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"POSITION-TAKING, INFORMATION, OR INSTITUTIONS?
WHY ITALIAN GOVERNMENT BILLS CHANGE IN THE LEGISLATIVE
ARENA (1987-2006)"

SPS/04

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INTRODUCTION

Policymaking in contemporary parliamentary democracies appears to be dominated by cabinets. The vast majority of legislative proposals originate in governmental offices, and most of these bills are eventually enacted (see Andeweg and Nijzink 1995: 171; Gamm and Huber 2002: 323). However, the legislation sponsored by governments is often modified during the lawmaking process. This observation is so trivial that it does not seem to be worthy of any further investigation and indeed, with very few exceptions, scholars interested in legislative processes pay relatively little attention to the changes made to bills in parliamentary systems. Comparative studies often describe legislative institutions in parliamentary countries as ineffectual vis-à-vis cabinets throughout the lawmaking process, while rational choice literature focuses more on the formal rules regulating amendatory activity than on amendatory activity in itself[1].

On the one hand, typically motivated by the normative question of whether 'parliament matters', over the last decades comparative research has characterized legislatures in many parliamentary countries as weak institutions (see, for example, Mezey 1979: 36; Blondel 1995: 250). In fact, over the past century the expanding scope and complexity of governmental tasks and the growing size of state bureaucracy have prompted 'modern' parliaments to devolve increasing powers to the prime minister and the cabinet (Bagehot [1872] 2001; Bryce 1921; Cox 1987; Wheare 1963). As a result of such delegation, in contemporary parliamentary systems legislative activity revolves mostly around government bills. Thus, since the inter-war period a long line of scholars have diagnosed a decline of parliamentary principals vis-à-vis cabinets as their agents (see, for example, Bryce 1921: 367-377), and legislatures have even been defined as mere 'rubber stamps' for decisions made elsewhere, or 'talking shops' tamely approving legislation laid before them by governments for ratification (see, for example, Johnson 1982).

On the other hand, most of the time the rational choice literature has just focused on the formal rules regulating the lawmaking. In particular, the type of amending rule employed in a legislature has primarily been studied as one of the institutional factors constraining actors' behaviour. In line with the fundamental idea that outcomes are produced by a combination of individual preferences and insitutional rules (see, for example, Plott 1976), this strand of research – and more precisely social choice theory – considers amending rules among the procedures that allow to translate legislators' preferences into collective choices, thus shaping the legislative

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[1] The terms 'amendatory activity', 'legislative review' and 'parliamentary scrutiny' are used interchangeably throughout the text. Also the terms 'legislature', 'parliament' and 'assembly' are used in an interchangeable manner. In addition, I use the terms 'multiparty government' and 'coalition government' interchangeably to refer to instances where the cabinet ministers belong to more than one political party.

outcomes (see Rasch 1995, 2000)[2]. Being typically interested in the level of similarity between the proposer's ideal point and the final legislative outcome, social choice works take the preferences as constant and study how changes in the rules affect this similarity. Since the distance between the proposer's ideal point and the final outcome depends on the particular rules employed, any reduction or increase of this distance will be the consequence of some change in the institutional rules (see, instance, Baron and Ferejohn 1989).

Remarkably, the theoretical models built within this framework allow us to evaluate the so called agenda setting power: the closer is the final outcome to the proposer's ideal point, the stronger is the proposer in setting the agenda (see, for instance, McKelvey 1976). However, at least in their baseline formulation, these models are not particularly useful for studying the transformations undergone by government legislation in parliament. Indeed, the distance between the proposer's ideal point and the final legislative outcome does not necessarily result in observable modifications to the initial bill. As I will show, if political actors knew perfectly each other's preferences as well as all the implications of the legislative rules, and if their utility derived simply from the legislative outcome, in parliament we would observe no changes to government bills. The proposer would present a bill corresponding to the best policy she can obtain given the present rules and the distribution of political preferences among the actors, and such a proposal would be approved in parliament without any change. This would happen under any amending rule. Therefore, we would not see any transformation in parliament even in presence of a huge distance between the proposer's ideal policy and the final outcome.

Nevertheless, legislation is often amended in real-world parliaments. How can we account for the amendments successfully made to government bills during the legislative process? What affects their number and importance? Moreover, is it posible to explain successful amendatory activity in a way that is also consistent with the theory? As outlined in the literature, three fundamental considerations may help us answer these questions and improve the explanatory power of standard models.

First, for the actors involved in the parliamentary process the political utility may not depend entirely (and, sometimes, hardly depends) on the policy implications of the legislative outcome, i.e. on the actual consequences of the law finally approved. The parliamentary arena is not simply a place for passing bills into laws, but also an important venue where political actors send signals to the electorate, in particular to their own respective constituencies. More precisely, introducing a bill has also a *position-taking utility* (Mayhew 1974; Huber 1996): hoping for future electoral rewards,

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[2] For introductions to social choice theory, see for example Riker (1982) and Sheplse and Bonchek (1997).

political actors may want to propose policies that appeal to their own voters even when they know in advance that such bills will be amended during the legislative process.

Second, the *level of information* at political actors' disposal throughout the legislative process may be somehow limited. In particular, actors have rarely complete information about other actors' preferences and perfect information about the actual effects of the laws (Krehbiel 1991).

Third, in presence of at least one of the previous two circumstances the particular *institutions that regulate the legislative process* will affect the amount of changes made to bills in parliament.

Relying on these considerations, it is possible to identify the following three major sets of (non-mutually exclusive) theoretical explanations of the modifications made to governmental bills during the legislative process:

I)   *Explanations based upon the conflict*. Since legislation is introduced (also) as a means of communicating with the electorate, cabinet ministers can propose their own ideal point in order to appeal to their own respective constituencies. As a consequence, the dissimilarity between the initial governmental bills and the laws finally approved in parliament – i.e., the amount of modifications made – indicates true conflict among the actors (and the positions they take before the voters) participating in the lawmaking process.

II)   *Explanations based upon the lack of information*. If the level of knowledge in the cabinet is relatively low and governmental bills reflect such lack of information, the following parliamentary step allows actors to learn and to correct the initial proposals by amending them.

III)   *Explanations based upon institutional changes*. Legislative outcomes are affected by the type of amending rule employed as well as by other institutional arrangements. The more restrictive the rules, the lower the possibility of altering legislation in parliament. Most of all, any change of amending rule from the open rule type to the closed rule type will decrease the amount of modifications made to government bills[3].

As pointed out before, very few studies try to explain how much laws are altered in the legislative arena and why (the only important exception is Martin and Vanberg 2005). In the present work, I analyze the modifications made to government bills during the legislative process as an outcome itself – that is, as a dependent variable. In particular, based on the three major sets of explanations introduced above, I present a conceptual framework where to locate existing and original theoretical explanations of the occurence of changes to governmental bills in parliament.

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[3] As I will explain in the introduction to the first chapter, my research design does not allow to test the effect of different amending rules on parliamentary scrutiny of government legislation. Neither is possible to assess the impact of alternative institutional arrangements, with the exception of the 1993 reform of the Italian electoral system.

Hence, I empirically evaluate the hypotheses derived from the literature against evidence from Italy (1987-2006), in which regard – as far as I know – no research has ever sought to explain successful amendatory activity by testing a set of alternative hypotheses.

The literature on post-war Italian politics has emphasized the wide-open amendment process for virtually all legislation (Hine 1993; Hine and Finocchi 1991; Manzella 2003; Predieri 1975), together with the difficulties of the government in controlling the legislative process (Allum 1973; Blondel 1988; Cazzola 1975; Predieri 1963; see also Mezey 1979 and Norton 1994) and the strength of Italian parties in it (Di Palma 1978; Furlong 1990). It has been argued that, due to the complex array of procedural opportunities at Italian legislators' disposal, the Italian parliament may encourage extensive amendatory activity, to the extent that it seems reasonable to talk of an 'amendment culture' (Cocozza 1989: 242). Indeed, the standing orders of both Italian chambers grant all the actors involved substantial amendatory powers. On the one hand, the government and the referral committees succeed in getting almost all of their amendments passed. On the other hand, the standing rules enable opposition parties to considerably delay legislation and provide individual MPs (also from the majority) with significant power to table amendments. As Capano and Vignati (2008: 38) recently argue, the Italian legislative process is characterized by a series of potentially 'nested amendatory games', whereby the government's strategies and tactics overlap and conflict with those of opposition parties and those of members or groups within the parliamentary majority.

In the literature, the largely unrestricted Italian amendment process has been commonly considered either as part of the consensual legislative style that according to the prevailing view characterizes Italian lawmaking, or as one of the major reasons of the growth of public debt in Italy.

As for the former interpretation, a long line of scholars have emphasized that longstanding rules of procedure provide many groups with vetoes throughout the entire legislative process (Allum 1973; Blondel 1988; Cotta 1990; Di Palma 1976, 1978; Furlong 1990; Hine 1993; Hine and Finocchi 1991; Manzella 2003; Spotts and Wieser 1986). In particular, although public debate and election time are characterized by harsh political confrontation, the actors involved in the lawmaking adopt a consensual approach from the introduction of bills, through the amendment process, to the final voting. In addition, recent studies on Italian legislative process have shown that the consensual style of Italian lawmaking seems to have persisted even after the end of the so called First Republic (Capano and Giuliani 2001a,b; 2003a,b). Remarkably, since the 1990s, a number of works have highlighted a strengthening in the concrete legislative powers of the Italian executive (Capano and Giuliani 2001b, 2003b; Zucchini 2005, 2006). Yet, this happened because Italian governments began to adopt circumventing tactics – that is, a variety of techniques to circumvent the ordinary legislative process. More precisely, they make increasing use of delegating laws,

decree-laws, and maxi amendments. However, this does not imply that the Italian parliament is now less able to influence the legislative process through the institutional means traditionally at its disposal, most of all its amendatory powers.

Concerning the latter interpretation, the analyses of Italian legislative outputs have always emphasized the huge quantity and the particularistic nature of the legislation produced by the Italian parliament (Cantelli, Mortara, and Movia 1974; Di Palma 1978; Bonanni 1983; Motta 1985). It has been shown that Italian negative financial outcomes are among the direct consequences of this type of legislation – that is, micro-sectional laws serving specific constituencies. More in particular, many scholars see the amending power of the parliament as a crucial factor explaining the growth of public debt in Italy (Tabellini and Alesina 1990a,b; Alesina and Perotti 1999; Masciandaro 1996).

In any case, a line of research explicitly studying amendments as a dependent variable is lacking in Italy. Existing Italian works focusing on amendments are largely descriptive in nature and ambition (see, for example, Di Palma 1978 and Capano and Vignati 2008). So far, no studies empirically evaluating a set of alternative explanations of the modifications made to bills are available.

Before reviewing the literature on the topic, let me emphasize that the primary interest of the present work is in the transformations undergone by government legislation during the parliamentary process. In other words, I try to explain why and to what degree governmental bills are altered in the legislative arena. To this purpose, I focus on the amount of observable changes, and neither amendatory activity *per se* nor the approval of amendments are the concern of this work. Indeed, as for amendatory activity, the efforts made by parliamentary groups and individual legislators in preparing and submitting amendments are only partially related to the modifications we observe in the course of the parliamentary process: the changes actually carried out are just a part (a small part) of the overall number of amendments presented to governmental bills. A couple of considerations may help us understand this. On the one hand, quite trivially, not all the amendments which are tabled can succeed in assembling the majority of parliamentary votes necessary for their approval. On the other hand, not all amendments are introduced with the aim that they will be approved: as commonly acknowledged, a large portion of amendments is presented for obstructionist or merely expressive purposes. With regard to obstructionism, time is an extremely scarce resource in the parliament, and opposition parties may present a huge number of amendments to block government bills or to get some concessions from the majority. In a recent contribution on Italian amendatory process, Capano and Vignati (2008: 50-52) show that during the 1997-2006 period the same parties submitted thousands of amendments when in the opposition, and very few while in government. Concerning the expressive function of amendatory activity, Di

Palma (1978: 91-93) analyzes Italian legislation from 1948 to 1972 and finds that amendments were primarily presented by members of small parties at the most visible stages of the legislative process. Similarly, Mattson (1995: 481-482) argues that the members of all West European parliaments often table amendments simply as a way to attract media attention and communicate with their own electorate – that is, as a means of showing their constituents what they are doing for them[4]. Importantly, they may be willing to do so even knowing that their real chances of success are scarce. Hence, there seems to be a fairly weak relationship – if any – between amendatory activity and the changes to government bills which we observe in the course of the legislative process, and the reasons that induce political actors to engage in amendatory activity do not appear useful for explaining the size of the actual transformations. Indeed, as Di Palma (1978: 93-96) shows, it is precisely on the bills that receive the largest number of (presented) amendments that amendments are the least likely to be accepted.

In addition, studying the conditions under which presented amendments are more likely to be approved does not help in understanding how much governmental legislation is modified during the parliamentary process. In fact, arguing that the amendments proposed to certain types of bills have higher success rates does not necessarily imply that those bills are actually more changed: some amendments might have high probabilities of being approved because they are minor or even irrelevant (see Weingast 1992)[5]. Instead, certain bills might be substantially altered also when the success rates of the amendments presented to them are very low.

All that said, both amendatory activity and the approval of amendments seem to reflect different logics than the subject of the present work, and therefore the factors which may account for the presentation of amendments and their success appear unlikely to explain the actual transformations experienced in parliament by government legislation. As a consequence, in the following pages I will not consider hypotheses explaining why certain types of bills are subjected to more (proposed) amendments, or why some parties or individual legislators are more likely to submit amendments, or why certain types of amendments have higher probabilities of success.

