and between the EUL and PES in January 1993.

1994, after the fourth EE.

1995, situation in January 1995 after the latest EU enlargement.

1997, situation in March 1997.

Political groups enjoy considerable material and political rights. They receive financial allocations from the Parliament's internal budget. Direct funding of the party groups accounts for over 10 per cent of the EP's budget. The sum each group receives is dependent on the number of members in the group. The funds provided by the Parliament may not be used for European election campaigns.

Political groups have their own staffs, the size of which has grown substantially since the first direct elections of 1979. This political group staff must be differentiated from both the Parliament's own officials and from the MEPs' personal assistants. In 1997 the Parliament was budgeted a total of 4,109 posts, including party group staff. The members are given money from the Parliament's budget to hire personal assistants. While there is substantial variation in the use of assistants, the average MEP normally has a personal assistant both in Brussels and/or Strasbourg and in the constituency.

The Parliament has precise rules concerning the hiring of staff. The total number of employees a group is entitled to depends on the size of the group and on the number of languages used in the group. The total number of posts per party group may not exceed the number of members within that group. The input and workload of the party group staff should not be under-estimated. The staff performs a whole variety of functions inside the groups. One particularly important duty is to follow proceedings in the committees. The larger party groups are able to have one or even two persons following the work of each committee, whereas an official in a smaller party group may be forced to follow the work of three or four committees. Officials are involved in preparing debates within the group meetings, and draft studies and reports for the group. By assisting the individual MEPs and the party groups, the officials greatly increase the functional capacity of the entire Parliament.⁵

Turning from material benefits to procedural rights, the party groups have over the years strengthened their position at the expense of individual MEPs. According to the rules of procedure, appointments to committees (Rule 137) and intra-parliamentary leadership positions (Rule 13) and the allocation of speaking time (Rule 106) are based on the rule of proportionality between the groups. Certain rights, some of which were previously available to individual members, are now reserved for party groups (or a committee, or twenty-nine MEPs). These procedural rights include, for example, the right to submit an oral question to the Council or the Commission (Rule 40) and the possibility of requesting a debate to be held on a topical and urgent subject of major importance (Rule 47).⁶

The Conference of Presidents, which replaced the enlarged Bureau in 1993, is the body responsible for organising the Parliament's work. Its composition and decision rule is regulated in Rule 23 of the rules of procedure.

- 1 The Conference of Presidents shall consist of the President of Parliament and the chairmen of the political groups. The chairman of a political group may arrange to be represented by a member of his group.

- 2 The non-attached Members shall delegate two of their number to attend meetings of the Conference of Presidents, without having the right to vote.
- 3 The Conference of Presidents shall endeavour to reach a consensus on matters referred to it. Where a consensus cannot be reached, the matter shall be put to a vote subject to a weighting based on the number of Members in each political group.

The main duties of the Conference of Presidents are laid down in Rule 24:

- (a) It shall take decisions on the organisation of Parliament's work and matters relating to legislative planning.
- (b) It is the authority responsible for matters relating to relations with the other institutions and bodies of the European Union and with the national parliaments of Member States.
- (c) The Conference is responsible for matters relating to relations with non-member countries and with non-Union institutions and organisations.
- (d) It shall draw up the draft agenda of Parliament's part-sessions.
- (e) The Conference of Presidents is responsible for the composition and competence of committees and temporary committees of inquiry and of joint parliamentary committees, standing delegations and *ad hoc* delegations.
- (f) It shall decide how seats in the Chamber are to be allocated.
- (g) The Conference is responsible for authorising the drawing up of own-initiative reports.
- (h) It shall submit proposals to the Bureau concerning administrative and budgetary matters relating to the political groups.

The composition of, and decisional rule used in, the Conference and the powers given to it consolidate the strong position of party groups in the chamber. The present ascendancy of the party groups is the result of gradual and piecemeal, but consistent changes introduced as the EP's formal powers have been increased in the EU decision-making system. The dominant role of party groups inside the Parliament has been motivated by the need to rationalise parliamentary work in a legislature bringing together 626 representatives from fifteen member states. Thus 'the political groups of the EP have become the institutional cement pasting together the different units of the Parliament' (Williams 1995:395).

Co-operation and cue-taking: life inside the groups

The internal organisation of EP party groups resembles the structure of PPGs in national legislatures. The main difference is the existence of national party delegations, 'parties within parties'. Figure 14.1 shows the basic internal structure of an EP party group.

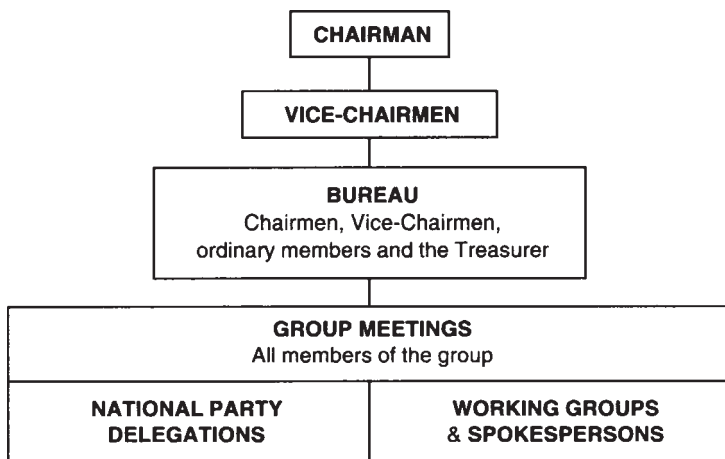


Figure 14.1 The internal structure of a European parliamentary party group.

The group elects the chairman and the length of tenure has tended to vary both between and within groups. The chairman is the figurehead of the group and represents the group in the Conference of Presidents. In May 1997 the UPE and the Greens used two chairmen, while other groups had one chairman. The number of vice-chairmen varies between the groups, with the smaller groups having a proportionately higher share than the larger groups. The most important intra-group body is the Bureau, which is composed of the chairman, vice-chairmen, ordinary members and the treasurer. The Bureau is largely responsible for dealing with issues relating to the group's internal organisation and administration, but it also takes decisions on policy matters. Seats in the Bureau are distributed between the group's national party delegations on the basis of the respective sizes of the delegations. In practice the leaders of the national party contingents automatically become members of the Bureau. In the case of larger national party delegations, the leader of the delegation is the chairman or one of the vice-chairmen of the party group, with the party delegation also allotted additional seats in the Bureau (Westlake 1994a: 140).

Table 14.2 shows the share of MEPs belonging to the group leadership for each party group (May 1997). There is considerable variation between the groups. The difference between the two large groups, the PES and the EPP, is most notable. Whereas only 15.4 per cent of the Socialist MEPs were members of the group Bureau, the EPP Bureau operates with a much wider membership, comprising 34.3 per cent of the group's MEPs. In the ELDR group the Bureau included almost half, 48.8 per cent, of the group members. Of all MEPs, 26.8 per cent are either group chairmen or members of the group Bureaux. In the smaller groups the line separating the Bureau from the rest of the group is less rigid and of lesser importance than in larger party groups where the sheer size of the groups necessitates more organised and institutionalised mechanisms of co-ordination.

Table 14.2 The leadership and Bureaux of the European Parliament's party groups, May 1997

<i>Party groups</i>	<i>MEPs</i>	<i>Chairmen and vice-chairmen</i>	<i>Total Bureau members^a</i>	<i>Bureau MEPs (%)</i>
PES	214	1 + 15	33	15.4
EPP	181	1 + 8	62	34.3
UPE	55	2 + 8	20	36.4
ELDR	41	1 + 3	20	48.8
GUE-NGL	33	1 + 9	11	33.3
V	28	2 + 3	6	21.4
ERA	20	1 + 7	9	45.0
EN	18	1 + 2	7	38.9
NA	31			
Total EP	626	10 + 55	168	26.8

a Bureau members are the chairmen, the vice-chairmen, ordinary members of the Bureau and the treasurer.

Source: European Parliament: *List of Members* (28 May 1997).

The same applies to the internal rules of the groups. While each group coordinates its activities according to written internal rules, the rules are more detailed and of greater importance in larger groups than in the small and less well-established groups.

The distribution of appointments within groups is a complicated bargaining process between the national party delegations in the group. These delegations, in particular the larger ones, have their own hierarchical structures. They elect their own leaders, and negotiations at the group level are often preceded by similar discussions within the national party delegations. The influence of a national party delegation depends mainly on its size, with the largest delegations inside the PES and EPP, such as the British Labour Party and the German CDU/CSU in 1994–99, wielding much influence in the Parliament.

Candidate selection is the key to understanding the strong position of national parties. MEPs need the backing of their parties for nomination as candidates in future European—and indeed local or national—elections. In the 1994 Euro-elections, for example, candidates were selected by national electoral committees in seven member states, by regional electoral committees in four member states, and by local party organs in Britain (Hix and Lord 1997:60). Therefore MEPs have a career motive to respect the wishes of their national parties. When members receive conflicting voting instructions from their EP group and from their national party, they will most likely obey the orders of the latter. However, apart from certain votes with significant national or EU-wide implications, national parties have so far refrained from giving voting orders to their members.⁷

While the importance of national party delegations should not be underestimated, it must by no means be taken for granted that these party delegations are unitary actors themselves. Many national parties are divided over Europe,

and these cleavages surface in the Parliament as well. Well-known examples are the two main British parties: both the Conservative and the Labour contingents in the EP have experienced splits when anti/pro-integration votes have been on the agenda of the plenary.

Group meetings—meetings in which all the MEPs of a group can participate—perform an important function in intra-group consensus-building. The groups convene regularly in Brussels prior to the plenary week as well as during the plenary in Strasbourg. The meetings in Brussels constitute a ‘group week’, usually lasting two to three days, during which groups primarily discuss the topics appearing on the agenda of the plenary to be held the following week. Reflecting the strong position of national parties, full group meetings are usually preceded by national party delegations’ own meetings.

These group meetings are significant, since they provide the individual members with a chance to express their points of view. Obviously this does not mean that a group meeting is a forum where all members take part in discussion and decision-making with equal weight and influence. But the group meetings enable MEPs to learn what is happening in the various committees, and gives them a chance to put forward questions and present their arguments. When MEPs decide not to follow the group position, they may use the forum offered by these group meetings to explain the reason behind their decision. Bay Brzinski cites the example provided by a member of the EPP group secretariat:

On issues on which members would not feel very strongly, they will vote with the majority. If they feel strongly, they find other ways of demonstrating it. Very rarely they will vote against the group line in plenary. According to our rules it [voting against the group line] is possible, *only they have to state it before in the group*. Not just behind curtains, suddenly voting against the group. That gives very negative voices in the group. They state their reasons, and why they have to do it.

Bay Brzinski (1995:149, emphasis in the original)

Time tends to be a scarce resource in modern legislatures, and the EP is definitely no exception. Intra-party division of labour is not only a practical necessity, but also facilitates cohesion inside the groups by delegating responsibility within them. The MEPs sitting in the respective committees also act as representatives of their groups, normally with one nominated as a co-ordinator and one as a spokesperson (at least in the two large groups). The co-ordinators arrange the work of the committee together with the committee chairmen, and aim at maximising the influence of their groups in the committees by controlling the voting behaviour and attendance of the members. The spokespersons act as heads of their groups’ contingents in the committee, articulating group positions on issues that are handled in the committee. Committee-based division of labour thus brings some order to the often rather chaotic work environment of the Parliament, and thereby facilitates efficient co-operation and cohesion within party groups.

Political groups, in particular the larger ones, have adopted the practice of setting up specialised working groups to deal with specific policy questions. The EPP, for example, had five such working parties in 1997, with each focusing on a selected issue area. These working groups co-ordinate the work done in the committees and report to the full group meeting.

This practice of cue-taking mirrors the situation in the majority of Western European legislatures (Damgaard 1995). While there is naturally great variation between particular policy questions and party groups, group positions are influenced, or even determined, by the committee members or the party spokespersons on the issue. Group spokespersons or co-ordinators in the EP committees use the group meeting to present their reports, with the opinion of the spokesperson/co-ordinator often constituting the final party group position (see Mix and Lord 1997:120–5). These spokespersons and co-ordinators are therefore very influential inside the groups, and national party delegations compete hard over nominations. This has increased party groups' need to have some control vis-à-vis the committees and individual members (Bowler and Farrell 1995).

Political groups, at least the larger ones, have whips. Whips work to ensure the goal that: (a) all members of the group are present in the chamber during voting periods; and (b) vote according to the group line. However, the job of the whip is made difficult by the lack of available formal sanctions: party discipline is more difficult to enforce than in national parliaments. Individuals who regularly dissent from the group line cannot expect to receive nominations—committee assignments and rapporteurships⁸—of their choice within the Parliament, and may end up marginalised within their groups. In the run-up to the vote on Jacques Santer's nomination as the Commission President in July 1994, the chairman of the EPP group, Wilfried Martens, indicated to his group that those dissenting from the group line could risk expulsion from the group (Hix and Lord 1996; Johansson, 1997b). However, the use of this kind of threat is extremely rare in the Parliament. The whip is better understood as a source of guidance in the often rather chaotic atmosphere of the plenary:

The complex structure of political choices in the plenary of the EP—with most MEPs being called upon to vote long lists of detailed amendments and specific clauses to several reports which they have not seen at the committee stage—means that the whip will often be valued as a source of political guidance: as a necessary simplification to the decision-making process and a means of dealing with information overload.

(Hix and Lord 1997:136)

With no governing majority to defend or challenge, with high overall levels of absenteeism, with national parties in control of candidate selection, and with issues of national importance undermining group consensus, the whip's role is less authoritative than in most national parliaments. Thus the willingness to co-operate and build compromises is crucial in explaining group cohesion in the European Parliament.

Does 105 go into eight?: group cohesion

In June 1996 there were a total of 112 national parties represented in the Parliament, seven of which had stayed as non-attached. The remaining 105 had formed eight transnational political groups. But does 105 go into eight?

Voting behaviour studies on the directly elected Parliament have shown that the majority of EP parties have achieved quite high levels of cohesion.⁹ When internal conflict surfaces within the groups, it is usually confined to specific votes, with the more cohesive party groups achieving unitary behaviour in an overwhelming majority of cases. There is, however, much variation between groups.

The EPP has been most consistent in its behaviour, with an average of over 90 per cent of the group's members following the group line in all four Parliaments. The PES has improved its cohesion over the years. The group was torn by intra-party conflict throughout the 1980s, and only in the 1994–99 EP has the group achieved a level of cohesion on a par with the EPP. The European Liberal, Democrat and Reform Party (ELDR) group has vacillated between achieving reasonably high levels of cohesion (1979–84, 1989–94) and being marked by internal division (1984–89, 1994–99). The performance of the smaller groups has varied, with some achieving very high levels of cohesion, while others, especially the technical PPGs, have not even tried to achieve unitary behaviour when votes have been taken.

The Parliament's rules encourage the formation of groups by providing them with considerable material and procedural benefits (see above). This has led to the birth of some technical PPGs, such as the Technical Group of Co-ordination and Defence of Independent MEPs (CDI) in the 1979–84 and the Rainbow Group (RB) in the 1984–94 Parliaments, as well as to the existence of groups formed around one national party such as the European Democratic Group (EDG) in the 1973–92 EP which was dominated by the British Conservatives. An extreme example was the short-lived Forza Europa (FE) group, which consisted exclusively of the representatives of the Forza Italia party. Formed after the 1994 European elections, the group joined the European Democratic Alliance (EDA) in the summer of 1995 to form the Union for Europe (UPE). The fragile ideological foundation of the UPE is suggested by the fact that prior to the formation of the group, Forza Italia had applied for membership of both the ELDR and the EPP, but had been rejected by both of them.

Furthermore, moves by whole national party delegations or individual MEPs from one group to another during the legislative term are more common in the European Parliament than in the EU member state legislatures. Smaller groups are particularly vulnerable to such defections, with the two largest groups attracting MEPs from their ranks. European elections are also difficult hurdles for the smaller groups. Should a national party do badly in the elections, the group may fail to meet the numerical criteria needed to gain group status, and will cease to exist unless replacements can be found (Bardi 1996). Defections and poor election results throw doubts even over the futures of the Greens (V)

and the Confederal Group of the European United Left (GUE-NGL). While the Greens have formed their own group since the 1989 elections, and the radical left has been represented in the Parliament under various names since 1973, the existence of both groups depends on the strength of two or three key national parties.

But how do EP party groups fare in comparison with parliamentary parties in national legislatures? Unfortunately there is not much recent data available for comparison (see Bowler, Farrell and Katz 1999). While PPGs in most Western European legislatures are still ahead of the EP parties in terms of cohesion, parties in the US Congress are interestingly less cohesive than transnational political groups in the EP (Cox and McCubbins 1991). The US Congress is known as a highly individualistic legislature, with parties playing a much weaker role than in European legislatures. When taking into account the American system of separation of powers and the more independent role of the average Congressman, the Congress may provide a better benchmark for comparison than European legislatures.

Increasing bipolarisation: the EP party system, 1979–1997

As their life span and level of cohesion indicate, party groups in the EP are a very heterogeneous collection of established groups and smaller, more temporary alliances. Table 14.3 shows the fractionalisation of the directly elected Parliament (1979–97). The fractionalisation of a decision-making body can be measured in many ways. Here the indicators chosen are quite straightforward. The second column shows the number of EU member states since the first European elections. The third column shows the number of party groups during the same period. In the fourth column is the percentage of seats held by the two largest groups, PES and EPP.

The number of political groups has remained almost constant in the period from 1979 to 1997, despite the fact that six new member states have joined the Union during that time. While the number of groups has remained between eight and eleven, the last column shows the dominance of the two largest groups. The PES and EPP have controlled over half the seats in the chamber at every juncture, with their share of the seats reaching and remaining above 60 per cent since 1992. Voting power analyses further prove that these two groups' share of voting power increases as the decision rule becomes more stringent (Hosli 1997; Wiberg and Raunio 1997a).

The smaller groups have repeatedly complained about the informal deals struck between the two giants. The PES and EPP have shared the presidency of the Parliament since 1989. The President is elected for two and a half years, and with the Euro-elections held every five years, the two groups take turns in holding the position. In the 1994–99 EP, for example, the first President was Klaus Hänsch, a German Social Democrat from the PES, and José María Gil-Robles Gil-Delgado, from the Spanish Partido Popular (EPP) replaced him in

Table 14.3 The fractionalisation of the European Parliament, 1979–1997

<i>Date</i>	<i>Member states</i>	<i>Party groups^a</i>	<i>PES/EPP (%)^b</i>
1979	9	8	53.7
1981	10	8	55.3
1984	10	9	55.3
1987	12	9	54.1
1989	12	11	58.1
1992	12	10	66.0
1993	12	9	69.5
1994	12	10	62.6
1995	15	10	63.2
1997	15	8	63.1

Dates:

1979, after the European elections (EE).

1981, following the first EP elections in Greece on 18 October 1981.

1984, after the second EE.

1987, situation 31 December 1987. First European elections in Spain were on 10 June 1987, and in Portugal on 19 July 1987.

1989, after the third EE.

1992, situation in May 1992 following the merger between EPP and the EDG.

1993, situation in January 1993 after the EUL had ceased to exist, and the majority of the group had joined the PES.

1994, after the fourth EE.

1995, situation in January 1995 after the latest EU enlargement.

1997, situation in March 1997.

a Including the non-attached members as one group.

b The percentage of seats held by the two largest groups, the PES and the EPP.

January 1997. As a protest against this duopoly, the smaller groups aligned in January 1997 to support Catherine Lalumière from the European Radical Alliance (ERA) who received 177 votes (*Istuntoviikko* 13–17 January 1997). Moreover, in December 1997 the two largest groups held sixteen of the twenty committee chairmanships.