In the first part of the present work I will discuss a number of theoretical explanations of the changes made to governmental legislation during the parliamentary process. More precisely, in Chapter 1 and 2 the accounts which are based upon position taking and conflict will be examined. In particular, the second chapter deals with Martin and Vanberg's (2005) influential hypothesis, according to which governmental bills are altered in parliament because coalition members monitor

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[4] This is especially true for opposition representatives, who - unlike their colleagues from the majority - cannot show their electorates the results achieved and the benefits distributed by the government.
[5] Providing evidence from the 98th U.S. Congress (1983-1984), Weingast (1992: 156-159) shows that, although amendments opposed by the proposers of bills have relatively high success rates, many of these changes are rather innocuous.

each other's ministers. In Chapter 3 and 4, then, I will discuss explanations emphasizing lack of knowledge and changes in institutional rules, respectively.

The second part of this thesis (Chapter 5) is devoted to the presentation of my dataset and the discussion of how I operationalized the dependent variable – *government bill changes*, measured as the number of changed words – as well as the entire set of the independent variables.

Finally, in the last part (Chapter 6) I introduce the statistical technique I employed (a Negative binomial regression model) and present the result of my analysis of the changes made to government bills in Italy during the 1987-2006 period.

PART I.

THEORY AND HYPOTHESES

As highlighted before, in their standard formulation social choice theoretical models do not allow to account for the transformations of government-initiated bills we observe in parliamentary processes. Commonly assuming complete and perfect information as well as the absence of position-taking incentives, those models predict no modifications to legislation at all. In other words, the (governmental) proposer of a bill has all the information concerning the other actors' preferences and the policy implications of her proposal. Also, she knows in advance which policy will be finally voted on the floor given the current institutional rules. Since, in addition, her utility derives entirely from the final policy outcome, she would rarely introduce to parliament a bill corresponding to her own ideal point. Rather, she would propose a bill which represents the best she can achieve under the present rules and the distribution of political preferences in the parliament. A simple spatial illustration may help understand how standard models work. Figure I.1 shows what happens in the standard situation in a unidimensional policy space and under two different types of amending rule identified in the literature: the open rule, that permits amendments to bills, and the closed rule, that prohibits amendments.
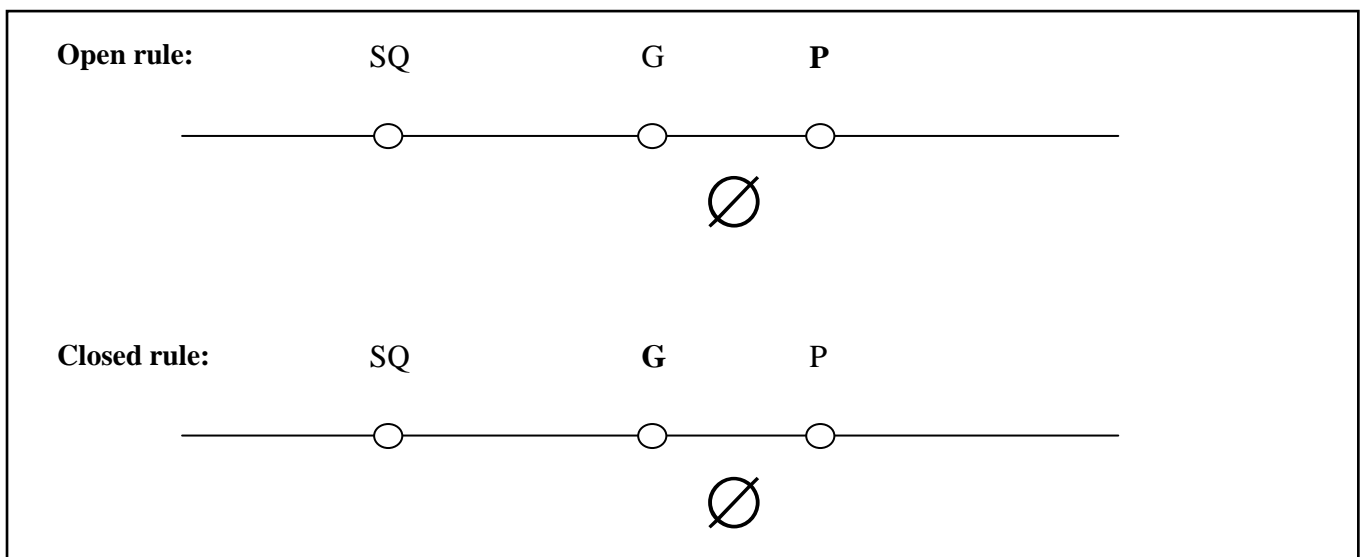
Figure I.1
Changes in government bills assuming complete and perfect information and no position taking
(by type of rule)

Let G be the government's position, P the point corresponding to the position of the parliamentary median voter, and SQ the status quo[6]. Bold letters indicate the final legislative outcome. It is easy to

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[6] For ease of illustration, here I consider a one-dimensional policy space (for the plausibility of this assumption, see below, note 69). Moreover, as for now, I identify G with the ideal point of the governmental proposer of bills, without distinguishing whether such a position reflects that of the proposing minister or a compromise within the cabinet (see below).

see that, if complete and perfect information is assumed and position-taking utility is excluded, under either amending rule the model predicts no changes to government bills (∅). Under an open rule, the government knows in advance that any legislative proposal would be amended to P in the parliamentary arena[7]. Therefore the government cannot avoid proposing P, which is the best that can be obtained given the present rules and preferences. Coinciding with the parliamentary median voter, the governmental bill is passed into law without any transformations. Similarly, under a closed rule the government knows that any proposal will not be amended on the floor and thus introduces a bill corresponding to its own ideal point (G). Since amendments are forbidden, the parliament approves the bill in its original formulation[8]. It is worth noting that, without modifying the baseline assumptions, even a change from a restrictive amending rule to a permissive one does not result in observable transformations to governmental bills.

However, as pointed out in the introduction, the explanatory power of these models can be improved if we allow position-taking behaviour and/or relax the assumption of complete and perfect information. On the one hand, political actors use the legislative process also as a means of communicating with their respective voters. Thus, even if they know that their proposals will be amended on the floor, cabinet ministers may decide to "take a stand" when introducing legislation. In other words, they may propose their own ideal point in order to secure future electoral benefits for the party they belong to. On the other hand, cabinet ministers may not know exactly the other actors' preferences, and may be unable to perfectly anticipate the effects of laws. The bills they propose are then modified in parliament in order to correct such limited knowledge. In addition, as I will show, these two modifications of the standard assumptions produce different effects if combined with diferent types of formal rules.

Let me illustrate what happens when we introduce position-taking incentives in the standard model presented above[9]. Remarkably, as Figure I.2 shows, the government proposes its favourite policy (G) under either amending rule: the utility of sending signals to their own particular constituencies leads cabinet ministers to propose bills reflecting their sincere preferences even in presence of an open rule. Hence, whereas under a closed rule amendments are prohibited, under an open rule the parliamentary median voter is free of modifying legislation and indeed will amend government bills to its own ideal point (P). This way we can account for the transformations of bills we observe in real-world parliaments. In particular, the amount of changes made in the legislative

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[7] Of course, for the parliamentary median voter the benefits from the final legislative outcome must outweigh the costs of revising the governmental bill. Otherwise, the same possibility of any transformation would not exist.

[8] This argument works also when SQ is on the right of G. In any case, under an open rule the parliamentary median voter (P) has to be closer than the SQ to G. Otherwise, the government would prefer the status quo and therefore would not propose any bill in the policy dimension at hand. In addition, under a closed rule for the parliamentary median voter the governmental proposal has to be closer than SQ. Otherwise, the status quo would prevail in the final voting.

[9] What follows is meant to be a simple illustration of the argument, not a formal proof.

arena will be equal to $\lvert$ G - P $\rvert$, that is the distance between the initial bill and the final outcome (in this case, the parliamentary median voter)[10]. In the figure, such modifications are represented by the arrow. It is worth noting that the final law can be very different from the bill initially proposed[11]. However, from the governmental proposers' point of view, since utility does not derive simply from actual policy implications but also from the perspective of possible future electoral rewards, proposing something they know will be changed is far from being a useless activity.
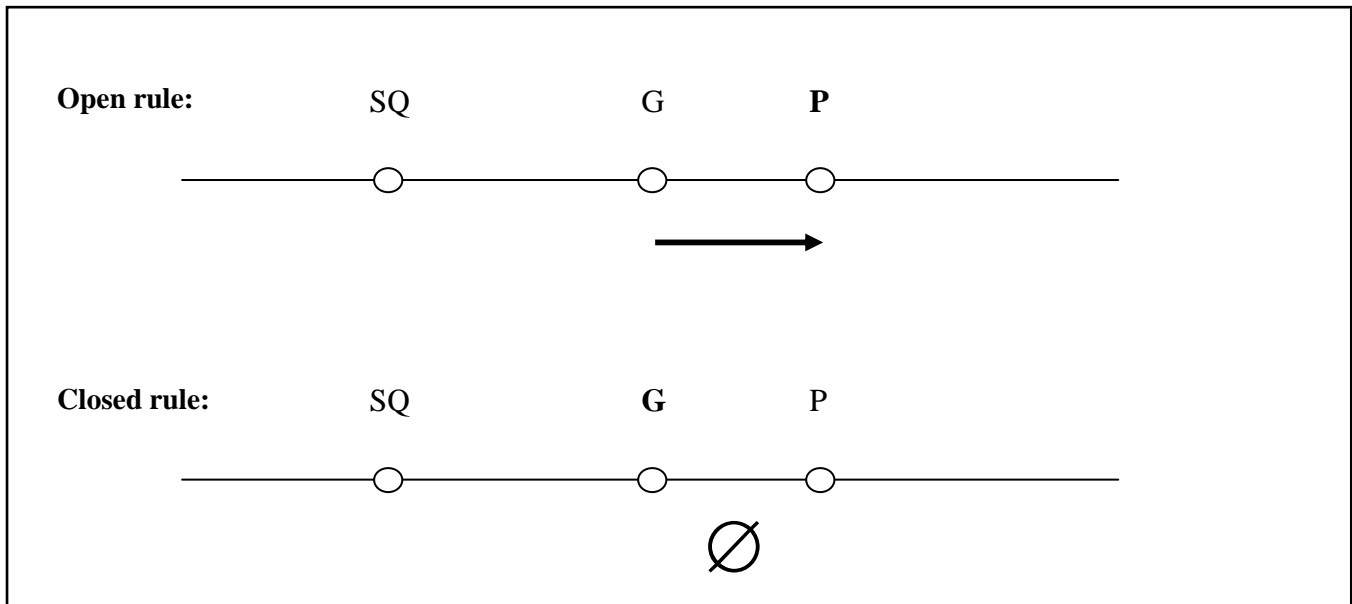
Figure I.2
Changes in government bills assuming position taking utility
(by type of rule)

The results are similar when the assumption of political actors' complete and perfect information is relaxed. Let us consider the case in which governmental actors do not fully anticipate the effects of laws when they introduce them. As shown by Figure I.3, also in this case under an open rule we are able to explain the occurrence of successful amendments to government bills during the legislative process. In particular, governmental proposers do not have a perfect knowledge of the actual policy consequences of laws when they draft them. This may happen, for example, when the subject dealt with by the law is particularly complex. Under an open rule, the government introduces P, which seems the best achievable policy given the present rules and the distribution of preferences. However, once such a bill is discussed in the parliamentary arena, the

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[10] As I will show, the final point to which governmental bills are amended is not necessarily the parliamentary median voter.

[11] Moreover, in presence of position-taking incentives the position of SQ is less important than in the previous situation. In an extreme case, it might also happen that the final law approved in parliament is farther from the proposer than the status quo.

political actors learn aspects of the subject which were previously unknown, and understand which are the actual policy implications. In other terms, they may discover that the policy proposed by the government is actually located in P(G). Since P(G) does not coincide with the position of the parliamentary median voter (P), on the floor it is amended to P. The distance $\left| P(G) - P \right|$ thus measures the amount of changes made under an open rule to government bills that reflect limited information in the cabinet.
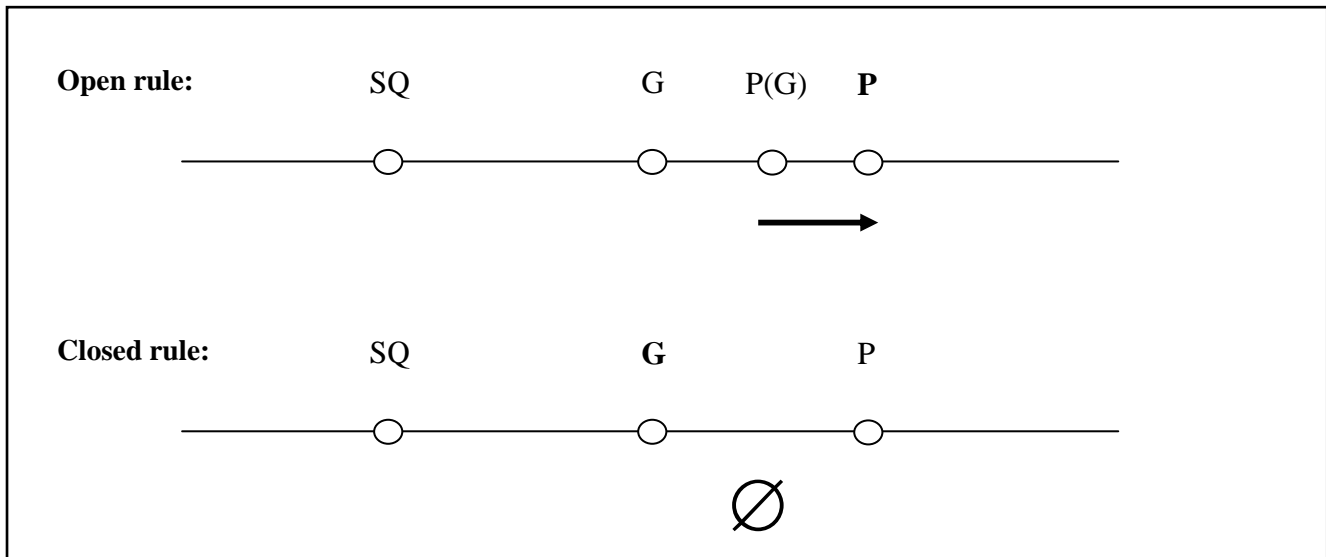
Figure I.3
Changes in government bills assuming imperfect/incomplete information
(by type of rule)

Note that we have the same results when the government does not completely know the distribution of preferences among the actors. If ministers erroneously believe that the parliamentary median voter is located in P(G) while it is actually P, they will propose P(G) and on the floor their bills will be changed to P[12].