Each successive EC/EU enlargement has presented a challenge to the Parliament and its political groups: national parties from new member states have entered the Parliament, and their successful incorporation into the pre-existing party groups demonstrates the ability of the groups to accommodate new party delegations. Obviously the interests of the new national party delegations and the party groups coincide. EP groups are interested in gaining new members, as this will increase their numerical strength and influence in the Parliament. And national parties benefit from belonging to a party group, thereby increasing their chances of gaining preferred intra-parliamentary appointments, and preventing them from becoming marginalised in the Parliament.

Ideological homogeneity has been equally important in facilitating the entry of national parties into the party groups. The EP party system is largely based on the traditional party families found in the EU member states. Some commentators have argued that such an arrangement is illogical since the

cleavages at European level are different from the ‘frozen’ cleavages found in the member states (Andeweg 1995). Sometimes new parties have indeed found it difficult to adjust to EP party politics. Such problems are hardly avoidable considering the diversity of political ideologies and geopolitical realities represented in the European Parliament. However, roll call analyses of voting and surveys have confirmed that party groups’ coalition behaviour and preferences reflect their corresponding positions on the left-right dimension.¹⁰

Party politics in Strasbourg cannot be understood without reference to the EU legislative majority requirements. Co-decision, co-operation, assent, and budget procedures normally require the Parliament to muster absolute majorities. The Parliament must be able to count on its members to be in the chamber to insert their cards into the voting machines, otherwise the influence and reputation of the EP and its party groups would be undermined. The ability of the Parliament to build these majorities depends on co-operation between the PES and the EPP. Every EP resolution is supported by at least one of these two giants. The most common outcome, however, sees cooperation between these two groups. This centrist coalition between PES and EPP, and possibly other groups such as the ELDR, is facilitated by their broad agreement over the future of European integration. Political groups thus have an incentive to achieve unity during voting periods in order to increase their influence in EU legislation and to put pressure on the Commission and the Council in non-legislative matters. Broad or oversized coalitions are thus very common in the Parliament.

Relationship to the Euro-parties

As indicated in the introductory section, the EP party groups operate in a very different institutional environment from the one parliamentary parties in national legislatures are used to (Hix and Lord 1997; Ladrech 1997). The political system of the EU can be characterised as multi-level governance, with several actors on various levels competing for influence. Euro-parties are parties operating at the European level, and in 1997 there existed three Europarties and one European-level party federation. The European People’s Party (EPP) was established in 1976, and following the Party Article (138 a) in the Maastricht Treaty, the Socialists and Liberals turned their federations into parties. The Party of European Socialists (PES) was established in November 1992 and the European Liberal, Democratic and Reform Party (ELDR) in December 1993. The Greens set up a European Federation of Green Parties (EFGP) in June 1993.

Officially the main EP party groups are organs of their Euro-parties: the PES is the group of the Party of European Socialists, the EPP the group of the European People’s Party, and the ELDR the group of the European Liberal, Democrat and Reform Party. The relationship between EP groups and their Euro-parties is best described as triangular co-operation, with national member

parties forming the third and definitely the most important part of the structure. The PES, EPP and ELDR have also established party groups in the Committee of the Regions, a consultative body set up in 1993 by the Maastricht Treaty, but national and regional viewpoints, and not party political ones, have so far tended to dominate the work of the Committee.

EP groups take part in the congresses and executive committees of the Euro-parties. The chairman of the group reports to the congress on the work of the group, and the chairman is also a member of the Euro-party's executive committee (the name and functions of which vary between the parties). In 1997 the chairman of the EPP group, Wilfried Martens, was at the same time the leader of the extra-parliamentary European People's Party. The purpose of these organs is to co-ordinate the work of the Euro-party: to plan and set policy goals and strategies for achieving them, and to adopt manifestos prior to the Euro-elections. The policy decisions taken by the party congresses are to be implemented by the member parties, the executive organs of the Euro-party and the EP party group. The exact influence of Euro-parties on EU legislation and on national decision-making in member states is difficult to measure. The main point is that their success depends on the willingness of national member parties and EU institutions to pursue and implement the agreed policy objectives.

While there is institutionalised co-ordination and interaction between the EP groups and the Euro-parties, the former are nevertheless in practice quite independent of their Euro-parties during the legislative term. Despite their naming themselves parties, these Euro-parties continue to function more as umbrella organisations, providing a forum for co-ordination to like-minded national parties, than as real parties as we know them from national politics. Moreover, Euro-parties are weak in resources, with the EP groups and national member parties each paying approximately half their expenses. The European Parliament thus remains the most important arena for party politics at the European level.¹¹

Conclusion

Political groups rule in the European Parliament. This chapter has analysed the evolution, status, internal structure, cohesion and coalition behaviour of the EP transnational political groups. Party groups enjoy considerable material benefits in the chamber, they have developed their internal organisation in a way which enables them to delegate authority to individual members without surrendering control over outcomes, and they have increased their power at the expense of individual MEPs' rights.

No matter how strange these alliances may seem from a distance, the European Parliament's party groups are sufficiently cohesive to fulfil their role as important players in the EU political system. This cohesion is facilitated by intra-group committee-based division of labour, willingness to build

compromises, inter-institutional majority requirements, and by ideological affinity inside the groups.

Transnational political groups in the European Parliament are a diverse collection of well-established groups, short-lived alliances, and pure technical PPGs. There is much variation between the groups, with the more established PES and EPP groups largely comparable to PPGs in national legislatures, while most of the smaller groups have been more temporary alliances vulnerable to further centripetal changes in the chamber. Outside observers may regard the larger groups as more ‘European’ and more representative than the smaller political groups that are often formed around one or two national parties. However, considering the differences between member states’ party systems, it is simply not realistic to expect the Parliament to house truly transnational party groups: that is, each group having one party from each member state. To quote Mogens N. Pedersen:

The great variety of party systems in Western Europe—ranging from ‘2½-party systems to highly fragmented, even atomised multi-party systems—precludes the formation of a relatively simple system of political groups in the European Parliament.

(Pedersen 1996:23)

What does the future hold for the European Parliament’s party groups? If the past is any guide to what lies ahead, the party system will continue to be characterised by substantial variations between the political groups. The past decade has seen gradual moves towards bipolarisation in the chamber, with the EPP and the PES constituting the cornerstones of the Parliament. It is most likely that this trend will continue. However, relations between the two mammoth groups are still based on co-operation rather than on conflict. The institutionalisation of EP parties is largely tied to the progress of European integration. Should the EU take further steps in the direction of a federal state, party politics in Strasbourg could well lose its consensual nature.

Notes

- 1 For two readable and informative general texts on the European Parliament, see Corbett, Jacobs, and Shackleton (1995) and Westlake (1994b). Both sources include detailed descriptions and analyses of the EP’s legislative and informal influence in the EU decision-making system.
- 2 Research on the concept of representation in the Parliament has shown that MEPs understand their role to be to combine European and national interests, with members viewing contribution to EU policy-making as their primary function. See Bardi (1989), Bowler and Farrell (1992), and Raunio (1996a, 1997b).
- 3 For information on party groups in the ECSC Common Assembly and in the nominated Parliament, see Fitzmaurice (1975), Henig and Pinder (1969), Pridham and Pridham (1981), Van Oudenhove (1965), and Zellentin (1967). Party groups in the directly elected Parliament have received surprisingly little coverage. After being largely neglected as

an object of research in the 1980s, the situation has improved recently. See Bardi (1994), Bowler and Farrell (1995), Hix and Lord (1997), Ladrech (1996), and Raunio (1996b, 1997a).

- 4 Note that these numerical criteria have changed over the years as the total number of seats has gradually increased from 78 to 626.
- 5 The information on the Parliament's staff and financial resources is based on Corbett, Jacobs, and Shackleton (1995:86–9).
- 6 For detailed information on such procedural rights, see the EP rules of procedure and Corbett, Jacobs, and Shackleton (1995:56–61)?
- 7 Hix and Lord (1997:129) report only two parties that have tried to 'mandate' their members on a more regular basis: The French Parti Socialiste in the early 1980s and the British Labour Party from 1994 onwards.
- 8 A rapporteur is a member drafting a report for the committee. The Parliament produces two kinds of reports: legislative reports and own-initiative reports. In both cases, the member selected as a rapporteur prepares a report which is first discussed and voted upon in the committee, and then debated and voted upon in the plenary. The distribution of rapporteurships in the committees is based on the rule of proportionality between the groups. Each group receives a share of points corresponding to its share of the seats, which it will then spend on the reports that are graded individually according to their perceived importance. The distribution of reports between the groups is thus a sophisticated bargaining process. The rapporteurships provide the individual member with an excellent opportunity both to influence the final position of the Parliament, and to gain valuable experience and expertise within the committee and the Parliament. See Bowler and Farrell (1995) and Westlake (1994a).
- 9 For data on group cohesion in the 1979–84 and 1984–89 Parliaments, see Attinà (1990, 1992) and Quanjel and Wolters (1992). Raunio (1996b, 1997a, 1998, 1999) and Bay Brzinski (1995) have analysed the cohesion of party groups in the 1989–94 Parliament, while Hix and Lord (1997) contains data from the beginning of the 1994–99 legislature.
- 10 For voting behaviour analyses on EP coalition politics, see Hix and Lord (1997), Quanjel and Wolters (1992), and Raunio (1996b, 1997a, 1998, 1999). Research on MEPs' own coalition preferences have produced similar findings. See Bardi (1989), Lahav (1997), Niedermayer (1983), and Rattinger (1982).
- 11 For information on the evolution, structure, and influence of Euro-parties, see the excellent analysis in Hix and Lord (1997). Johansson (1997a) provides an interesting and empirically strong case study of the relationship between the Christian Democrats and the Conservatives.

15 Parliamentary party groups compared

Knut Heidar and Ruud Koole

Parliamentary party groups (PPGs) are central actors in most European democracies. In some countries they are even more important than the extraparlimentary party organisations (EPOs). This volume has tried to expand our knowledge on the manifestations and operations of the PPGs. Thirteen specialists on parliaments in Europe have analysed the PPGs of their respective countries and in the European Parliament. Although this study does not cover all the parliaments of the continent, we have presented a fair sample. In this final chapter we will present a comparative conclusion, in which we refer to the authors in the previous chapters. First we will *describe* similarities and differences between PPGs. In the second part we make an attempt to *typologise* the main trends, employing the categories introduced in Chapter 1. In this part we will also look for *explanations* of major differences and similarities between the various types of PPGs. In the third and last section we will discuss possible *systemic consequences*.

Descriptions and comparison

In this first part we begin by revisiting our ‘working’ PPG definition and note some comparative findings about the formal position and origins of PPGs. Then we will turn to mapping variations in the internal organisation of party groups. The next section will develop one particular aspect of that organisation and look at the position of the individual MP within the groups. In the last two sections we compare the relationships of the PPGs to the external party organisation on the one hand and to the government on the other.

Definition, formal position and origins

Our working definition needs to be somewhat refined. PPG members do not always belong to the same party. In the Slovak parliamentary election of 1994 several parties presented joint electoral lists in order to pass the threshold of 5 per cent, and the eight lists that managed to get MPs elected brought in representatives from sixteen different parties (Malová and Krause, Ch. 12).

Actually, MPs from seven small parties joined the party groups of their respective electoral lists creating *multi-party parliamentary groups*. When different parties consider the political distance to be so small that they can cooperate both in elections and later in parliament, we see no point in excluding these PPGs from the definition. The 'internal parties' come rather close to factions, which are found in many parties proper. On the other hand, we have the example of the German CDU/CSU group in the Bundestag. These group members do not belong to the same party, but the procedural rules defining party groups in the Bundestag state that *Fraktionen* can have members from 'several parties which do not compete against each other in any federal state' (Saalfeld, Ch. 2). No one would doubt, however, that in parliamentary terms the CDU/CSU *Fraktion* act as a 'parliamentary party group'. This is so even if the group quarrels internally (as most groups do) and the CSU at times threatens to compete in federal states other than Bavaria (sometimes internal factions of other PPGs also threaten with secession). This definitional point evidently also affects the group status within the European Parliament where 105 national parties make up eight transnational political groups (in 1996), some of which are based on ideological kinship. Some groups, however, are merely 'technical' in the sense that they have very little politics in common, but would still like to benefit from the spoils of group status. One example is the 'Technical Group of Co-ordination and Defence of Independent MEPs' (CDI) in the 1979–84 EP (Raunio, Ch. 14). But we also have the Czech groups which in the 1992–96 period had 'little else in common beyond the desire to obtain financial support' (Kopecký, Ch. 11). The question is how to identify the element of political cohesion necessary to make organisations operate like groups, i.e. more or less cohesively, in parliamentary politics. We believe that the EP technical groups should be left out of the PPG definition due to their lack of political cohesion. At the same time we realise that this introduces an evaluation of political cohesion which includes a 'greasy pole' in the contest for group status. But it is only when this technical consideration explicitly acts as the main motive for group formation that we do not see any point in including them, and this presumably leaves the Czech groups still in. It also leaves the French UDF in. This was originally a confederation of (organisationally independent) parties negotiating a package of UDF candidates for elections to the National Assembly.

Against the background of the various empirical data presented in the previous chapters, we therefore revise the definition of a PPG as follows:

an organised group of members of a representative body who were elected either under the same party label or under the label of different parties that do not compete against each other in elections, and who do not explicitly create a group for technical reasons only.

Some problems, however, are not a question of definition alone, but deal more with the (sometimes) difficult distinction between formal appearance and political realities. On paper the parliamentary Conservative Party in the House

Table 15.1 The position of PPGs in lower houses, 1997

	<i>First formal recognition</i>	<i>Minimum number or percentage of members</i>	<i>Ministers can be MPs at the same time?</i>	<i>PPG has written internal rules</i>	<i>Overlap leadership PPG/EPO</i>	<i>PPG role in cabinet formation</i>
Austria	1932 (parliamentary rules)	5 MPs	yes	yes: FPÖ, Greens, SPÖ no: ÖVP, LF	yes: FPÖ, LF no: SPÖ, ÖVP, Greens	considerable
Belgium	1962 (internal parliamentary rules)	5 MPs	yes	not since 1995: CVP, Ecolo/Agalev, VB no: other parties	yes: all parties	no
Czech Republic	1990/1992	10 MPs	yes	no, except ODS	yes: all parties	minimal
Denmark	1898/9 (yearbook of parliament)	1 MP (4 MPs in practice)	yes	yes: SD, FP, (V) no: other parties	yes: all parties	considerable
Finland			yes	yes (all?)	seldom	considerable
France	1910 (parliamentary resolution)	30 (parliamentary rules, 1959), 20 (parliamentary resolution, 1988)	no	yes	no	minimal
Germany	1922/1950	5%	yes	yes	yes: CDU (since 1969) no: SPD	minimal
Hungary	1990 (parliamentary resolution)	15 MPs	yes	yes	yes	minimal

Netherlands	1966 (Standing Orders Second Chamber of parliament)	1 MP	no	yes: PvdA, CDA no: VVD?, D66?	yes: PvdA no: CDA, D66, VVD, GL	considerable
Slovakia	1990	8 MPs	no	yes	yes (weaker for government parties)	considerable
Sweden		1 MP(?)	no	yes: all parties	yes: all parties	only regarding the selection of the Prime Minister
United Kingdom			yes	yes: Labour	yes	no
European Parliament	1953	29 (if from 1 country) 23 (2), 18 (3), 14 (4+)	no	yes	no (except EPP)	n.a.

of Commons at Westminster does not exist in the form of an organised PPG. There is a group of MPs elected under the same party label who take the Conservative whip. The formal parliamentary organisation, however, is the 1922 Committee of which the Conservative leader, who decides on party policies and whom the Committee elects, is not a member. There is also the problem of defining the group as consisting of ‘members of a representative body’. In Austria the PPGs were composed not only of the members of both chambers of parliament, but also of the party representatives in the European Parliament. What is more, full membership rights are sometimes assigned to EPO representatives who are not members of parliament—like the Progress Party in Norway (see Chapter 1). These groups no doubt direct the parliamentary activities of the party MPs and should therefore be included. The degree to which the group as such is directed by external forces, like the EPO or the government, should be dealt with as a group characteristic rather than as a defining element.

In formal laws and regulations the status of PPGs varies. The British Westminster parliament is at one extreme with no written constitution, meaning that party groups obviously cannot be mentioned. Nor are there any statutory or parliamentary rules ‘governing the formation or membership of the PPGs’ (Norton, Ch. 3). In Denmark, which has a written constitution, the party groups are not mentioned either, but in the Parliamentary Standing Orders their existence is simply taken for granted which is also evident from the fact that since 1965 PPGs have been given state subsidies (Bille, Ch. 8). Groups in the German parliament have, however, been well taken care of in the legal texts, both in the Basic Law and the Bundestag rules of procedure. German party groups are even ‘vested with independent legal rights in the Federal Constitutional Court’ (Saalfeld, Ch. 2).

This official recognition is Janus-faced since parliaments were originally based on the political legitimacy of the individual representative. The tension is brought out in the German Basic Law which on the one hand (Article 21) stresses the independence of the MP, but on the other (Article 38) makes the party groups privileged as the main and most legitimate actors—leaving the Constitutional Court to decide in conflicts between the two. In Finland the constitution states that the individual MP shall be bound by nothing but the constitution itself and neither the constitution nor the Parliament Act mentions party groups at all. Still, ‘in reality, the parties run all the important things inside the popular assembly’ (Wiberg, Ch. 10). Most parliaments constitutionally reflect the traditional, strong legitimacy of the individual MP (as the representative of the people) at the same time as they in practice give him/her a subordinate position to the effective power vested in the PPGs.

The PPGs came into being in the dual context of parliamentarism and universal suffrage. Some developed internally as actors in the parliamentary game; external parties generated others with success in the electoral arena. Origins, however, do not explain much in the sense that they all ended up as the central players inside parliament. The dynamic is visible in the short history of

the post-communist Czech and Slovak parliaments. Although the Czech Republic recognised ‘democratic parties’ and the free competition between them as the basis of the political system, party politics were associated with the corrupt hierarchy of the old Communist Party. Strong individual MPs backed by social movements and co-operating in party clubs still turned, fairly quickly, into a system based on strong PPGs. This ‘occurred in the post-communist period within a relatively short period of time’ and testifies ‘to the conscious efforts of the Czech elites to establish a system where party strength plays a crucial role’ (Kopecký, Ch. 11). More or less the same story is told about Slovakia where all major parties ‘quickly adapted to orient themselves around parliamentary competition’ and developed strong PPGs (Malová and Krause, Ch. 12). It seems that the dynamics of parliamentary government is such that *organisation* is imperative to gain power—not only to get into parliament in the first place, but to influence and to get into government.

How are PPGs organised?

Party groups are more than a circle of the like-minded MPs. They are ‘organised’. Often but not always their activities are guided by written rules. The German groups have elaborate rules, and also in Hungary group regulations are treated very seriously, at least in the sense that they are frequently revised. Among the exceptions are the groups at the Westminster parliament, and also most of the Czech ones. Group membership is generally defined by being elected under the party label or on the party lists. In the UK we have learned that membership is defined by who has been ‘sent the whip of the party’ (Norton, Ch. 3). Most groups meet at regular intervals when parliament is in session. The Danes actually stage daily meetings. Both the Conservative 1922 Committee and the Parliamentary Labour Party (PLP) in the United Kingdom meet once a week, but both with low attendance. As the subtitle of this volume suggests, secrecy is indeed a common feature of PPGs. No party group invites the press to be present at its meetings.¹ This does not exclude internal PPG affairs from entering the media, but as a debating forum it is sheltered from media attention.