It is easy to notice that position-taking and lack of information arguments are not mutually incompatible. Rather, they can reinforce each other as well as combine with changes of formal rules. On the basis of the arguments sketched above, it is possible to distinguish between three major sets of theoretical explanations of the changes made to governmental bills in the course of the legislative process:

    I)   *Explanations based on position-taking and conflict;*

    II)   *Explanations based on the lack of information;*

    III)   *Explanations based on institutional changes.*

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[12] In addition, political actors may not know even the exact location of the status quo.

In the next four chapters I review the literature dealing with the parliamentary transformations undergone by government legislation. Although in real parliamentary life the three above mentioned explanations are unavoidably intertwined, for analytical purposes I discuss them separately and I present the testable explanatory hypotheses that can be derived under each of them. More precisely, I examine theoretical accounts relying on a position-taking argument in the first and second chapters, dedicating the latter to Martin and Vanberg's (2005) hypothesis, which currently is probably the most influential one. According the authors, in parliament the members of multiparty coalitions amend government-initiated legislation in order to monitor each other. Then, the third and fourth chapters are devoted to explanations based on the lack of knowledge and the changes of institutional rules, respectively.

Remarkably, scholars interested in the topic have placed particular emphasis on the conflict between actors – and, in particular, on some peculiar types of conflict – as the key explanatory factor. My literature review cannot avoid reflecting this imbalance.

Let me also point out that in the fourth chapter most of the hypotheses dealing with changes of rules are discussed just for purposes of completeness, as my research design does not allow to empirically evaluate them. Indeed, the processes through which governmental ordinary legislation is approved in Italy takes place under an open amending rule[13]. Moreover, during the chosen time span the institutions regulating the parliamentary process have not undergone substantial reforms except when, in October 1996, the Italian Supreme Court ruled unconstitutional the reissuance of decree-laws. In addition, studying a single country makes it impossible to test the effect of alternative institutional arrangements external to the parliamentary process on legislators' ability to amend governmental bills. In this respect, however, in the period under consideration a fundamental change occurred in the electoral system, which in 1993 turned from a purely proportional representation system into a mixed one.

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[13] Of course, amendments are not allowed when the government attaches a question of confidence to a bill or to some part of it. However, although more frequent than in the past (Zucchini 2005), this practice is far from being the rule in the Italian legislative process.

CHAPTER 1.
POSITION TAKING AND CONFLICT AMONG ACTORS

Governmental legislation is first proposed and deliberated in the cabinet, and then introduced, discussed and finally approved in parliament. Theoretical explanations emphasizing the conflict among the relevant actors maintain that position-taking incentives drive governmental actors to present bills which appeal to their own constituencies; these bills are hence turned into laws that are acceptable for the legislature after being altered on the floor or in committees. In other words, there is dissimilarity between the governmental proposal and the final law, and such dissimilarity indicates a conflict between the actors involved in the legislative process. Since we are in the presence of a two-stage process whereby the cabinet deliberation is followed by the introduction in parliament of government proposals, the possible conflicts that explain amendatory activity reflect the possible interactions both within the cabinet and between the cabinet and the parliament. More precisely, two factors have a crucial role:

- the type of decision making inside the cabinet, and
- the difference in terms of preferences between the cabinet and the parliament[14].

As for the first factor, the literature dealing with coalition governments provides two alternative models of decision making inside the cabinet: 1) ministerial discretion and 2) collective cabinet responsibility[15]. According to Laver and Shepsle's *ministerial discretion model*, coalition parties are granted property rights over specific jurisdictions through the allocation of ministerial portfolios[16]. Thus, we can maintain that each minister drafts the bills falling under her policy jurisdiction independently of the other members of the cabinet, and then presents them to the parliament for approval (Laver and Shepsle 1994, 1996; Laver 2006; see also Austen-Smith and Banks 1990)[17]. In this case, the place where governing parties actually bargain is not the cabinet, but the legislature. By contrast, Tsebelis' (1995, 2002) veto players framework is the basis of a *model of collective cabinet responsibility*. Since each coalition party's agreement is necessary for a change of policy, the responsibility of government decisions is mostly collective and there is always a deliberation or

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[14] At least in principle, a third aspect could be relevant: the type of decision making inside the parliament. However, since in the present work I analyze only ordinary legislation, such a factor remains constant across laws. As Rasch (1995: 494-495) shows, in Italy and all the other European countries the voting procedure adopted in parliament for passing ordinary legislation is the simple majority.

[15] In Strøm's (1994) definitions, "ministerial government" and "cabinet government", respectively.

[16] In his discussion of alternative explanations for budget policy in Italy and Belgium, Hallerberg (2000: 6-7) defines such a model as a 'fiefdom' approach.

[17] This view seems supported by what is reported in a number of studies of cabinet decision-making: in several parliamentary countries there is a tacit rule of mutual non-interference within the government, whereby ministers do not criticize the proposals drafted by their colleagues (see country chapters in Laver and Shepsle 1994; see also Gallagher, Laver, and Mair 2006: 43). The presence of such a rule is explained by the ministers' lack of time (capacity) and the logic of anticipated reciprocity between them.

a bargaining process within the cabinet. Accordingly, the modifications to government bills we observe in parliament depend on the fact that the decision equilibria reached in the cabinet can be different than those that will be reached in the legislature.

Concerning the distance in terms of preferences between the cabinet and the parliament, two situations are possible: the cabinet can be either 1) *representative* or 2) *not representative* of majoritarion preferences in parliament. In the former case, the preferences that are present at the cabinet level represent those of the parliamentary majority. Hence, their aggregation in the cabinet should, at least in principle, generate an equilibrium (i.e., a governmental bill) which corresponds to the equilibrium in the legislature. In the latter case, we have two possibilities: either the cabinet does not control a majority of seats in the parliament; or the cabinet does control a majority of parliamentary seats, but for some reasons cabinet decisions do not represent the preferences of the parliamentary majority. We may have this last situation when, for instance, due to the particular type of aggregation rule employed for cabinet decisions, the equilibrium reached in the cabinet (i.e., the governmental proposal) does not correspond to the equilibrium in the parliament.

Combining the type of cabinet decision making and the difference in terms of preferences between the cabinet and the parliament, we can obtain a conceptual map of the conflict-based theoretical explanations of the changes made to government bills during the legislative process. Let me precise that what is displayed in Figure 1.1 is not to be understood as a rigorous classification, but just as a framework where to locate existing and original explanatory hypotheses[18].

In the remainder of the present chapter, I discuss the hypotheses displayed in the figure. In particular, in the first section I consider the explanations maintaining that the preferences of the parliamentary majority are not represented in the cabinet, and in the second section those assuming no difference of preferences between cabinet and parliament. In both cases, I specify which hypotheses can be derived under either collective cabinet responsibility or ministerial discretion. Finally, the third section is devoted to the discussion of the role of presidents of parliamentary chambers. As I will show, presidents' preferences may affect the amount of modifications made to governmental bills under either type of cabinet-parliament interaction and of cabinet decision making. As anticipated above, Martin and Vanberg's (2005) hypothesis, which belongs to the set of explanations reviewed in the second section of the present chapter, will be examined in detail in the next chapter.

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[18] For ease of illustration, all the explanatory hypotheses related to ideological conflict within the cabinet (H.12) are not displayed in Figure 1.1. Such hypotheses, which will be discussed in the second chapter, would obviously be located in the same place as H.12. See Figure 2.1.
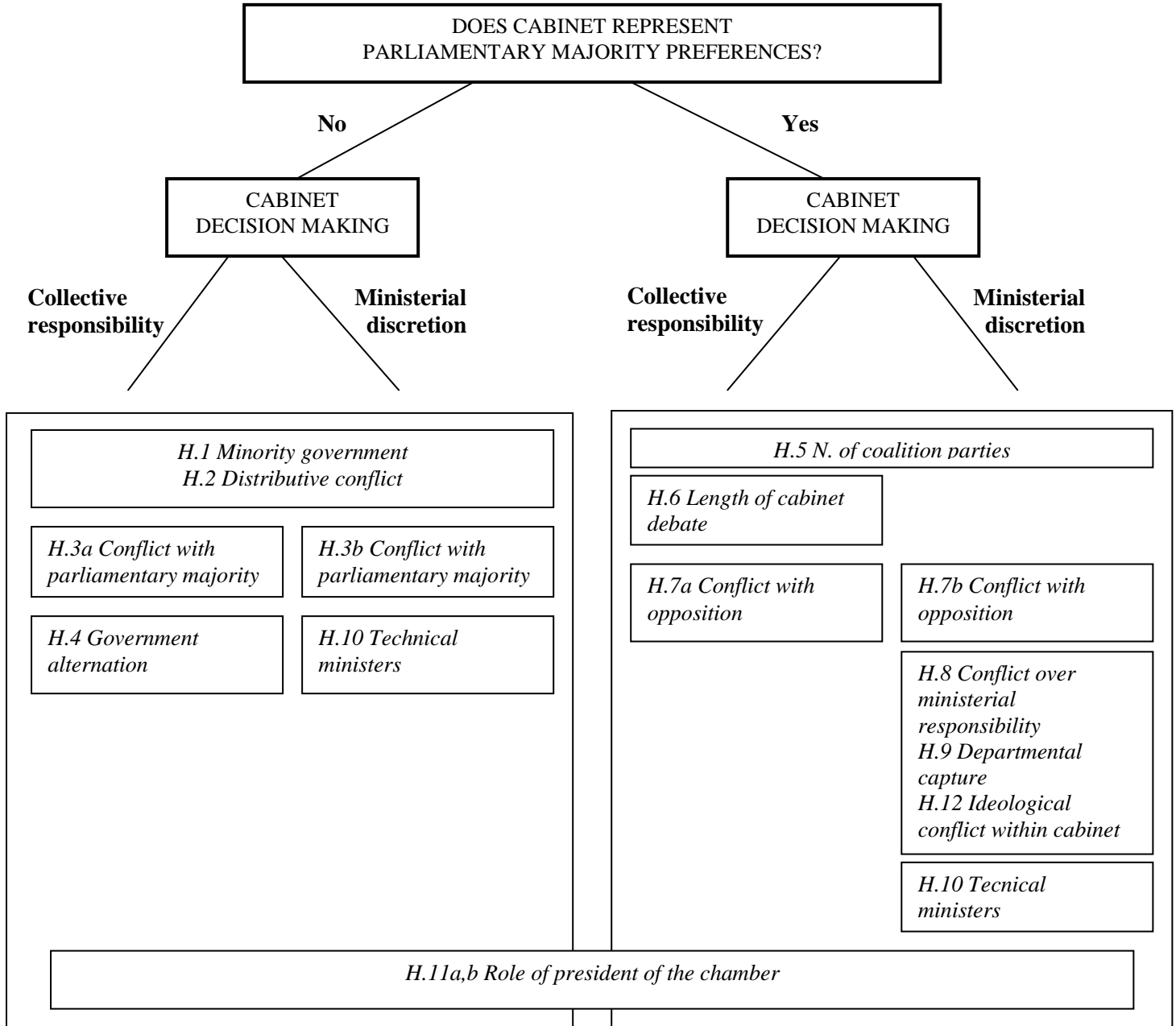
Figure 1.1

Explanations based upon position taking and conflict among actors: a conceptual map.

1.1 WHEN CABINETS DO NOT REPRESENT PARLIAMENTARY MAJORITY PREFERENCES

When the preferences in the cabinet do not reflect those of the parliamentary majority and actors are driven by position-taking incentives, the legislation approved in the cabinet is unlikely to be satisfying for the parliamentary majority. Government bills are thus altered during the legislative process until they become acceptable to the parliamentary majority. The preferences in the cabinet may not be representative of those of the parliamentary majority in several possible situations. First of all, quite trivially, when the government is a minority government. Secondly, when the content of government legislation has a distributive nature. Thirdly, when the voting rule in force in the cabinet prevents government decisions from being representative of the parliamentary majority preferences. Finally, when we introduce Tsebelis's (1995, 2002) veto players approach and acknowledge the importance of the position of the status quo. While the former three circumstances are independent of the type of decision making inside the cabinet, the latter one assumes collective cabinet responsibility.

1.1.1 Minority governments

By definition, minority governments control no more than 50 per cent of the seats in parliament[19]. It is trivial, therefore, to state that such governments do not represent the preferences of any parliamentary majority. Driven by position-taking incentives, the members of minority governments propose bills which – they know – are unsatisfying for the parliament and so will be amended. This simple logic works with both types of cabinet decision making: legislation initiated by minority governments is modified in parliament whether it reflects just the drafting minister's ideal point or the result of a complex bargaining within the cabinet. It is therefore possible to derive the following hypothesis:

> **H.1 Minority Governments:** *We expect more changes to government bills during the legislative process when the government is a minority government rather than a majority one[20].*

In their influential study of legislative review of government legislation, Martin and Vanberg (2005: 104-105) suggest that the type of governmental coalition (majority versus minority government)

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[19] Governments in parliamentary systems are supported by a parliamentary coalition, which is the set of legislators that are expected to support government initiatives. Concerning minority governments, the parliamentary support coalition may include the parties that support the government on its formal investiture or in subsequent confidence votes (Laver 2006: 127-128).
[20] The 'all else being equal' clause is presumed in all the hypotheses formulated in the theoretical chapters of the present work.

may have some effect on the level of modifications made to bills in parliament. However, the cases they choose to analyze do not allow them to investigate the impact of such a factor. Indeed, throughout the considered period the two countries they select (Germany 1983-1994 and the Netherlands 1982-1994) were characterized by majority government coalitions only (for a discussion of Martin and Vanberg's work, see the second chapter).