Formal decision-making on important issues normally takes place at the PPG meetings. In the UK parliament, however, the party leader decides policies. This has always been true of the Conservative Party; in practice it is now also true of the Labour Party. British MPs who refuse to follow a three-line whip may have the whip withdrawn (i.e. their membership of the PPG is suspended). In Belgian parties the EPO board and the government are so important that PPGs are more or less sidestepped as arenas of power, reduced to ‘voting machines’. Here the picture is naturally quite complex, as there are six or seven parliament-like assemblies in Belgium. All parties have created ‘co-ordination mechanisms in order to harmonise the positions of their four to six parliamentary groups’ and some parties hold regular meetings with all the groups, i.e. from all assemblies (De Winter and Dumont, Ch.7).

Table 15.2 Internal operation of PPGs and state subsidies

	<i>Frequency plenary meetings PPG</i>	<i>Frequency selection of PPG leader</i>	<i>Subsidy to individual MPs (year of introduction)</i>	<i>Subsidy to PPGs (year of introduction)</i>	<i>Average number of staff (PPG + MPs) per MP</i>
Austria	before each parliamentary plenary meeting	at beginning of legislative term	yes (1992)	yes (1963)	1.8
Belgium	weekly	at beginning of legislative term	yes (1980)	yes (1971)	
Czech Republic	before parliamentary sessions	at beginning of legislative term	1995	yes (1990/1992)	2
Denmark	daily	annually	MPs are entitled to have a share of the amount given to the PPG (1981)	yes (1965)	0.9 (full-time, 1995)
Finland	weekly	annually			
France	weekly	at beginning of legislative term	yes (1970) for secretarial costs; 1976 for assistants)	—	3
Germany	weekly	at beginning of legislative term	yes (1969)	yes (1950)	approx. 7 (part-time, full-time, 1991)
Hungary	weekly	at beginning of legislative term	no	yes (1990)	?
Netherlands	weekly	at beginning of legislative term	yes (1974)	yes (1966)	1.9 (part-time/full-time, 1991)
Slovakia	before parliamentary sessions	at beginning of legislative term	no	yes (1990)	0.2
Sweden	weekly				
United Kingdom	weekly	on demand	yes	no	
European Parliament	one week per month for group meetings	varies, usually at beginning of legislative term	yes	yes (1953)	0.9 for PPG alone + MPs 1–3 personal assistants

Decision-making within all parliamentary groups is characterised by both hierarchy and specialisation. The important thing is that they go together in different mixes. Hierarchy is extreme in Britain with its party leader and front bench system. This ‘elective dictatorship’ (to borrow Lord Hailsham’s

exaggeration) is balanced by the fact that the individual MP is free to make his own marks within the limits of the issues determined by a three-line whip. A more broad-based top-down process is found in, for example, Hungary, where PPG leaders and working group leaders dominate PPGs while ‘backbenchers feel disprivileged’ (Ch. 13). The PPG leaders are central in all parliaments due to the necessity of co-ordinating the policy process and to confronting/defending governments. But in the Nordic countries the PPG leaders by and large turn out more like team-leaders and co-ordinators than as ‘Big Chiefs’. This is of course also a question of personality, in addition to organisation and culture.

A counter force to this hierarchical decision-making is policy specialisation. Organisationally this is brought out in the practice of appointing policy spokespersons and in giving the party’s committee members (in ‘working’ parliaments) a fairly broad mandate. Müller and Steininger describe this in the Austrian setting as a division of labour based on ‘mutual trust and anticipated reciprocity’ (Ch. 5). The two main German parties have working groups inside their PPGs monitoring the departmental work and formulating party policies, and at the same time elaborating procedures to co-ordinate policies.

All parliaments put financial and other resources at the disposal of the party groups. In Hungary financial resources are given in full to the PPGs and not to individual MPs or parliamentary committees (Ch. 13). The British opposition PPGs receive some, but only limited, public support, while all MPs receive an ‘office cost allowance’ sufficient to hire two or three persons for secretarial and research assistance. This is about the same total assistance that is given to each Slovak PPG (Malová and Krause, Ch. 12). The German PPGs probably have the largest staff with close to 300 persons employed by each of the two main parties, not including the personal staff of MPs (Saalfeld, Table 2.3). Whether the subsidy goes to the PPG or to the individual MP has an impact both on the ability of MPs to act on their own and on the disciplinary measures available to the PPGs. In Austria, access to staff has traditionally been decided by a person’s position in the group hierarchy. A change in 1992 led for the first time to resources being given to individual MPs (Müller and Steininger, Ch. 5). To ensure that Danish MPs actually benefit from the public support to parliamentary work the rules specify that the individual MP has the right to a certain share of the party subsidy for hiring secretarial assistance.

The position of individual MPs

The Danish constitution makes it clear that MPs are bound only by their conscience and the Dutch constitution states that the MP ‘shall not be bound by a mandate or instructions when casting their vote’ (Andeweg, Ch. 6). Most European constitutions contain similar statements and the fiction of the fully independent MP is still part of much parliamentary rhetoric. The ‘free mandate’, however, belongs to the pre-party period, although it still has a ‘rest function’, as

the Dutch specialist in constitutional law Elzinga has called it, i.e. to protect the MP against too powerful domination by the parties (Elzinga 1982).

Today MPs are generally selected from party followers and elected on a party ticket. They are expected to stand by the party programme. But if voluntary cohesion does not emerge on important issues, the parties have special means for twisting arms and the PPGs have developed elaborate systems for co-ordination and control. The Belgian parties monitor the activities of MPs to be sure that their actions are in line with party programmes and governmental policies. Sponsoring new bills, proposing amendments, interpellations and oral questions must be cleared with the PPG. In cases where the MP makes known that he or she will for some reason defy the official party line, there is a whole arsenal of means to further party unity—both carrots and sticks. Help with staff and other resources have been mentioned. Austrian PPGs practice small incentives like being selected for interesting delegations and travel. More political substance is involved when parties distribute prominent positions within the PPG and in the parliament. Negative incentives are withdrawal of favours and ultimately deselection or expulsion. All of this is said to work through the ‘law of anticipated reactions’, i.e. that the MP knows in advance what to expect when behaving badly (Müller and Steininger, Ch.5). In some Hungarian, Slovak and Dutch parties prospective MPs have to sign an agreement accepting party discipline. The Slovak constitution states that MPs are ‘bound by no directives’ (Malová and Krause, Ch.12). Still, the leaders in the dominant Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS) have evidently demanded signed, but undated letters of resignation from at least some of their candidates—to be made public if necessary! Commitment to the party line is furthermore enforced by the threat of huge financial sanctions, should the MP leave the PPG (Malová and Krause, Ch. 12). Another leadership option is to work with the EPO constituency party in order to deselect or at least impair a rebellious MP’s chances of re-election.

For some issues the question of disciplinary measures does not arise. They may be too small and unimportant, or they may be of a denominational or moral character, which makes the party whip inopportune. The Swedish PPG has informal rules to the effect that the MPs may defect from the party line in ‘religious, ethical and sometimes regional questions’ (Hagevi, Ch.9). For Denmark, Bille reports that deviation from the party line must be reported to the PPG meeting in advance.

Means of independence on the part of the individual MP are fewer. One such means, however, is that personal popularity among the voters makes disciplinary measures difficult. Also the specialisation of knowledge arising from committee work gives the MP resources with which to fight back if necessary (see below). In Britain the MP’s influence outside the PPG context is greatest away from the chamber, for example in the departmental Select Committees (Norton, Ch.3). Most important, though, as has been witnessed in numerous PPG conflicts, is the support the MP has from his or her local constituency.² The PPG and EPO leadership will move with care when challenging local activists or at least local

voters. The question of who controls the process of nomination is often the most crucial in these matters, *pace* Schattschneider's statement that 'he who can make the nominations is the owner of the party' (Schattschneider 1942:64).

Relations with the extra-parliamentary party organisation (EPO)

Liberals and socialists had—during the formative years of party democracy—very different conceptions of where to place legitimate party power. Liberals gave priority to the PPG, the socialists to the EPO. Even today we can find remnants of this. Take the French parties. Here the statutes of the liberal-conservative UDF are practically silent about the PPG apart from giving it several seats on the EPO National Council. The PPG leader also appears to the public as a 'second leader' of the party. On the other hand, the French socialist PS stipulates that the PPG cannot commit the party to policies without EPO acceptance. It must accept the party programme and, if demanded by either the EPO executive or the PPG executive, these two executives must meet and vote in common to decide an issue with a simple majority. These close ties make it difficult for the PPG to 'resist the very strong hold of the EPO' (Thiébaud and Dolez, Ch. 4).

All parties need to co-ordinate the policies of the two domains of the party-as-a-whole (PPG and EPO). Parties like the Dutch, Swedish and Finnish ones take one measure where the PPGs make reports to their party congresses. These reports, however, are fairly superficial and a poor instrument for EPO co-ordination and guidance. Another measure is overlap in leadership. Here the pattern varies from more or less complete fusion, as in the UK, to just a few points of personal overlap as in France. Even with one party leader, however, he or she may have a different party domain as a basis. At Westminster the leader emerges from the parliamentary party, even though Labour today brings the EPO into the selection process. In Sweden, on the other hand, the trend is for the EPO congress to elect a new leader, who afterwards is also elected leader of the PPG. The difference in origin may in the end not be very important, but it could still be a guide to the basis of party legitimacy and power. The description of the Swedish PPGs also points to the fact that most MPs have ties to the extra-parliamentary party at the national level. Most, but not all, parties also have mutual formal representation on their boards. In virtually all Czech PPGs the leaders are *ex officio* members of the EPO executive committee and in some parties the EPO executive committee is represented at the PPG meetings. When Kopecký in the Czech case talks about 'a complete elite mix, which makes the study of "who influences whom" very difficult' (Ch. 11), this could well refer to East European parties in general.