In this respect, the case selection seems to favour the present research. One major advantage of examining Italy is that the sample of bills exhibits substantial variation in terms of coalitional attributes. Therefore, although my analysis concerns a single country, the chosen time span (1987-2006) allows to assess the impact of different types of government (minority, minimum winning, oversized, technocratic) on the amount of changes undergone by government legislation.

1.1.2 Distributive conflict

A theoretically crucial explanation I will test relies on a distributive perspective on legislative institutions (see, for example, Shepsle 1979a,b; Shepsle and Weingast 1981; Weingast, Shepsle and Johnsen 1981; Weingast and Marshall 1988; Baron and Ferejohn 1989) and argues that government legislation is altered during the parliamentary process because reelection-seeking political actors try to secure benefits for their own constituencies. According to a vast literature in formal political science studying how different voting procedures in legislatures lead to different outcomes and primarily focusing on the U.S. Congress, representatives with geographically based constituencies ask for spending programs that benefit their district and are financed nationwide. The modifications that are made to bills thus depend on politicians' will to ensure particular benefits for their constituencies and to secure their own reelection.

Drawing on Lasswell's (1958) insight that the fundamental question of politics is how the gains from a bargaining situation are to be distributed among members who have heterogeneous and sometimes conflicting preferences, the distributive perspective on politics is based on the obsevation that politicians come to the legislature with a variety of purposes. As the scholars in this body of literature have variously assumed, these purposes may derive from the electoral connection, from the wish for power, or from the desire to enact policy preferences[21]. In any case, decision making in the legislature is characterized by heterogeneity of tastes: there is not any view on the use of legislative authority which is shared by enough legislators to be decisive (see Shepsle and Weingast 1995: 10). Remarkably, in the framework of social choice theory, as Arrow's (1951)

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[21] According to Mayhew (1974), reelection concerns are legislators' fundamental motivation: in order to ensure their reelection, representatives engage in credit-claiming, advertizing, and position-taking activities. In Fenno's view (1973), legislators pursue three goals – reelection, power, and good public policy – and the relative importance of these different goals may vary during a member's career (Fenno 1978, 1989).

impossibility theorem implies, in a unicameral, majority rule legislature there is no voting equilibrium unless some restrictions ('structure') are imposed by procedural rules. Since any alternative can be put simultaneously and costlessly against any other alternative, the legislature would never produce any expenditure policy, but only legislative chaos. As Shepsle (1979a,b) demonstrates in his fundamental works, imposing restrictions on the ways in which alternatives are posed against each other can generally solve Arrow's problem and induce stable equilibrium choices – that is, predictable legislative outcomes. Thereafter, a wide research program in formal political science has studied how different voting procedures produce different legislative outcomes, focusing most of the time on the budget in the U.S. Congress. Being conceived of as the result of the conflicting interests of actors with geographically based constituencies, policy – and the budget in particular – is seen as a distributive problem among districts. Accordingly, two problems are of primary concern in this line of research: the determination of the size of the budget and the allocation of projects among different districts.

Weingast, Shepsle, and Johnsen (1981) provide a clear example of a study of policymaking in the context of distributive policy. In offering a rational political explanation for the approval of inefficient distributive policies in the U.S. Congress, they develop a formal model of the public choice mechanisms in a cooperative legislature in order to show the political factors that systematically bias public decisions away from efficient outcomes. In so doing, they emphasize geography as the hallmark of distributive politics and the source of its inefficiency: projects are geographically targeted, and geography is the basis for political organization and representation. Weingast, Shepsle, and Johnsen (1981: 643) define distributive projects (or pork barrel projects), as projects that concentrate benefits in a specific geographic constituency and spread their costs across all constituencies through generalized taxation[22]. Although distributive projects are typically assembled in a single large bill, namely an omnibus package[23], each project is fashioned independent of the others in the omnibus, since its benefits are concentrated in a geographically specific constituency. In other terms, if N is the number of districts and taxes are equally distributed among them, the voters of the ith district receive benefits from a certain public project in their district, but have to pay just $1/N$ of the total costs of this project. As a result, since each legislator is electorally motivated to serve the economic interests of his own constituency, such that in his

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[22] Distributive policies (called by Ferejohn [1974] 'divisible' policies) may include public works projects about rivers and harbors (Maass 1951; Ferejohn 1974), appropriations (Fenno 1966), urban renewal (Plott 1968), land and resource management (Fenno 1973), elements of tax policy (Manley 1970), private member bills (Froman 1967), tariffs (Schattschneider 1935), military procurement (Rundquist 1973), categorical grants-in-aid (Mayhew 1974), and even some social programs (Stockman 1975). For a discussion of the different types of policies based on on the incidence of costs and benefits, see Wilson (1973). See also Lowi (1964).

[23] Sinclair (1997: 64) defines omnibus legislation as 'legislation that addresses numerous and not necessarily related subjects, issues, and programs, and therefore is usually highly complex and long'. For a recent review of the concept of omnibus legislation, see Krutz (2001).

political calculus local gains and losses are valued more than nonlocal effects[24], the legislature will select an omnibus of projects with geographically targeted benefits and diffuse financing costs, each of which exceeds the efficient scale (Weingast, Shepsle and Johnsen 1981: 646-658)[25].

Remarkably, as the authors point out and a vast amount of empirical evidence on the U.S. Congress demonstrates, the combination of universalism and reciprocity represent the critical features of a voting equilibrium leading to an oversupply of pork barrel projects. On the one hand, universalism assures any district a project. On the other hand, according to the practice of reciprocity, the representative of the ith district votes in favour of a project for district j, expecting the same favour in return from the representative of district j in the next vote (Weingast, Shepsle, and Johnsen 1981: 651; see also Weingast 1979; Collie 1988)[26].

The scholarship relying on the distributive approach has typically focused on one legislature: the U.S. Congress. However, the idea that amendatory activity depends on politicians' will to secure particular benefits for their constituencies has been applied also to parliamentary countries. Mattson (1995), for instance, shares this view in his contribution to Döring's 1995 volume on parliaments in Western Europe. In analyzing private members' bills and amendments, Mattson (1995: 483) argues that in European parliaments these two types of legislative behaviour perform both instrumental and expressive functions. As for the former functions, which are more interesting here, private bills and amendments are not only employed as a means of affecting legislation, but also as instruments for ensuring legislators' renomination and reelection. In particular, through them individual representatives may try to show their constituents that they are promoting the interests of the district. Moreover, private members' bills are often pork barrel projects, containing particular benefits for the members' districts. Private members' bills are commonly small in scope, brief, uncontroversial and have minor financial impact. Being pork barrel projects, they concentrate their benefits in some specific geographical districts and disperse their costs across all constituencies through generalized taxation. Further, these projects are able to satisfy demands from various small groups and are approved through a bipartisan legislative process (Mattson 1995: 482).

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[24] More precisely, each legislator is assumed to maximize the district's private benefits, minus its share of the taxes, minus the externalities of the project which fall on the district (Weingast, Shepsle, and Johnsen 1981: 652). In the authors' view, representatives are conceived of as reelection oriented, and their reelection chances are positively associated with the net benefits they deliver to their constituents. In other words, the authors maintain that voters behave in a *retrospective* manner: their decisions depend on what legislators have done for them. This contrasts with the prospective voting model, whereby voters choose on the basis of promises for future policies (see Downs 1957).

[25] As Weingast, Shepsle, and Johnsen (1981: 658) point out, a cooperative legislature has no incentive to entirely remove the sources of inefficiency. These are the politicization of expenditures, the districting mechanism, and the general taxation as financing mechanism.

[26] Evidence abounds that universalism and reciprocity are the prevailing decision rules in the U.S. Congress. Almost all the studies cited in note 20 show it. On their turn, a number of other works have focused on the choice among different decision rules, identifying the conditions under which institutional actors prefer universalistic criteria to pure majority rule (Fiorina 1978; Weingast 1979; Shepsle and Weingast 1981).

To sum up, within the distributive approach bills are conceived of as proposed distributions of benefits among districts, and are used to secure politicians' reelection. For our purposes, we may argue that governmental actors propose legislation that delivers particularistic benefits to their geographical constituencies or to certain interest groups. Importantly, position-taking incentives drive cabinet members to do it even when they know in advance that their bills will be amended in parliament. In other words, although they anticipate that the original proposal will be altered in order to reach a majority of votes, governmental actors may derive considerable utility from showing that they are trying to promote the interests of their district or to satisfy the demands of some influential interest groups. This may happen under both types of cabinet decision making.

If ministers are assumed to prepare legislation independently of each other, they may want to present bills which benefit just their own district or certain groups. Of course, these bills are not acceptable to any parliamentary majority since they do not represent any majority of constituencies.

If we suppose that ministers collectively decide upon the content of bills, then government legislation represents the entire cabinet, but the benefits it distributes are not always satisfying for the parliamentary majority. Indeed, even when the government parties control a majority of parliamentary seats, the functional or geographic constituencies represented directly by ministers in the cabinet cannot be large enough to enjoy a majority in the parliament[27].

In either case, government bills are modified in the legislative arena because, on their turn, reelection-seeking legislators add 'new constituencies' such that a parliamentary majority is reached. As a consequence, defining distributive bills as programs that concentrate benefits in a well-defined special interest and widely distribute costs (Wilson 1973: 333-334), the testable hypothesis which can be derived from this body of scholarship is the following:

H.2 Distributive conflict: Bills with a distributive nature should be more extensively modified in parliament than other types of bills.

Looking at the literature on postwar Italian politics, it seems reasonable to consider Italy as an appropriate setting for the application of the distributive perspective on legislative institutions. Indeed, many scholars have emphasized the distributive nature of legislation and have considered the amending power of the parliament as a reason of the excess of budget debts.

As Di Palma (1978: 102) argues, the occurrence of amendments may be viewed as an indicator of centrifugal tendencies in the Italian parliament. More recently, Hine (1993: 172-174) highlights the importance of Italian politicians' constituency as well as the distributive nature of

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[27] For instance, imagine that in a certain country the parliamentary majority is representative of both the northern and the southern regions of that country, while all the ministers in the cabinet come from northern districts. In this case, also bills which represent the entire cabinet are not acceptable to the parliamentary majority.

Italian legislation. As the author points out, Italian MPs' local ties strongly condition their behaviour: combined with the pressures stemming from electoral competition, they create a parliamentary class which promotes locally directed legislation. This is proven by the highly disaggregated and distributive nature of Italian legislation: governments tend to accomodate all the interests, meeting particularistic demands and distributing something to everybody (see Cantelli, Mortara and Movia 1974; Bonanni 1983; Motta 1985). In Hine's (1993: 171) view, parties in the Italian parliament represented overlapping and highly fragmented interests throughout the so called First Republic. On the one hand, due to their strong local ties, politicians from the DC and the other majority parties used to press sectional demands: benefits for their constituency as well as resources for their personal electoral machine and for the organized faction they belonged to. On the other hand, also the Communists used to promote sectional demands (that at least in part overlapped with those of the governing parties), although not having the same individual entrepreneurialism typical of the Christian Democrat group. According to Cotta (1994: 60-64), due to the noticeable degree of parliamentary individualism in both chambers, Italian backbenchers have a legislative culture closer to that of the U.S. Congress than to that of many European legislatures. As Hine and Finocchi (1991: 83; 95, n. 4) stress, this is reflected in Italian legislators' attitudes about the legitimacy of questioning, altering, delaying and rejecting government legislation, and in their considerable autonomy from party leaders. In the authors' view, one of the consequences of Italian backbenchers' legislative culture is, as in the U.S., an unhealthily large budget deficit (see also Hine 1993: 180-182).

Relying explicitly on the distributive perspective on legislative institutions, large part of the studies of Italian budgetary process see the amending power of the parliament as a crucial factor explaining the growth of public debt. For example, Masciandaro (1996) employs a theoretical scheme of analysis based on Weingast, Shepsle, and Johnsen's (1981) model, in which reelection-seeking politicians try to maximize the benefits for their own constituencies (either geographical districts or particular categories or interest groups). In Masciandaro's (1996: 401-417) analytical scheme, as in those inspired by the U.S. Congress, each legislator finds incentives to amend the governmental budgetary bill in order to provide his own constituency with benefits, thus increasing the overall amount of public exepnditures. The author's aim is to explain how, during the budgetary process, certain institutional aspects of the relationship between government and parliament – namely, the type of amending rule employed – affect the amount of public expenditure[28]. In particular, Masciandaro (1996: 417-419) demonstrates that MPs are more able to affect the amount of public expenditures the more powers of amending the governmental budgetary project they have.

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[28] The reason why Masciandaro (1996: 399) develops such a model is discussing the possible consequences of a proposed reform of the Italian budgetary process implying a closed amendment rule.

In so doing, he distinguishes between two 'budget regimes': the 'parliamentary' type, in which the legislature can amend and introduce, with a majority vote, expenditure proposals; and the 'governmental' type, where the legislature can either accept or reject the governmental budgetary bill. As Masciandaro (1996: 419) argues, the Italian case approaches the parliamentary regime since Italian parliament enjoys considerable proposal powers during the budget session: both chambers can modify the budgetary bill presented by the government, and appoint committees specifically dedicated to fiscal matters, with proposal and amending powers[29].

Let me precise, however, that the amending power of parliament is not the concern of the present work. Indeed, the fact that legislators are more able to amend government bills during the budgetary process does not necessarily result in more extensive modifications to those bills. Unlike the rest of legislation, the budget must be approved within a limited period of time. Hence the government, being aware of the amending powers of the parliament, may attempt to reduce the possible obstacles to the approval of the budget by strategically including in the initial bill some concessions to certain representatives or parliamentary groups[30]. In this case, the amount of changes we observe between the initial bill and the final law does not indicate the actual extent of the conflict between the actors involved.

1.1.3 Conflict with parliamentary majority

As Huber (1992: 682) suggests, we may observe changes to government legislation during the parliamentary process simply because the cabinet and the floor have different policy preferences: as policy divergence between the cabinet and the floor becomes larger, he argues, the modifications to the government's text of a bill increase. Hence, in testing the hypothesis that restrictive procedures

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[29] The thesis of the amending power of the parliament as the main factor of public deficits and debts, which has long been an axiom in the literature on Italian fiscal policy, assumes the existence of a relationship between the type of electoral system and the size of budget deficits. The conventional wisdom is that PR systems tend to produce larger deficits than plurality systems (see, for example, Persson and Svensson 1989; Roubini and Sachs 1989; Grilli, Masciandaro, and Tabellini 1991; Hahm 1994; Alesina and Perotti 1995; for an alternative perspective, see Hallerberg and von Hagen 1997a). In Italy, where the PR produced a multiparty system, the political fragmentation prevented governments from controlling the legislative agenda, particularly in fiscal matters. Thanks to the mass of amendments submitted during the budgetary process, the Italian parliament was able to considerably influence the budget project proposed by the government, thus producing growing deficits and debts. As predicted by Grilli, Masciandaro, and Tabellini (1991), a move from PR to a plurality system would have improved the government's control of the agenda and reduced the amending power of the parliament, leading to lower budget deficits. However, interestingly, in a recent analysis of Italian financial laws Fedeli and Forte (2007) find that in the 1988-2002 period neither the parliament exploited its amending power to increase the budget deficits beyond the planned value, nor the 1994 adoption of a quasi-plurality electoral system affected the use of the amending power, since governments proved to be able to control the amendments flow under both electoral systems. According to the authors, the structural break of the Italian budgetary policy was instead the Maastricht Treaty, whose fiscal rules succeeded in constraining both the government and the parliament to a new budgetary discipline.

[30] In other words, during the budgetary process we may assume that the position-taking incentives for governmental actors are somehow compensated for by the need to speed up the approval of the budget.

are used by the government to protect its bills from change, Huber assumes that successful amendatory activity (measured as the sum of all accepted amendments on a bill) is a proxy for the distance between government and floor preferences[31].

Apart from minority governments and distributive legislation, the preferences of the cabinet and those of the parliamentary majority may not coincide under other circumstances. For example, when the cabinet controls a majority of parliamentary seats, but government decisions are taken under a particular type of aggregation rule which produces a cabinet equilibrium different from the equilibrium in parliament (i.e., the parliamentary median voter). This may happen when decisions within the cabinet are taken by majority rule and each party enjoys equal consideration, no matter its size. In a one-dimensional policy space, the median voter in the cabinet can often be different from the median voter in the parliament. Government parties know that the difference between these two majority equilibria will result in modifications to the initial bill in parliament, however they face position-taking incentives and therefore choose to introduce legislation which pleases their voters.

Maintaining that the parliamentary median voter eventually prevails in the legislative arena, we can have conflict between governmental proposers and parliamentary majority under both types of cabinet decision making. If cabinet decisions are taken according to collective responsibility, coalition partners may bargain and finally agree to submit a certain government bill (corresponding, for instance, to the cabinet median voter) in order to convey a symbolic 'compromise' message to the electorate. Yet, as the equilibrium in the parliament is different, that bill will be modified. If, instead, we assume ministerial discretion, individual ministers may want to introduce bills in order to communicate their own ideal point to their respective constituencies although they know in advance that those bills will be amended to the parliamentary median voter. Therefore,

> *H.3 Conflict with parliamentary majority: I expect more changes to government bills as the policy distance between a) the government compromise or b) the proposing minister and the parliamentary median voter increases.*

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[31] As acknowledged by Huber (1992: 684) himself, the use of amendments as a proxy for differences between government and floor preferences may raise two objections. First, in case of multidimensional bills a huge amount of modifications does not necessarily stems from a wide divergence of preferences between government and floor. Second, all else equal, large bills are likely to experience more changes than small bills. As I will show, I control for both factors in my empirical analysis.

1.1.4 Status quo and veto players approach

There is another situation in which, in presence of position-taking motivations, the difference between cabinet decisions and parliamentary preferences may result in observable modifications to governmental bills during the legislative process. It is the case when decision making in the cabinet not only conforms to collective responsibility, but the unanimous agreement of all the government parties is necessary to change the policies enacted by prior cabinets. In the present paragraph, I employ Tsebelis' (1995, 2002) veto players approach and discuss an original account of the changes made to government legislation in the course of the parliamentary process. As I will illustrate, the position of the status quo may result to be a key factor for explaining how much governmental bills are altered in the legislative arena[32].

Except for the one which is discussed in this paragraph, all the explanations considered in the first and second chapters of the present work are based upon some conflict among actors and ignore where the status quo is located before the lawmaking process starts in the cabinet. Indeed, if we assume that political actors in the cabinet cannot prevent a decision making process whose last outcome is for them worse than the status quo (i.e., they lack gatekeeping power), then the position of the status quo does not matter at all. However, this assumption may be disputable: fundamental contributions in the literature on comparative politics (Tsebelis 2002; Cox 2006) assign to each government party the possibility to veto the policy change. A veto players framework allows to take this possibility into account, and once such an approach is introduced, the position of the status quo becomes a crucial variable.

Imagine hence that the assent of each coalition party is required for a change in policy (Tsebelis 1995, 2002). Suppose that (1) the equilibrium decision at the cabinet level (i.e., the bill which is introduced to parliament) corresponds to the policy closest to the cabinet median voter that is also unanimously preferred by the government parties to the status quo, and that (2) the final outcome in parliament (the approved law) is the policy closest to the parliamentary median voter that is also unanimously preferred by the government parties to the status quo. The second assumption requires that coalition parties prefer the final policy outcome to the status quo. Otherwise, they would not introduce any bill. The first assumption, instead, requires that also the cabinet deliberation, which is induced by position-taking utility, is preferred by all the government parties to the status quo. In other words, even if coalition partners know in advance which policy will be approved on the floor, the need to communicate with the electorate drives them to jointly present to parliament a policy which is different from the final law. Under these two assumptions, the farther the status quo is from the government, the more government-sponsored bills are

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[32] This paragraph owes much to Francesco Zucchini.

modified in parliament. A simple graphical illustration in a one-dimensional policy space (Figure 1.2) can easily show why it happens.
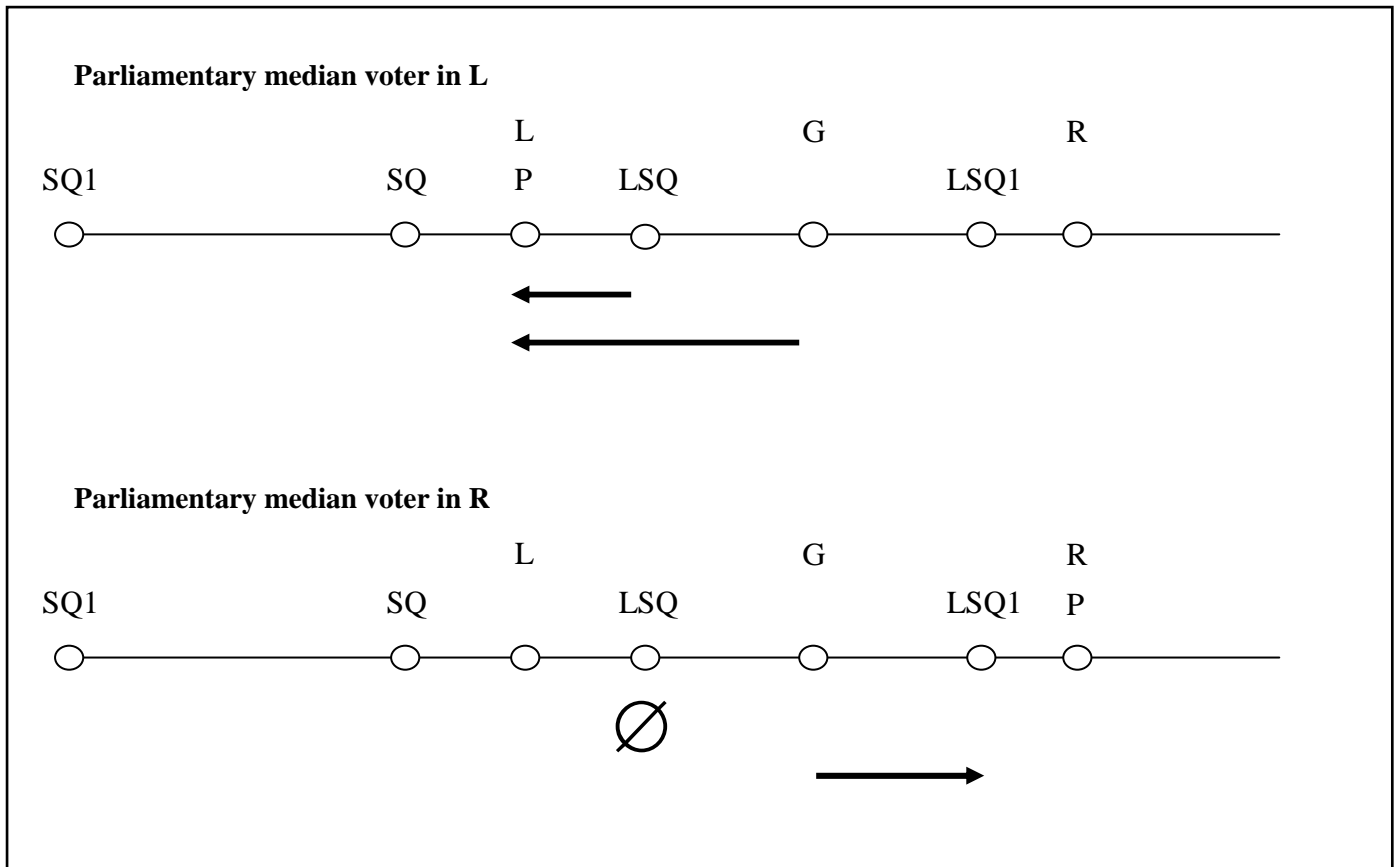
Figure 1.2
Changes in government bills and location of SQ.

Imagine a coalition government formed by three parties: L, G and R. G's ideal point represents also the cabinet median voter, while P is the median voter in the parliament. The figure illustrates how the location of the status quo affects the amount of transformations experienced in parliament by government bills in two different scenarios: in the first one the parliamentary median voter (P) overlaps with the leftist coalition party (L), while in the second one it overlaps with the rightist coalition party (R). The status quo is located on the left of L[33], and its position can be either SQ (near the government) or SQ1 (far from the government). LSQ is a policy on the right of L and marginally better for L than SQ. Similarly, LSQ1 is on the right of L and marginally better than SQ1.

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[33] If the status quo were on the right of R, the model would work in the same way (symmetrically).

In the first scenario, when the status quo is SQ the policy closest to the cabinet median voter that is also unanimously preferred by the government parties to the status quo is LSQ. Thus, the bill presented in parliament by the government is LSQ. In the legislative arena, since P is the policy closest to the parliamentary median voter that is also unanimously preferred by the government parties to the status quo, the government bill LSQ is amended to P. The distance | LSQ – P | thus represents the amount of changes made in parliament to the initial bill. If the status quo moves farther up to SQ1, the cabinet median voter G becomes an acceptable compromise also for L. Therefore, since P is still the final outcome in parliament (i.e., the final law approved), the governmental bill is altered more than in the previous situation. As we can see looking at the arrows in the figure, | G – P | > | LSQ – P |.

Let us now turn to the second scenario, where the rightist coalition party R is also the parliamentary median voter P. Also in this case, the farther the status quo is from the government, the more governmental legislation is changed in the parliament. In particular, when the status quo is SQ we do not expect any change as LSQ is both the equilibrium decision in the cabinet (i.e., the closest policy to the cabinet median voter which is also preferred by all the government parties to the status quo) and the final law approved (i.e., the closest policy to parliamentary median voter which is also preferred by all the government parties to the status quo). If the status quo moves to SQ1, the coalition partners jointly propose the cabinet median voter's ideal point, since G is unanimously preferred to SQ1 by all the government parties. In the legislative arena, such a government bill (G) will undergo an amount of changes equal to | G – LSQ1 |. Indeed, the law finally approved will be LSQ1, which represents the closest policy to the parliamentary median voter that is also preferred by all the government parties to SQ1. Quite trivially, | G – LSQ1 | > ∅.