The writing of party programmes is mostly done by and in the EPO. In the Nordic countries the programme is finally adopted at the EPO congress. Before that, however, it has often been strongly influenced by the party's MPs. Bille's evaluation of Danish programme-making is that 'the initiative to issue a new

manifesto, decisions on the main ideological elements of the programme, the phrasing of the draft and the final text is heavily influenced by the PPGs' (Bille, Ch. 8). As for its implementation, however, Danish PPGs are 'almost sovereign'. In the old days, the two main UK parties issued an election manifesto written under the sole guidance of their parliamentary leaders. As in Denmark, implementation is most often left to the PPGs.

Strong EPOs, however, have several means at their disposal for influencing their PPG. Take the Austrian parties where three means of control have traditionally been exercised. First, the EPO leadership controlled the recruitment of the PPG leader and, if different persons, the EPO leader was considered leader of the party-as-a-whole. Second, the party executive committee recommended proper parliamentary actions for their PPG although only in rare cases told them exactly how to vote. Third, top EPO officials participated *de facto* in the decision-making of the PPG. Belgian PPGs are another example of PPGs as the weaker party domain. Half the Belgian MPs feel that everything is decided at the top of the party, meaning the EPO leadership and (if relevant) party ministers in government (De Winter and Dumont, Ch. 7). This is illustrated by the fact that lobbyists contact the government, the party leaders and the EPO research centres rather than the PPG chairman.

The paradigmatic examples of strong PPGs (*vis-à-vis* EPOs) are, of course, the two main British parties—or rather, their PPG leadership. At a lower level of PPG strength we find—among others—the major Hungarian PPGs where 'parties have been largely dominated by the PPGs' (Ilonszki, Ch. 13).

Relations with the government

Most PPGs and several EPOs are—formally or informally—involved in the process of government formation. In Denmark government formation is a complicated business in which both PPGs and EPOs take an active part. The final deal must be formally accepted not only by the PPGs but in most parties also by the EPO (Bille, Ch. 8). Still, most countries lean towards the mode of PPG-based government formation. The pattern is, however, far from universal. In France, and even more so in Belgium, the PPGs do not take part in the process, and in Germany the EPOs (including regional state-level politicians) are the dominant party domain in the negotiations preceding government formation.

Governments will need an active group in parliament to get their policies through without major casualties. Clearly there is a need for co-ordination, and some have PPG representation in government as with the British Chief Whip. In Austria PPG leaders take part in cabinet meetings, while in the Netherlands they participate in informal meetings with party ministers the evening before cabinet meetings (Andeweg, Ch. 6). Several countries also allow MPs to enter government without renouncing their seats—in the UK and in Ireland only MPs can become ministers (in the UK also members of the

House of Lords). Most governing PPGs also allow or ask relevant ministers to be present at PPG meetings when their policies are discussed. In terms of influence, however, the picture is more varied. The French government does not listen much to its PPG (s), and during the Fifth Republic Prime Ministers have regularly had difficulties with their PPGs (Thiébaud, Ch. 4). The Belgium PPGs are described as ‘the weakest factor’ in the government-EPO-PPG triangle (De Winter and Dumont, Ch. 7).

When a party participates in a government, the relative importance of PPGs may decline to the advantage of the group of ministers: they are ‘disprivileged’ (Ilonszki, Ch. 13). But being in government at the same time gives the PPGs access opportunities, and they may increase their relative power within the ‘party-as-a-whole’ (even if losing power to the few selected ministers), particularly when there is a coalition or minority government. Denmark’s tradition of great parliamentary compromises may therefore be one of the most interesting arenas for viewing these processes (Bille, Ch. 8).

PPG types: trends and explanations

The operation of political parties in the parliamentary arena differs over time, across nations and among political families. We have noted differences both between individual parties and between the PPGs of various national parliaments. Still, the preceding chapters allow us to conclude—albeit prudently, because we have limited ourselves to thirteen European cases—that there is a tendency towards PPG convergence. In the organisational perspective the trend is towards the ‘parliamentary party complex’, and in the ‘parties-as-a-whole’ perspective towards the type of ‘integrated PPGs’. These types were proposed in Chapter 1, and are—of course—nothing more (and nothing less) than heuristic tools to analyse the various PPGs. Therefore, the observed trends do not preclude differences between PPGs, even if they develop in the same direction.

Trend toward the parliamentary party complex

Nearly all country specialists reported trends towards the PPG complex type. The historically high degree of voting cohesion in European party groups has—on the whole—remained intact, while more recently the growth in state funding has produced better staffed and more professional parties inside parliaments.

There are obviously large variations around this general trend towards the ‘parliamentary party complex’. First, large differences emerge from PPG size. Most support from the state to PPGs is related to the number of parliamentary seats. Hence, a small PPG receives less money to hire staff than a bigger PPG. Comparing smaller with larger PPGs, the first category could therefore hardly be called a ‘parliamentary party *complex*’. In the Netherlands, for example, one

MP can form a PPG and will only have one or two assistants. Still, it might very well be that even in this case the small number of political professionals in and around parliament (the MP and his or her assistants) is higher than the number of political professionals in the EPO, which probably consists solely of political *amateurs*. The heuristic value of the ‘parliamentary party complex’ type is to point to (even in small parties) a *relatively* high concentration of political *professionals* within the parliamentary arena which again may engender both a professionalisation and a ‘parliamentarisation’ of the ‘party-as-a-whole’.

The German CDU/CSU and SPD are examples of giant parliamentary party complexes. The SPD (with 239 seats) employed almost 2,000 persons in and around the PPG in 1991. The German case, however, is extreme according to European standards. On the other hand, the PPGs of the German FDP and the Greens have been classified as ‘fractions’ by Saalfeld in Chapter 2, because the level of their external resources is lower than that of the SPD or CDU/CSU. But if we take the FDP in the period 1991–94 (seventy-nine seats), this party had about 650 persons (including MPs) on the Bundestag pay-roll (full or part-time), a number that would easily qualify for the ‘PPG complex’ label in other countries. Therefore, when we speak about a general trend towards ‘parliamentary party complexes’ it must be understood within the specific national context. Absolute size is not the most important criterion.

The second dimension along which PPGs may vary is their degree of political cohesion, either enforced (‘discipline’) or spontaneous. But there are only a few examples of PPGs with a low degree of voting cohesion today, although a slight tendency towards less cohesion can be observed in some of the ‘old’, or at least well-established, democracies (Austria, United Kingdom). PPGs of the ‘club’ or ‘personal kingdom’ types, however, are not reported. Only in the immediate aftermath of the removal of the Iron Curtain, could ‘clubs’ be detected in a former communist state like Czechoslovakia. But after the split of this country at the end of 1992, Czech PPGs too, moved in the direction of PPG complexes. In Austria PPGs are still called *parlamentarische Klubs*, but they have not been ‘clubs’ according to our definition for decades. They have rather recently changed from ‘fractions’ to ‘PPG-complexes’ because of the enormous increase in external resources. The cohesion of Austrian PPGs is all the more interesting, since the Austrian PPG comprises not only MPs in the Lower House, but also MPs in the Upper House, MEPs and cabinet members. Internal divisions do exist along the lines of interest groups and recently the almost 100 per cent cohesion has declined, but not enough to disqualify them as parliamentary party complexes.

Party unity is not a new phenomenon, as Norton makes clear in his chapter on the British parties. Even if the number of MPs defying the party whip has increased since the 1970s, party cohesion has remained the norm in the British PPGs. The same also applies for the Scandinavian countries, Germany, the Netherlands and Belgium. Even the PPGs in the European Parliament, which are organised along ideological lines, as is the case in the member states, exhibit a fairly high level of cohesion today. This has been the case for the European

People's Party (EPP) for a longer period, but is only recently so in the case of the Party of the European Socialists (PES), by far the largest PPG on the European stage. In the new democracies in Central Europe PPG cohesion was not obvious at the outset, but has increased considerably during the recent years.

In trying to explain these developments, we probably pick up most of the variation through what we called macro (or system) variables in Chapter 1. The level of external organisational resources is obviously primarily a function of public support. In the 1960s the Danish Folketing introduced financial aid to the PPGs and during the thirty years from 1965 to 1995 the state subsidy increased from DKR 57,000 to 56,000,000. From 1963 onwards, the Austrian Nationalrat made funds available to the PPGs. The German Bundestag has given financial assistance to PPGs since 1969 and increasingly does so. In 1991 this support amounted to over DM 100 million. In the new democracies of Eastern Europe public financing of the PPGs remains comparatively small.

A systemic factor impinging on party cohesion is the nature of parliamentarism in a given country. The parliamentary practice of the Westminster model means that party groups must stick together to be as politically effective as possible, both in government and in opposition. Semi-presidential systems as in France should be less prone to developing parliamentary party complexes than purer types of parliamentary systems. Group voting cohesion in the French National Assembly varies between the parties; the free vote is, for example, a tradition within the UDF. Nevertheless there is a high and rising level of voting cohesion in the French parliament (Thiébaud and Dolez, Ch. 4). This may be explained by the fact that the French government also needs to have the confidence of a majority in parliament. Compared to Germany, however, group resources in France also appear to be rather limited. If the PPG complex seems relatively slow to develop in the French parliament, this is not the case in the Finnish Eduskunta. This is also a semi-presidential system, but the institution of a politically significant president alone has not blocked the development of parliamentary party complexes.

Parliamentarism creates a need for cohesion and quick manoeuvres, i.e. for autonomous and professional party groups. The emergence of strong and independent media may have enhanced the development of PPG complexes. In the old days when some countries had more predictable, party-loyal media, the parties had more time to consult and consider. They could bring selected issues into discussion in the various party domains and could 'afford' a slower decision-making process. Under the new media regime, however, this has become increasingly difficult. Professionalisation was the answer. Another macro factor may add to the media pressure: increased voter volatility—in a given electoral system—induces similar reasons to adapt PPG operations. In order to match changing voter preferences, PPGs learned to act more swiftly as well as more independently of the party-as-a-whole.