All that said, the position of the status quo appears to be a crucial theoretical factor for explaining the changes made to government bills. However, from an empirical point of view, it seems rather difficult to know exactly where the status quo is located. Nevertheless, if we interpret the status quo for the current government in a certain policy area as the decisions taken by the prior cabinet in that policy area, it is possible to identify a systematic source of relatively large shifts in the position of the status quo in many policy domains: *government alternation*. Government alternation affects the location of the status quo in at least two ways. First, the decisions taken by the previous government are likely to be in many policy areas a status quo far from the current government if the current government is formed by the previous opposition. Second, also the mere perspective of the alternation may have an impact on the location of the status quo. Under the expectation of government alternation, the 'reversion point' in case of no decision can move farther than the present status quo in a certain policy area. In other words, the potential legislative

outcome if the current opposition wins the next elections becomes the status quo that the current coalition parties take actually into consideration. Such a crucial change in the political calculus of goverment parties takes place when the expectations of government alternation are well grounded – that is, when government alternation has already become a real and experienced possibility. Therefore, since the status quo is more likely to be far from the government in the presence of alternation than in the absence of it,

> *H.4 Alternation: I expect that government bills proposed in an alternational party system are more changed than government bills proposed in a pivotal party system.*

Although they are rather rare, in principle we might have large shifts in the position of the status quo also in a pivotal party system. However, these shifts would not result in observable modifications to government bills. As Figure 1.3 shows, in absence of government alternation the location of the status quo is by no means influential.
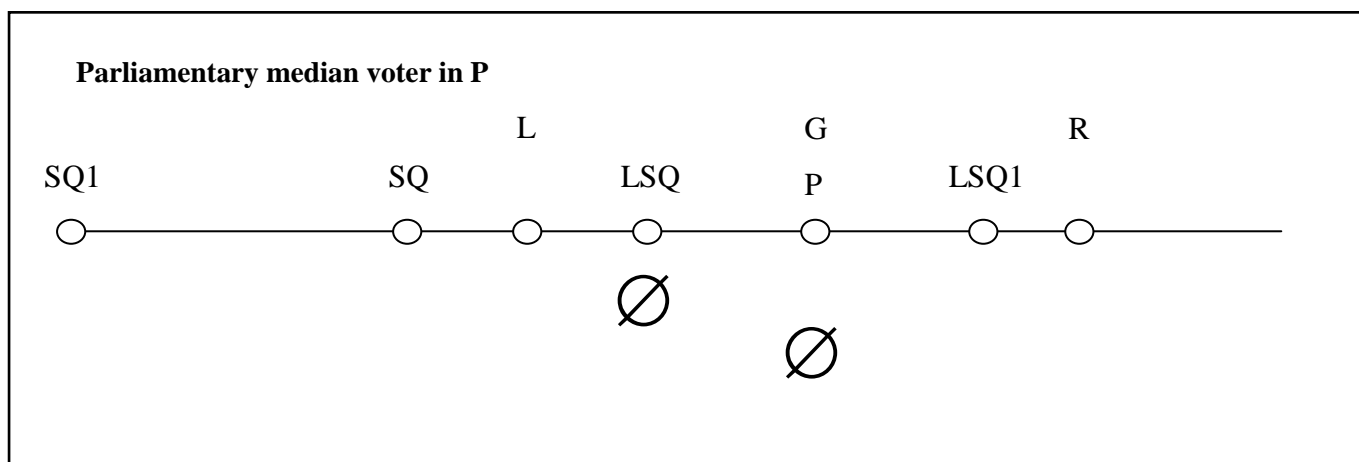
Figure 1.3
Changes in government bills and location of SQ in a pivotal party system.

This figure resembles the two scenarios illustrated in Figure 1.2. However, in this case, G and P coincide. Indeed, it seems reasonable to suppose that in a pivotal party system the median voter in the cabinet is very close to the median voter in the parliament. Since the median voter in the cabinet and in the parliament almost overlap, all the bills that are unanimously preferred to the status quo by coalition parties are passed into laws without changes[34]. In more detail, when SQ is the status quo,

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[34] In other words, the two requirements discussed at the beginning of this section overlap.

the government parties agree on proposing LSQ, which is at the same time the policy that all the coalition parties prefer to SQ and the closest point to the median voter in both the cabinet and the parliament. Such a bill will not be modified in the legislature. The same will happen if the status quo moves to SQ1, with the only difference that in this case coalition partners can implement the ideal policy of the cabinet median voter. Remarkably, in either case we would not observe changes in parliament. The reason is that, if government alternation is neither credible nor possible, the location of the status quo does not affect the amount of modifications made to governmental legislation.

1.2 WHEN CABINETS DO REPRESENT PARLIAMENTARY MAJORITY PREFERENCES

How is it possible to account for the changes made to government bills when cabinets are assumed to replicate the preferences and the equilibria of the parliamentary majority? When the preferences of the cabinet and those of the parliamentary majority coincide, the prime minister and his cabinet colleagues are expected to introduce legislation that is absolutely acceptable to the legislature and thus will not be modified. However, in presence of position-taking incentives, there may be situations in which this does not actually happen. First, assuming that government legislation is the outcome of a collective decision within the cabinet, we may imagine that for some reasons coalition partners may fail – or deliberately renounce – to reach a true agreement in the pre-parliamentary stage. As a consequence, government parties have to bargain on the content of bills in the legislative arena. Second, even when coalition partners are able to reach a full agreement on the content of bills in the cabinet, in the legislature they may be forced to accept some modifications proposed by opposition parties. Third, if we hold that each minister drafts the bills falling under her policy jurisdiction independently of the other cabinet members and presents them in parliament for approval, such a discretion may generate some kind of conflict among the members of the government, a conflict which in turn will result in observable changes to the initial proposals. Conflict inside the cabinet may concern the policy jurisdictions of different ministries, the peculiar preferences developed by ministers in their respective departments, or the ideological divergence among the different parties to which ministers belong. As already mentioned, this last type of conflict will be examined in detail in the second chapter. In any case, remarkably, some ministers could be less sensitive to position-taking incentives. It is the case of technical ministers, whose bills are expected to be acceptable to the parliamentary majority from the very beginning.

1.2.1 Number of coalition parties

Governmental bills can be altered in the course of the legislative process even when the preferences of the government replicate exactly those of the parliament and within the cabinet coalition partners collectively decide on the content of legislation. This may happen when, for some reasons, cabinet members decide to introduce legislation in parliament although they have not yet reached a full-fledged agreement on its content. Therefore, they have to find a compromise in the legislative arena, where the original bill is modified until it reflects the cabinet equilibrium (which in this case corresponds also to the preferences of the parliamentary majority). In other words, the executive-level process of bargaining "fails" or, at least, is stopped: coalition partners debate in the cabinet, but at a certain point they may choose to introduce a bill even in the absence of an actual agreement

on its content. They may decide to do it for a number of reasons. For instance, because new issues arise and the government is overloaded with work, or because cabinet bargaining is taking too long and government members need to show that they are not divided. Also, coalition partners may realize that in the cabinet they lack the knowledge required to take decisions on certain subjects, but they do not have the time to collect new information. In any case, governing parties may want to introduce that bill in order to signal to their respective electorates that they are doing 'something'. Of course, coalition members know that they will have to endeavour to find a compromise in the parliament. In this perspective, in the legislative arena it is up to coalition partners – and not to the entire parliament – to reach a decision on the content of legislation. In doing so, they may amend the originary bill.

Remarkably, this argument works also if we assume ministerial discretion. By definition, in such a situation it is always the case that the legislation introduced by coalition partners does not represent a true agreement among them. In other terms, a bill reflecting the drafting minister's ideal point can be employed as a normal starting point for the parliamentary process.

The process through which coalition partners arrive at an agreement in the parliament after renouncing to reach it in the cabinet can be affected by several factors, such as their number and the amount of efforts already made at the executive level. The present paragraph concerns the former aspect, while the next one deals with the latter.

In a recent contribution on the duration of lawmaking, Becker and Saalfeld (2004) argue that Tsebelis' (1995, 2002) theory of veto players can provide useful insights into this process. Tsebelis (1995: 301) defines a veto player as 'an individual or collective actor whose agreement (by majority rule for collective actors) is required for a change in policy', and argues that the number of veto players, the ideological distance between them, and their internal cohesion affect the ability of a political system to change the policy status quo. Veto players can be 'partisan' (the parties forming a government) or 'institutional' (for instance, second chambers or directly elected presidents with significant veto power) (Tsebelis 1995: 302). The author's core prediction is that the policy stability of a political system increases with the number of veto players, the ideological distance between them, and the internal cohesion of each of them (Tsebelis 1995: 293-301).

Interestingly, Kreppel (1997) analyzes Italian legislative output during a relatively long period of time (1948-1987) within a veto player framework. In her perspective, the size of the government coalition (in terms of the number of parties participating in the government) influences both the quantity and the type of legislation that governments introduce and get passed by the legislature. Importantly, the parties participating in the government are conceived of as veto players in the legislative game. In other terms, the government must work as a unified body if it is to be successful,

and so each party represents a potential hurdle to the successful proposal and acceptance of a governmental bill. Therefore, the inclusion of each additional party increases the difficulties that the government will have in successfully proposing and passing legislation. This is especially true if the growth in the number of governmental parties also increases the ideological distance between the two extremes of the coalition (Kreppel 1997: 336; see also Tsebelis 1995). As expected, Kreppel (1997: 340-342) finds that increases in the number of parties participating in the government coalition systematically reduce the number of laws presented and laws passed. Moreover, the number of veto player has the same negative impact on the number of *leggine*[35]. Finally, the number of decree-laws is positively related to the number of veto players and inversely related to both laws and *leggine*, showing that decree-laws are used as substitutes for normal legislation[36].

In their contribution, Becker and Saalfeld (2004) draw on Tsebelis's work, although their interest is not in the changes of the legislative status quo but in the speed of those changes. In particular, their dependent variable is the speed of the legislative process, measured as the number of days from the introduction to the promulgation of a bill. Becker and Saalfeld (2004: 60) theorize the dynamics of the legislative process as a function of the transaction costs of legislation, which, in turn, depend on (among other factors) institutional constraints, including the number of veto players or the ability to inflict opportunity costs on the parliamentary majority[37]. Using a sample of bills from 17 West European parliamentary democracies in the policy area of working time and working conditions, the authors test whether the speed of the legislative process is affected by 1) the number of partisan veto players (i.e. the number of parties in the government coalition), 2) the ideological range of the government, 3) the number of veto players outside the legislatures, and 4) the presence of opportunities enjoyed by parliamentary minorities in the chamber. Interestingly, evidence does

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[35] Kreppel (1997: 337-338) interprets *leggine* as rather substantive (albeit often low cost) pieces of legislation. They are approved in committees and encompass a broad range of policies with the key characteristic that they are less controversial than bills passed on the floor. This contradicts the conventional wisdom, according to which *leggine* are small, clientelistic, and therefore unimportant, laws (see Della Sala 1993: 102; Furlong 1990: 64; D'Onofrio 1979: 89; Di Palma 1978: 110-111). Conceiving of *leggine* this way, Kreppel (1997: 338) conjectures that *leggine*, just like laws, will react negatively to an increase in the number of parties participating in the government coalition.

[36] Coalitions with many veto players may find it really difficult to agree on regular legislation, and so they may choose decree-laws as temporary solutions to politically divisive problems (Kreppel 1997: 338). Indeed, as Furlong (1990: 65) argues, decree-laws are often used to deal with important issues that from a political point of view are potentially too damaging or controversial to be introduced as normal legislation.

[37] Indeed, Becker and Saalfeld (2004: 61) use the term 'veto player' in a wider sense than Tsebelis. Concerning institutional veto players, also powerful interest groups, independent central banks, the army, constitutional courts, constitutionally required super majorities and referendums may be included (see Schmidt 1997: 227). As for partisan veto players, since parliamentary minority groups are somehow able to prevent majorities from monopolizing the legislative agenda, they may have a *de facto* veto power (see Scharpf 1997: 116-150), and thus may be counted as veto players. However, in the hypotheses I am interested in – namely, the first two – Becker and Saalfeld use the concept in the same way Tsebelis uses it.

not support the first three hypotheses, thus not providing support for the veto players' framework as an explanation for the length of the legislative process (Becker and Saalfeld 2004: 71-88)[38].

Following Becker and Saalfeld's (2004) logic, which they apply to the length of the parliamentary process, it seems possible to derive hypotheses also concerning the amount of changes made to legislation during that process. Reasonably, there could be a positive relationship between how long bills are discussed and how much they are modified in parliament. We may therefore argue that, once a bill is submitted to the floor, if the parties forming the government coalition are many or have very different policy preferences, they are likely to debate a lot before reaching an agreement on the content of that bill. Hence, they are more likely to propose amendments and to successfully modify the originary bill. However, in the formulation of my hypothesis I will not employ the term 'veto player'. Tsebelis uses the concept of veto players for deriving predictions on policy stability across different types of political systems (Tsebelis 1995: 315), and not on features of legislative process such as the amount of modifications or the length of the process. In any case, the hypothesis I derive from Becker and Saalfeld's (2004) work is the following:

> **H.5 *Number of coalition parties and government range:*** *We can expect more modifications to government legislation the higher the number of parties in the government coalition and the wider the ideological distance between them.*

1.2.2 Length of cabinet debate

When coalition partners fail to agree in cabinet meetings or deliberately choose to use the parliament as the place where to actually discuss the content of governmental bills, the difficulties of reaching compromises in the legislative arena may depend also on the amount of efforts already made at the cabinet level. In particular, it seems reasonable to assume that, in the cabinet, the more coalition members strain to arrive at an agreement, the longer they discuss; and that the bigger the efforts put in the debate in the pre-parliamentary stage, the less are the difficulties of reaching a compromise in the legislative arena. On their turn, less difficulties mean less need of modifying the original bill introduced in the parliament. Putting it differently, longer bargaining among coalition partners in the cabinet makes changes to governmental bills less likely in the legislature[39]. As a consequence,

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[38] As for the fourth hypothesis, the one which is confirmed by the data, Becker and Saalfeld (2004: 82-88) find that the speed of the legislative process is reduced by parliament's authority to determine floor agenda independently of the government, and increased by committee's authority to determine its own agenda independent of government.
[39] It is worth noting that, unlike the hypothesis based on the number of governing parties, the argument concerning the length of debate in the cabinet works only if we assume collective responsibility in the government. The logic of the former hypothesis holds even if bills are not discussed at all in the cabinet – that is, in the extreme case when there is

H.6 Length of cabinet debate: *I expect more modifications to government legislation the shorter the length of debate in the cabinet.*

Remarkably, this argument might be linked to those explanations of parliamentary scrutiny which rely on ideological conflict between cabinet parties (see chapter 2). In investigating the timing of bill introduction by the cabinet, Martin (2004: 455-456) shows that ideological divergence among governing parties induces delay in the introduction of legislation to the parliament.

1.2.3 Conflict with opposition parties

When in the cabinet coalition partners have the time to reach full agreements on the content of legislation and executive policy outcomes reflect the preferences of the parliamentary majority, government bills may be altered in the legislature because opposition parties manage to modify them.

Heller (2001: 786) defines opposition amendments as alternative proposals through which the opposition wants to involve part of the majority into a new enacting coalition[40]. As suggested by a number of important comparative works, opposition parties are able to influence policymaking in parliamentary systems (see, for example, Döring 1995a; Powell 2000; Strøm 1990a). In particular, since time is one of the scarcest resources in the legislative arena (Döring 1995c; Cox 2006), opposition parties are not necessarily ineffective in the course of parliamentary process. In this regard, several scholars have emphasized how legislative institutions strengthen the influence of opposition parties (Döring 1995a; Müller and Strøm 2000; Powell 2000: 32; Saalfeld 1990, 2000: 365; Strøm 1990a: 70-72; see also Gallagher, Laver, and Mair 2006: 66). According to Strøm (1990a: 71), for example, the opposition enjoys greater potential influence over policymaking when the number of standing committees is large, the areas of committee specialization are fixed, committee jurisdictions closely correspond to ministerial jurisdictions, there are restrictions on the number of committee assignments per legislator, and committee chairs are proportionally distributed among parliamentary parties.

Opposition parties may play an important role in modifying government legislation under both collective responsibility and ministerial discretion within the cabinet. In the former case, after discussing and arriving at collective policy decisions inside the cabinet, coalition partners may decide to introduce bills that, they know in advance, will be amended in parliament also by

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ministerial discretion. The latter, instead, requires that government parties spend at least some time debating in the cabinet.

[40] In his analysis of governments' authority to make last-offer amendments in West European countries, Heller (2001: 786) distinguishes between friendly, credit-claiming, and opposition amendments.

opposition parties. This may happen because parties in the opposition could exchange the possibility to delay the final approval of a governmental bill for the introduction of some modifications that bring some benefits or alleviate some costs for their own electoral constituencies. Reasonably, opposition parties will be more inclined to use dilatory tactics the more they perceive government legislation as detrimental to the interests they represent. Government parties, in turn, derive a (position-taking) utility from presenting a bill which, although bound to be altered, symbollically represents the will of the coalition.

In the latter situation, it is the bills autonomously drafted by cabinet ministers that induce opposition parties to threaten to slow down the legislative process. Although anticipating that her proposals will be amended in parliament, the responsible minister introduces legislation that pleases her constituency. In this case, changes to government-sponsored bills occur because on the issue at hand the minister's party holds an extreme position with respect to the parties sitting in the opposition.

Based on the previous arguments, I can formulate the following conjecture:

H.7 Conflict with opposition: *I expect more changes of government bills as the policy distance between a) the government compromise or b) the proposing minister and the opposition parties increases.*

This hypothesis is consistent with a common view of Italian parliament, whereby a strong and decentralized committee structure enables the opposition to exercise substantial policy influence (Strøm 1990: 152-154). As Di Palma (1978: 95) points out, it is in the committees that the Italian opposition has the best opportunity to influence legislation: in committees, opposition parties often succeed in amending even governmental bills[41]. Moreover, as shown by Cox, Heller and McCubbins (2005: 30) in their analysis of roll rates, Italian parliament stands out from other legislatures in that it gives opposition parties much more power to delay or block statutes. This is especially true for non-extreme opposition parties, whose average roll rates are lower than those of extreme ones, and for ordinary legislation, on which opposition parties are rolled less often than on decree conversion and budget bills[42].

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[41] Di Palma especially refers to the PCI (the Communists), which has been the main opposition party throughout the Italian First Republic.

[42] Cox, Heller, and McCubbins (2005: 47, n. 24) define *roll rates* as the total number of times a party is rolled divided by the total number of final passage votes for a party. In particular, a roll is when a party allows another party to put a bill on the agenda, which then passes although the former party votes against it. Cox, Heller, and McCubbins (2005) analyze roll rates in the Italian Chamber of Deputies from 1988 to 2000 and find strong evidence that governing coalitions in Italy exercise significant negative agenda powers – that is, they block bills that would roll them.

The influence that Italian opposition parties seem to exert on lawmaking is highlighted also by Capano and Vignati (2008), who analyze amendatory activity in Italy during the 'bipolarization decade' (1997-2006) from a descriptive point of view [43]. The fundamental theoretical assumption underlying Capano and Vignati's work is that of the institutional dis-alignment of parliament, according to which parliament is much more than an arena where different actors (governments, parliamentary groups, individual MPs) further their own interests. Indeed, in line with historical institutionalism, parliament is conceived of as 'an institution with its own logic, organizational culture and rules' (Capano and Vignati 2008: 36). As Capano and Giuliani (2001a) demonstrate in their volume on the Italian legislative process, history shows that the Italian parliament is an autonomous institutionalized arena: it does not simply reflect the logic of governments but seeks to perpetuate the objectives and purposes it has inherited from the past[44]. Following this logic, Capano and Vignati (2008: 36-39) see the amendatory process as the occasion in which the boundaries separating the parliamentary majority and the opposition may blur, and government is forced to bargain with parliament, negotiating with both majority and opposition parties. In other words, due to the powerful institutional tools at the disposal of Italian parliament (substantial powers to delay lawmaking as well as opportunities to amend bills), governments need to renegotiate the content of their own bills in the parliament if they want to protect them and get them through[45].

1.2.4 Conflict of responsibility between ministers

Let us now leave aside the conflict with opposition parties and assume that the cabinet reproduces the preferences and the equilibria of the parliamentary majority. Then, the only possible conflicts which may result in observable changes to governmental bills during the legislative process are those among cabinet members, and take place just if decision making in the government conforms to ministerial discretion. Focusing on the patterns of interaction among ministers, it is possible to identify a first type of conflict which may explain the amount of modifications made to government legislation in the course of the parliamentary process: the conflict over which minister has the responsibility in a certain policy area. More precisely, if minister A introduces a bill dealing with issues on which also other ministers may draft legislation, minister B could perceive interference. Believing that those issues fall under her own jurisdiction, minister B may thus want to correct the

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[43] Capano and Vignati (2008) consider all the bills approved in the Italian Chamber of Deputies during the 13th (1996-2001) and 14th (2001-2006) legislatures (except for 1996 and part of 1997), and collect information on all the amendments voted on. Laws ratifying international treaties are not included in the dataset, which consists of around 42,000 voted amendments.

[44] See also Capano and Giuliani (2001b: 27-28). For a different perspective, see Hine (1993: 194), who interprets Italian parliament as an arena.

[45] A second solution for Italian governments is to force the hand of parliament and of the parliamentary majority through a vote of confidence and/or instruments such as maxi-amendments. As Zucchini (2006) and Vassallo (2007) point out, this option was deliberately strengthened during the 13th and 14th legislatures.

initial bill. In order to do so, she may rely on her followers in the assembly and in committees, who will therefore amend the bill submitted by minister A. The drafting minister can be perfectly aware that she is proposing legislation in a rather disputed policy domain, and that some other ministers could react. However, she may want to communicate with her own constituency, signalling that she is promoting her voters' interests in that particular policy area. Therefore, she introduces that bill all the same. On the basis of this argument, I can derive the following hypothesis:

> *H.8 Conflict over ministerial responsibility: Since there are issues on which different ministries may draft legislation, on those issues I expect to observe more conflict over jurisdictions and so more changes to governmental bills.*

1.2.5 Departmental capture

Still looking at the interactions among cabinet members, let us now turn to the conflict that may arise when ministers develop some peculiar type of preferences in their respective departments. According to Andeweg (2000: 389-391), who frames in agency-theoretic terms the relationship between the cabinet as a whole and individual ministers, the most probable source of agency problems in this stage of the parliamentary chain of delegation is 'departmental capture' – that is, ministers' identification with the interests of the departments they head. Since, as the author argues, the government (principal), which delegates to heads of departments (agents), also consists of heads of departments (i.e., the principal is made up of its own agents), each minister is almost free to follow her own preferences. Drawing on the literature on coalition governments, Andeweg identifies two drives that may motivate cabinet ministers as well as politicians in general: continuation in office or promotion to higher office (office-seeking), and policy achievements (policy-seeking)[46]. Whereas delegation to office-seeking ministers is not particularly problematic in that the policies they make will simply reflect the preferences of those who decide on their further career (very often their principal), delegation to policy-seeking ministers may present dramatic agency loss: ministers may use their considerable discretion to pursue their policy goals regardless of their principal's preferences. Remarkably, as Andeweg points out, one of the typical solutions provided by rational choice neo-institutionalism – ex ante screening of potential ministers – cannot mitigate this kind of agency loss. The reason is that such a mechanism assumes that policy preferences are stable and exogenous to institutions: within the rational choice approach, ministers'

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[46] For the distinction between office-seeking and policy-seeking motives in the literature on governmental coalitions, see Budge and Laver (1986), and Strøm and Müller (1999b). Office-seeking political actors – parties, in particular – value offices intrinsically and simply seek to increase control of governmental office rewards. Instead, if policy is pursued, offices are valued instrumentally, as a means of influencing policy, and actors are not willing to sacrifice policy objectives for office rewards.

preferences are exogenously given, do not change after appointment to a ministry, and hence can be predicted on the basis of past track records in other offices and circumstances. Andeweg rejects this assumption and embraces the historical neo-institutionalist insight whereby political institutions do not only represent constraints on the possibilities for pursuing (exogenous) preferences, but may also mould those preferences. Indeed, institutions provide a set of expectations about the appropriate behaviour of an incumbent of a position – that is, a role (March and Olsen 1989: 6, 23). Following this logic, a minister heading a certain department may internalize these expectations, developing preferences that may differ from those she held before being appointed. The result, which Andeweg claims to be very common in parliamentary systems, is departmental or bureaucratic government, with ministers being 'captured' or 'going native'[47].

However, being captured does not necessarily mean being less susceptible to position taking incentives. When a minister increasingly identifies with the interests of the department she heads, she may become more and more sensitive to the demands of the specific pressure groups and external organizations which are active in the policy area at issue. It seems thus reasonable to suppose that the stronger a minister identifies with the interests of her own department, the more she will propose policies that favour her department, but that can be detrimental to the interests of other members of the government. Coalition partners, on their turn, may want to monitor what captured ministers do by modifying in parliament the bills submitted by those ministers. In other terms,

> **H.9 Departmental capture:** *The more ministers are captured, the more we should expect modifications to their bills.*

In the Italian case, as Hine and Finocchi (1991: 86) argue, the inhibitions against departmental capture were weak for the ministers belonging to the DC. The reason is that, due to the factionalized nature of that party, Christian Democrat ministers were more loyal to their own particular faction than to the party or to the prime minister[48].

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[47] Alternatively, one may think about *leisure-shirking* motivations: ministers (agents) attempt to secure leisure time for themselves, and therefore do not do their best for the party or the coalition they belong to (their principal). Confronting bureaucrats who typically dislike policy changes, a certain minister may opt to adhere to the knowledge and common practices in use in her department instead of making every effort to achieve the policy objectives of her party or her coalition (see Müller 2000: 320-321).

[48] In their analysis of the factors constraining Italian prime ministers, Hine and Finocchi (1991) distinguish between the constraints deriving from the institutional context (such as the Constitution, the principle of dispersion of power across institutions, the centrality of parliament, the legislative culture, etc.) and the more fundamental ones arising from the nature of parties and the party system. In the second set, the peculiar, highly factionalized nature of the DC is considered by the authors as the most serious limit on prime ministerial autonomy (Hine and Finocchi 1991: 85).

1.2.6 Technical ministers

As stressed at the beginning of the present chapter, theoretical explanations focusing on the conflict among actors rest on a position-taking argument. Since initiating legislation serves also the purpose of communicating with the electorate, cabinet ministers can propose bills corresponding to the preferences of their respective constituencies even when they know in advance that those bills will be modified in parliament. In other words, each minister derives considerable utility from the simple fact of introducing a bill representing her voters' ideal point. However, there might be ministers who are less sensitive to position-taking incentives.

It is the case of technical ministers, who are non-partisan ministers appointed for their technical competence in a particular policy domain. Unlike their much more common partisan colleagues, who become ministers for the purpose of (at least) representing in the cabinet the coalition party they belong to, technical ministers are assigned portfolios because of their expertise. Neither technical ministers represent a certain political party or constituency, nor they seek to be re-elected. Therefore, they do not need to send signals to their own voters. While each partisan minister continuously tries to communicate with her electorate, and hence takes stands in order to show publicly that she is doing something (and in particular, that she is doing exactly what her voters want), technical ministers are experts whose aim is to actually reach policy goals. As a consequence, when they initiate legislation, technical ministers are likely to propose the technically feasible policy which is the closest to the coalition agreed-on compromise. Coalition parties are thus unlikely to modify such a 'technical' proposal, even under ministerial discretion. Therefore, since for technical ministers position-taking utility is lower than for other ministers,

> *H.10 Technical ministers: Government bills proposed by technical ministers should be less extensively changed in parliament than bills sponsored by partisan ministers.*

Beside the fact that technical ministers are more pragmatic due to the relatively small utility they derive from position-taking, another reason might help to explain why legislation drafted by technical ministers should be less amended than that presented by their partisan colleagues. Generally speaking, when ministers present legislation they may exploit feasibility constraints in defense of their preferred policies. Typically, ministers claim that they did all that could be done – that is, their bill represents the closest policy to the coalition compromise given the current situation. In multiparty governments, the other coalition parties commonly want to discover whether proposing ministers are honest (Martin and Vanberg 2004: 16). In order to do so, they may engage in amendatory activity as well as employ other control mechanisms (see chapter 2). However,

technicians' publicly-acknowledged expertise makes technical ministers' commitments and justifications fairly credible: if it is an expert who claims that her bill represents the best feasible solution, then this claim appears more credible to coalition partners.