Turning to the 'micro' or individual party level, the strength and political coherence of the EPO is another relevant factor in explaining the trend towards

PPG complexes. In the new regimes in Eastern Europe, legitimate parties preferably had to emerge outside the old system, to be based in society not in the state apparatus. At the outset this affected all parties. The PPGs of Hungary and the Slovak Republic did not have many resources and they had (like the Czech PPGs before 1992) difficulties with cohesive party voting. The party systems were volatile and the post-communist parties initially did not want to impose the kind of discipline associated with the old regime. Strong EPOs, as in Belgium, may also have had a political interest in not putting large resources at the disposal of their PPGs. The party statutes in Belgian PPGs, for example, oblige the MPs to contribute towards the finances of the EPOs (De Winter and Dumont, Ch. 7).³ Belgian PPGs have just recently developed from fraction to a parliamentary party complex.

Finally and back at the macro level one would expect national political culture to affect these developments. When the German constitution made it clear that parties have a proper place within the democratic system, it followed that the parties became legitimate political actors worthy of state support. British political culture, on the other hand, emphasises effective government and stresses that the proper job of the opposition is to present an alternative government and to challenge its policies. The party in opposition should be politically fit to take over the government and the training for this is to challenge the government in the House and in public debates rather than to develop elaborate policy alternatives. These debating capabilities are not—as seen in the mainstream British perspective—necessarily improved by increasing the PPG staff.

The PPGs in the ‘party-as-a-whole’

The second trend that can be observed from the country reports is the development towards ‘integrated’ PPGs, i.e. parliamentary groups that have quite strong links with the extra-parliamentary organisation (EPO) and with ministers when in government (PiG). This trend is not as strong as the development towards parliamentary party complexes, but is nevertheless clearly discernible. Parties that have never participated in government and are not likely to do so in the near future fall outside this category, but almost all major parties now have ‘integrated’ PPGs. This is not as obvious as it may seem. While the link between the EPO and the PPG has traditionally been stronger in socialist and communist parties than in ‘bourgeois’ parties, we now see that this distance between the two domains is shrinking within bourgeois parties as well. Again, this trend cannot be presented in absolute terms. For instance, the linkage between the parliamentary and the extra-parliamentary leadership within the German CDU has always been strong, and is not a recent phenomenon. It has to be said, however, that the EPO was radically modernised in the early 1970s. Some authors have argued that, at the national level, an efficient EPO was only then established.

A pivotal factor in placing the party groups within the ‘party-as-a-whole’ is whether or not they are currently in government. Looking at parties as they enter or leave governments is indeed instructive as it changes the *modus operandi* of the party group. To borrow King’s terms, the intra-party mode of executive-legislative relationship was cut instantly within the British Conservative Party when the party lost the general election and Labour, under Tony Blair, was elected to office.

Turning to the second dimension, explaining the degree of integration between party domains is a highly complex business. Is it, for example, the central EPO which controls re-election to parliament? In Britain the answer is by and large no. In this perspective the division between PPG and EPO is strong at the national level. The individual MP has to stay in close contact with his or her constituency party. The party headquarters are fairly (though not wholly) irrelevant for his or her position when elected in the first place.⁴ Turning to the policies of British PPGs, however, these are very much under the control of the leader, and there is almost no dividing line between the PPG leader and the central EPO: he or she will—broadly speaking—be in charge of both places. When the EPO controls electoral lists in PR countries like Slovakia, it underpins a less marked division between the two party domains.

Origin and party ideology have—at least historically—also been important in determining how the PPG branches operate inside the ‘party triangle’. Both factors seem, however, to lose weight as the parties gain parliamentary mileage. Over time, a process of convergence has been at work (as discussed above): the old socialist parties have adapted to traditional parliamentary practices of relative PPG autonomy, while the conservative and liberal parties have accepted the need for group discipline. The parties that are still considerably marked by origin and ideology today are the populist, charismatic leaders’ parties and the greens. Strong populist leaders put their mark on PPG operation. Le Pen in France and Haider in Austria are examples. Mogens Glistrup certainly did so during his time as the leader of the Danish Progress Party: when he was at the height of power, the EPO-PPG distinction seemed basically irrelevant. He was the ‘party owner’.⁵ The Austrian Green Party was a loose alliance of different green groups running on a common platform in order to get elected to parliament and to be allowed to form a PPG. During its first term, these different green groups—at least for practical purposes—had to create an EPO. The German Greens are described by Saalfeld as ‘autonomous’—according to the typology presented in Chapter 1—with a strong division between party domains, conditioned by a mix of origin, party statutes and ideology (Ch. 2). But, of course, Green MPs are answerable to the grassroots members of the EPO.

Subtypes of ‘integrated party groups’

Parliamentary groups can be ‘integrated’ in different ways. In Figure 1.3 four possible subtypes were proposed. The preceding chapters lead us to conclude

that no PPG dominates both the EPO and the PiG. Some PPGs, however, are dominated by the EPO and the PiG at the same time. These PPG ‘voting machines’ are found in Belgium and Austria. In various countries today we also find that if a party participates in government, it is the ministers (PiG) who dominate the PPG. This in turn has a big impact on the EPO—for example, in the Netherlands. The internal hierarchy of such parties is ministers first, parliamentarians second and the membership organisation third. But the picture is not as clear as this simple scheme suggests. The order can be different at different points in time. In between elections this scheme may reflect reality, but as soon as elections are approaching the EPO may gain influence, for example through its role in the selection of candidates and sometimes also through its influence on programme development. Immediately after the elections, the PPGs may also have an important say in the formation of a new cabinet. The impact of the temporal power of the EPO and the PPG, therefore, forces us to use the (sub) types in Figure 1.3 with even more prudence than the other typologies. In some countries, mainly because of personal overlap, it is also simply impossible to disentangle the precise power relations within the parties with integrated PPGs, for example in the Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany and Sweden. In other countries, however, the dominance of one party domain over the others is clearer. In Slovakia, a shift of power from the PPG to the PiG has taken place during recent years (Ch. 12). In various opposition parties in Hungary, the PPG clearly dominates the EPO, while this is less true for governmental parties (Ch. 13).

Traditionally Dutch parties have had quite a strong demarcation line between the party in government and PPGs, but this line has become more blurred over the years (Andeweg, Ch. 6). When a government has been in power for a long time there is a tendency for a ‘governmentalisation’ of the PPGs to emerge, i.e. making the PPG more of an ‘instrument of the government’. Time in office thus seems to change the power relationship to the advantage of the PiG.

Institutional factors also impinge on the PiG-PPG relationship. The formal overlap of positions in governments and PPG (s) is one such factor. In Germany the *Kanzler* is given strong state prerogatives, but he does not, unlike his British colleague, have any leadership position within his PPG, even though he remains very influential. There are, as we have discussed above, very different practices within European parliaments as to whether ministers can stay on as MPs when in government. Another important factor influencing the balance of power between PiG and PPGs is also brought out by the German experience, namely the fact that for most of the time its post-war governments have been coalitions. The FDP has been the junior partner and Saalfeld classifies its parliamentary domain as a ‘ruling PPG’ (Ch. 2). It is the government’s need for parliamentary majorities that gives coalition PPGs a strong position. One could see a political advantage for the FDP, as the junior partner in government with its weak EPO, to keep a strong position *vis-à-vis* the government. The position of a minority government also leaves much initiative and power to its supporting PPG (s). They have the political prerogative of telling the ministers about what is

politically possible in parliament. This mechanism can be documented quite easily by the Danish custom, mentioned earlier, of government by grand parliamentary compromise.

System implications

The links between the EPO leadership, the PPG and the party ministers in government (PiG) are in general closer than ever. It is our assertion that this trend toward PPG complexes and 'integrated PPGs' is in part a result of persistent efforts to cope with changing and turbulent surroundings—like increased electoral volatility and increased media impact. The increased flux and turnover in policies and personnel has led to a closer decision-making elite milieu at the crossroads of EPO, PPG and PiG. We would expect, for example, that the frequency of public conflict between these three branches of the party has generally decreased in the 1980s and 1990s in European parliamentary democracies. It is also our assertion that, in this triangle, the position of parliamentary party groups has increased in importance.

The benefits of party unity have, of course, been common knowledge since parties first emerged, but have become even more crucial over the last few decades. A more recent factor enhancing PPG strength is the—in most countries—substantial increase of state subvention. The parliamentary party complexes, resulting from the growing generosity of the state, have put the PPGs more and more in a position to dominate their EPOs in terms of policy formulation. In addition, the constant stream of changing policy issues in modern politics has also given the PPG a more prominent position in the programmatic sphere. The (full-time) political professionals in and around the PPG seem to be better equipped to deal with rapidly changing issues than is the EPO, which traditionally concentrates more on long-term policy formulation. Moreover, since the personalities of the MPs and ministers have become more important in election campaigns, the PPG and the PiG have increased their relative strength within the party. The EPO, however, is—as we have seen—not without power. The process of candidate selection is an especially important device in redressing the balance somewhat. But as this control over candidate selection has in some cases decreased and a tendency exists in many parties for membership as well as EPO activities to decline, the EPO position within the party-as-a-whole is threatened. It must be noted, however, that in Germany federalism continues to be a countervailing force to an overall dominance of the Bundestag PPGs.

Thus, within the parties-as-a-whole, the EPOs are in general losing power to the PPG. If the party participates in government, however, the role of the ministers (PiG) tends to be more powerful than that of the PPG. The same emphasis on issues and personalities accounts for this. The agenda-setting power of government is stronger than that of the PPG, and most of the time the top leadership in governing parties are ministers.

If we leave the *party* perspective and turn instead to a *parliament* perspective, we can also observe that the importance of the PPGs is growing. The saliency of PPGs within the parliamentary system is nothing new, as the quotation by Lord Bryce in the Introduction indicates. He insisted on the necessity of some predictability in parliamentary business in order to realise responsible and effective government. He considered the PPGs to be essential in this respect. They ‘rationalise’ parliamentary work, as Raunio put it in his chapter on the European Parliament.

But in the previous chapters other system implications or functions have been mentioned as well. In the new democracies in Central Europe, PPGs play a central role in organising political life, because—apart from the (former) communist parties—EPOs were initially not well developed and were often mistrusted. The electoral slogan of Václav Havel’s Civic Forum, cited in Kopecký’s chapter on the Czech Republic, illustrates this: ‘Parties are for party members, Civic Forum is for everybody.’ The newness of modern democratic politics in Central Europe underscores the educational value of the PPGs. They are considered to be ‘the engines of learning and pursuing professional politics’ (Ilonszki, Ch. 13).

Also in the older parliamentary systems, different functions of PPGs can be observed. Norton mentions several of them in his chapter on the United Kingdom. First, PPGs offer backbenchers an opportunity to have *some policy influence* through participation in PPG committees. Second, PPG meetings serve as a *safety valve*: MPs can vent anxieties behind closed doors, away from the public eye. After this, it is easier for parliamentarians to support their party in public. Third, PPGs offer MPs some collective strength and *autonomy vis-à-vis* the EPO. This is especially the case within the Conservative Party, where the party leader is selected by the PPG, and not by the EPO. This must be considered to be a typically British Conservative feature, however. In most parties in other countries, the selection of the leader of the party-as-a-whole is a matter for the integrated leadership of the party, and then often formally sanctioned by the congress of the EPO. Also within British Labour since 1981, the PLP is only one of the selectors, accompanied by affiliated trade unions and the constituencies in the EPO. But PPGs can be influential in the leadership selection in other countries as well, even if their formal powers are relatively small. In the Netherlands, for instance, the PPG always ‘elects’ the number one candidate on the electoral list as its chairperson after the elections. But if this person is appointed minister in the cabinet and therefore has to give up his or her parliamentary seat, or leaves the PPG for other reasons, the PPG can autonomously decide who is going to be its new chairperson. And this new PPG leader will be in a very good position to be elected by the EPO as the number one on the electoral list when the old party leader resigns.

The three functions mentioned by Norton serve either the individual MP or the party or both, but not the parliamentary or political system as such. Norton mentions two other functions of PPGs that have more direct implications for the political system. First, PPGs offer an opportunity for *specialisation and*

information-gathering. Of course, size is important here. A division of labour is only possible when there are enough MPs within a PPG to share the parliamentary work. Specialisation can improve the control function of the parliament *vis-à-vis* the government. The government with its bureaucracy has an enormous informational head start. While the size of bureaucracies has grown at a great pace during the twentieth century, the size of parliaments has more or less remained the same. The professionalisation and specialisation of MPs was the answer. The existence of PPGs made specialisation possible. State subvention for the hiring of secretarial and professional staff offered new opportunities to bridge the informational gap.

Within most major PPGs in the countries studied in this volume, the system of specialised parliamentary committees is (often) more or less 'mirrored' within the PPGs. This two-tiered system of parliamentary specialisation gives individual MPs the opportunity to discuss policy questions with fellow partisans who are specialised in a related field first, before entering the parliamentary arena. Internal party cohesion is fostered, while parliamentary debate is better prepared. But there is also another side to the coin. Specialists of several parties sometimes meet their colleagues from other parties more often than their fellow partisans in parliament. Consequently, specialisation, which is made possible through the existence of PPGs, may present the same PPGs with an (inter-party) cartel of sectoral interests that is hard to control. Specialisation leads to segmentation of PPGs, as Bille has shown in his chapter on Denmark. Fighting this danger may perhaps be why the PPG in Denmark meets so often (daily) and gets analytical support from and is under the ideological guidance and control of 'political-economic departments'. The leader of the parties-as-a-whole again controls these 'departments'. This situation somewhat resembles the Belgian case, in which MPs work together with experts from the 'party research centres'. These research centres have an important co-ordinating role within the party-as-a-whole.

Second, specialisation may enhance *regime support*, as Norton argues. PPG committees in Britain provide a means of allowing interest groups some input into the political process. Again this might be a British phenomenon. The Belgian case also makes it clear that interest groups are still very influential in the selection processes within political parties. The same is true for Austria and until recently for the Netherlands. In consociational societies the direct access of interest groups to both candidate selection within parties and decision-making within government does not make PPG committees particularly attractive for interest groups as the latter are represented in the process anyhow.

But consociationalism is declining. In the Netherlands politics has been 'depillarised' since the mid-1960s, and in Austria and Belgium this process is also under way. Does this mean that PPGs will become more important as gateways to parliamentary decision-making for interest groups in the future? Not necessarily. If neo-corporatist structures remain intact while consociationalism is fading, the interest groups will continue to have direct access to the decision-making process and therefore do not need to concentrate

on the MPs and PPGs in parliament. But if neo-corporatist practices are absent or in decline, the attraction of PPGs may indeed increase. The British system, especially in the Thatcher era, was suspicious of neo-corporatist structures, which explains why interest groups tried to find other ways to influence politics: they lobbied the PPG committees. The neo-liberal atmosphere during the 1980s and early 1990s has perhaps favoured lobbying practices, even in countries with traditional neo-corporatist practices.

The most important function of PPGs for the parliamentary system, however, remains the one already mentioned: *giving order to governmental-legislative relations*. Some predictability is needed in order to govern effectively and responsibly. PPGs furnish the necessary vehicle. The recent experience of new democracies in Central Europe shows that even where EPOs were absent or poorly developed, the formation of groups within parliament immediately started after the change of regime. The existence of PPGs reduces the complexity of political life considerably. Instead of dealing with all MPs individually, the government can limit itself to the spokesperson or leaders of the PPGs. And when the degree of cohesion within PPGs is sufficiently high, the government can concentrate on the PPG (s) supporting the government, even though it remains responsible to the parliament as a whole, including the oppositional PPGs.

The *ordering function* of PPGs, however, can be detrimental to the *controlling function* of parliaments—at least if (governmental) PPGs are only used as ‘voting machines’ to applaud governmental policies. If parliamentary predictability turns into parliamentary subservience, government may be effective, but no longer responsible. In none of the countries studied in this volume has this situation occurred, but tendencies are observed. In Belgium the negotiated governmental programme serves as a ‘bible’ for the ministers and their PPGs alike, which means that the PPG freedom to develop and adopt a different position is almost nil. The same was said of the Netherlands during the 1980s, although the drafting of the governmental programme was very much influenced by the PPGs. In Denmark as well, the role of PPGs is said to have become closer to that of approving than of guiding, but again—perhaps because of the existence of minority governments—the influence of PPGs is substantial. In Austria, PPGs serve as ‘sounding boards’ for the cabinet, and their leaders even participate officially in cabinet meetings.⁶ The time when the Austrian governmental PPGs only rubber-stamped governmental decisions belongs to the past.

The Austrian example points to the possibility that, even when the influence of PPGs on governmental policies cannot be ignored, the very fact that this influence is exercised in close co-operation with the government makes it difficult for the members of (governmental) PPGs to act as independent representatives with respect to them. They are themselves partly responsible for these policies. The traditional ordering function of PPGs, together with the growing importance of integrated party leadership, therefore, leads to a possible decline of the controlling function of parliament. Only opposition parties

assume this function, but these are (generally) in a minority position and are almost always divided. The ‘Westminster’ way of controlling the government by the parliamentary opposition only, has become more widespread in other countries. These, however, do not have an electoral system that allows for a clear ‘swing of the pendulum’. Governmental accountability, then, may be in danger of evaporating following the growing ‘integrated leadership’ and the ‘integrated’ policy formulation within modern parties.⁷

Combining the ‘party’ and the ‘parliament perspective’, we are able to make one final remark. In recent debates on the growing anti-political sentiment in various Western countries, the position of the political party is central. Political parties are said to be in danger of losing their ‘intermediary role’ between civil society and the state, between the citizens and their representatives. At the same time the parliamentary groups of the parties still play an essential ‘intermediary role’ between parliament and government. If the role as an intermediary between the citizens and the state is declining while at same time the party’s role as intermediary between parliament and government becomes all the more important, the balance between EPO and PPG by implication shifts to the advantage of the latter. That the classical type of mass parties is being replaced by other party types, has been a recurrent theme in party research since Kirchheimer—in 1965—introduced the ‘catch-all party’ as an ideal type for future developments, suggesting the decreasing importance of the membership organisation. New parties increasingly tend to become instruments of the elite or the declining group of active cadre or both, and they lack a mass basis in society. Some would therefore speak of a ‘decline of parties’. But the evidence in this volume makes it clear that there is no general decline of parties, as the PPGs remain important or are even gaining saliency. The ‘decline of parties’ thesis is perhaps relevant when discussing the EPO, not when dealing with the PPG. That is not to say that the PPG is not affected. To the extent that the intermediary role of the EPO is lost or in decline, the PPG is confronted with a double task: not only will it have to take care of the ‘ordering function’ between parliament and government, but it will also, and more than ever, have to play the intermediary role between citizens and the state. A traditional division of labour between the two party domains seems no longer to be adequate. This double task puts the PPGs under pressure and makes them the prime object of criticism. The growing isolation of parties from the wider society, although an effect of the decreasing mass basis of the EPO, is blamed on the PPG. A reduced ability to independently control the government is blamed on the PPG as well. The central, but vulnerable, position of parliamentary party groups in political systems makes it all the more interesting to know what is going on behind those closed doors.

Notes

- 1 The Danish Progress Party actually had open PPG meetings during the first years after entering the *Folketing*.

- 2 If there is one. They are formally absent in the Netherlands, where the country is one constituency.
- 3 We should not make too much out of this, however, as the practice can be found in many left socialist and communist parties in other countries. The historic reason for this 'party tax' was that the EPO did not want its parliamentarians to become part of bourgeois institutions and bourgeois society.
- 4 It is another matter when constituency parties are searching for a *new* candidate.
- 5 Borrowing a Norwegian expression about the leader of the Progress Party in Norway.
- 6 More or less official participation can be found also in other countries. In West Germany PPG chairmen have participated in important government decision-making at various phases (Küpper 1985:154; Rudzio 1991).
- 7 Federal structures as in Germany may be seen as a countervailing force by making resources available for the opposition, for example in the Bundesrat.

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