1.3 PRESIDENTS OF PARLIAMENT

Before concentrating on Martin and Vanberg's (2005) hypothesis, whereby the changes made to government bills stem from ideological conflict within the cabinet, it is worth spending some words on presidents of parliament. Since the literature on parliamentary systems emphasizes the important role that presidents of the chambers play in the lamaking process, it seems reasonable to suppose that their ideological preferences and the position-taking incentives they face may influence their attitude towards the cabinet, thus making modifications to governmental bills more or less likely to occur. In the present section, I review some important contributions on presidents of parliament (both in a comparative perspective and in the Italian case), from which I infer that in Italy the heads of the chambers could actually affect the amount of transformations undergone by government-initiated bills. Then, I formulate a testable hypothesis on the role of presidents of the chambers.

As Jenny and Müller (1995) emphasize in the first comparative study of presiding officers of legislatures in Western Europe, presidents of parliament influence legislative processes mainly through their control over the parliamentary agenda: they are typically in charge of scheduling bills for deliberation and arranging the parliamentary calendar. In addition, parliamentary presidents may carry out several other important functions: assigning bills to committees, shifting bills between committees, stopping comittees work on bills, administering the parliamentary staff, choosing rules for floor debate and voting procedures (Jenny and Müller 1995: 331-335).

The authors analyze 18 West European legislatures and the European Parliament in the 1970-1994 period, and evaluate the role of presidents of parliament in the parliamentary decision making on the basis of two dimensions: power and partisanship[49]. On the one hand, parliamentary presidency can be more or less powerful concerning the prerogatives mentioned above. On the other hand, presidents may exercise their powers either in a partisan or in a neutral fashion. By combining these two dimensions, Jenny and Müller (1995: 358-359) obtain a map on which they locate all the countries under investigation[50]. Presidents of most West European parliaments are rather weak, being classified either as 'neutral chairmen' or as 'minor party positions'. In the *neutral chairman* type (weak powers – neutral), which is best approached by the Speaker of the House of Commons in the U.K., the behaviour of the president of parliament does not raise any controversy among parties. Traditionally, the president neither votes in the chamber he heads (even when he formally has the right to do it), nor participates in legislative activities other than those strictly referable to its office. In the *minor party position* (weak powers – partisan), which is found for example in Portugal

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[49] In countries with bicameral legislatures, they choose either the head of the whole parliament (where such a position exists), or the head of the politically dominant chamber (which is normally the lower house).

[50] The powers of parliamentary presidents are measured through an index which takes into account both their institutional rights and their accountability to parliament As for partisanship, the authors build an index almost based on the amount of support for the presidents as expressed in their election (Jenny and Müller 1995: 336, 341, 350).

and France, the incumbent acts as a partisan, but this does not have relevant consequences since the parliamentary presidency provides weak powers. Few countries have relatively strong presidents of parliament. The *'speaker of the house'* type (strong powers – neutral) is inspired by the principle of the separation of powers, whereby the speaker represents the parliament as a whole vis-à-vis the public and the executive. Only Austria falls into this type, but as a borderline case. Indeed, this type might be found in the pre-party government era. Finally, in the *'party asset'* type (strong powers – partisan), the parliamentary presidency is an instrument of party politics. The legislative majority elects the president in order to exploit for its own political purposes the powers associated with the presidential office. The president usually participates in parliamentary votes and engages in other partisan activities. Since he pursues the goals of the party he belongs to, his decisions are likely to cause controversy. Together with Greece, Italy falls into this type (although as a borderline case, close to the minor party position type).

Interestingly, the classification of Italy in the party asset type contrasts with the image of Italian presidents of the chambers depicted by Di Palma in the 1970s. In his discussion of committees and parliamentary procedures in Italy, Di Palma (1978) describes Italian presidents of the chambers as officers with rather strong powers who behave in a non-partisan manner[51]. According to the author, the presidents of both the Chamber and the Senate are provided with considerable prerogatives and play a key role in the lawmaking process: they arrange the parliamentary calendar, are in charge of interpreting the standing orders and, most of all, choose what type of parliamentary procedure to adopt. Concerning the last aspect, it is the president of each house who, in assigning legislative proposals to a certain committee, decides at his complete discretion whether the committee shall be empowered to pass them into law (*decentralized procedure*), or shall report them to the floor for examination (*ordinary procedure*) (Di Palma 1978: 275). As Di Palma (1978: 77) points out, the presidents may decide to assign a project to the decentralized procedure (which is shorter and presents higher rates of success) in order to facilitate its approval. Therefore, if the government wants its proposals to be quickly enacted, the best it can do is to exercise its influence over the presidents of the houses and the chairs of the committees (Di Palma 1978: 72). However, as the author argues, the presidents of the Italian chambers do not exploit their powers for the political purposes of the party (or coalition) they belong to. On the contrary, they tend to act as neutral officers. Indeed, since they cannot effectively exercise their prerogatives without the consent (or, at least, the tolerance) of the majority of the parliamentary groups, in order to maintain a broad support in the parliament the heads of the Italian chambers need to behave in a prudent and impartial manner (Di Palma 1978: 275-277).

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[51] However, it must be taken into consideration the fact that Di Palma (1978) and Jenny and Müller (1995) study the Italian case in two different, only minimally overlapping, time periods: respectively, 1948-1972 and 1970-1994.

By contrast, more recent contributions on Italian lawmaking seem to take into consideration the ideological preferences of parliamentary presidents, thus treating them as partisan actors. For instance, Zucchini (2005) suggests that Italian governments have taken advantage of their political affinity with the presidents of the chambers in order to enhance their effectiveness in the parliamentary process. The author analyzes the evolution of the legislative agenda setting power in Italy, aiming to assess whether an increase of the executive's control of the agenda has taken place in the years of the Second Republic. As Zucchini (2005: 8-9) shows, since the beginning of the 1990s Italian governments have actually strengthened their role in the lawmaking process vis-à-vis the parliament, although they managed to do it through rather 'unusual' methods. First of all, as pointed out also by many other scholars, Italian governments have increasingly made use of the procedure of delegating laws (Vassallo 2001; Lupo 1998; Gianniti and Lupo 2004; see also Capano and Giuliani 2001b, 2003b; Zucchini 2006)[52]. Rarely employed during the First Republic (De Micheli and Verzichelli 2003), delegating laws give the executive the last word in the lawmaking process[53]. Moreover, together with delegating laws, Italian governments have increasingly resorted to other instruments for 'circumventing' the ordinary legislative process: decree-laws (Cox, Heller, and McCubbins 2005: 7-10) and maxi amendments (Zucchini 2005: 16-18)[54]. By contrast, the several reforms of the standing orders enacted in both Italian chambers (in 1971, 1981, 1990, and 1998) have only marginally contributed to enhance the executive's position. Instead, they strengthened the internal bodies of the parliament, most of all the presidents of the chambers. It is in such a situation that the political affinity between the government and the heads of the houses has turned out to have some importance.

In particular, according to Zucchini (2005) Italian governments may try to exploit the powers of well-disposed presidents of the chambers in three crucial domains of the legislative life: the parliamentary business planning and time constraints, the budgetary process, the amendment and

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[52] According to Zucchini (2005: 23-29), two factors explain why in the 1990s the Italian executive has managed to strengthen its control over the parliamentary agenda, which has corresponded to the increasing use of delegating laws: the *economic and financial emergency* of those years and the real possibility of *government alternation* in Italy. Both circumstances made the staus quo in many issues bad enough to induce the governing coalition to bear the transaction costs inherent in lawmaking and to delegate to the executive.

[53] The advatage for governments is the following: if the parliament enacts a delegating law containing delegations that are too far from the executive's ideal point, the executive can refuse to promulgate legislative decrees, thus preserving the status quo. Reasonably, since lawmaking is costly, legislators may anticipate the executive's behaviour by taking its preferences into account when they (re)define the content of the delegating bill. In addition, since 1992, the delegations included in most of the delegating laws enable governments to integrate and correct legislative decrees that have been already promulgated on the basis of the same delegating law (Zucchini 2005: 8-9).

[54] As Cox, Heller, and McCubbins (2005: 29-30) point out in their analysis of agenda power in the Italian lower chamber from 1988 to 2000, in some countries governments enjoy special parliamentary rights that enable them to get their legislation passed rather easily. Such peculiar prerogatives include special confidence powers as in France (Huber 1996a), urgency motions as in Brazil (Amorim Neto, Cox, and McCubbins 2003), the guillotine as in the U.K. (Dion 1997), and the authority to make last-offer amendments as in a number of European countries (Heller 2001). In other countries, as in Italy, the executive does not have similar powers, and therefore needs to resort to circumvention tactics in order to push its bills through the legislature.

voting rules. Concerning the last aspect, which is the most relevant for the purposes of the present work, the author stresses the crucial role of Italian parliamentary presidents both in the *control over the end of the amendment sequence* and in the *choice of the order of voting*.

More precisely, as Zucchini (2005: 13-14) points out, in the Senate it is the president who decides the end of the amendment sequence, while the government has the same rights as the committe. Firstly, individual senators' amendments are allowed only before the debate. During the debate, new amendments are allowed only if introduced by groups of eight senators and referring to amendments that have already been tabled or accepted. However, the president can discretionally decide to allow new amendments during the debate even when they do not refer to any previous amendment (art. 100 R.S., comma 5). Secondly, although the government and the committee can submit amendments without the previous restrictions, the president can choose to delay the debate in order to give senators the possibility to introduce new pertinent amendments (art. 100 R.S., comma 6).

In the Chamber of Deputies, where some of the filtering functions that in the Senate are accomplished by the president are carried out by the committee or a sub-unity of it ('*Comitato dei 9*'), the president is just slightly weaker (Zucchini 2005: 14-15). As in the Senate, when amendments and sub-amendments are allowed at the last moment, the president of the Chamber can discretionally decide the time limit for tabling them (art. 86 R.C., comma 5). Remarkably, in both branches of the Italian parliament, the control over the end of the amendment sequence plays a very important role if combined with the question of confidence (Zucchini 2005: 14). Moreover, the president of the Chamber has considerable powers against obstructionsim. First, he can reject the so-called 'serial' amendments: if the same text is subjected to a series of amendments differing from one another only with respect to increments in figures or data, the president puts to the vote the amendment that is the farthest from the original text, together with a limited number of intermediate amendments, thereby declaring the others to be subsumed (art. 85 R.C., comma 8). Second, the president can deal with obstructionist amendments by means of a 'vote by principles'. According to this practice, the assembly is called upon to vote on the common normative content of a number of amendments, all of which are rejected if the vote is negative (Manzella 2003: 335).

Another crucial prerogative in the hands of the presidents of both Italian chambers is the power to change the order of voting, which they can exert for reasons of efficiency or clarity of votes (art. 85 R.C., comma 8; art. 102 R.S., comma 4).

Remarkably, the influence that the presidents of both Italian chambers exert on the amendatory procedure, and in particular their crucial role in controlling the end of the amendment sequence, runs counter to Heller's (2001) argument that Italian governments enjoy the so-called

power of the final amendment offer. In discussing the puzzle of why multiparty governments are able to make joint policy, Heller (2001: 781-783) indicates as a solution the governments' ability to offer amendments toward the end of the process. Since coalition members may submit amendments to government bills in order to move policy in directions they favour but that can be detrimental to the interests of their partners, coalition cohesion stems from the responsible minister's ability to make 'last-offer' amendments before the final vote, thereby restoring the initial policy[55]. According to Heller (2001: 783-785), Italy is among the West European countries where such an argument finds empirical support (see also Heller 2000). However, as shown by Zucchini (2005), the standing orders of both Italian chambers do not grant the executive an unconditional and exclusive last-offer authority. Moreover, as displayed by the most relevant studies on amendatory activity in Italy, amendatory powers are distributed among several actors, both institutional and individual, within the parliamentary arena (Di Palma 1978; Capano and Vignati 2008).

All that said, it seems clear that the presidents of Italian chambers play a fundamental role in the parliamentary life: they can effectively favour certain bills over others, and they can take some part also in defining the content of legislation. For our purposes, parliamentary presidents can affect the amount of changes made to governmental bills during the legislative process. Of course, presidents of the houses cannot directly modify legislation, since they cannot submit amendments to the bills introduced in the chambers they head. However, thanks to the prerogatives mentioned above, parliamentary presidents are able to wield the rules regulating amendatory activity, thus allowing more or less amendments to bills. In the ordinary process, which is the one I am interested in and which normally takes place under an open rule, the president of the chamber may decide to foster some particular bills by putting constraints on the possibility to amend them. In other words, there would be a move towards a more restrictive amending rule, which would result in relatively few modifications in the course of the legislative process, all else equal. If, instead, the president wants to hinder the approval of some piece of legislation, or dislikes the content of the initial proposal, he may choose to keep the amending rule as open as possible. In this case, he would refuse to impose any limtation on the flow of amendments and, everything else being equal, we would observe more changes to the initial bill. Reasonably, the president of the chamber is more likely to restrict the amending process the more his preferences are similar to those of the proposer of the bill at issue. As a consequence,

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[55] It is worth noting that, although starting from the same puzzle, Martin and Vanberg (2004, 2005) give a different interpretation of the amendatory game. Whereas Heller sees amendments as coalition parties' attempts to move policy away from the coalition compromise (so that the responsible minister punishes them with her last-offer authority), according to Marting and Vanberg legislative review represents coalition partners' effort to correct 'hostile' ministers' attempts to undermine the coalition agreed on policy (see chapter 2).

H.11 Presidents of the chambers: *We should expect more changes to government bills during the legislative process the larger is the ideological distance between a) the government compromise or b) the proposing minister and the president of the chamber where the bill is discussed.*

Why should the preferences of parliamentary presidents be relevant for explaining how much government bills are altered in parliament? The incumbents of such a prestigious office could indeed choose to behave neutrally, in order to gain the esteem of the whole chamber as well as of the general public. However, as Jenny and Müller (1995) point out and Zucchini (2005) suggests, the presidents of both Italian chambers tend to act in a partisan manner. Therefore, like all politicians they need to send signals to their constituency, trying to enhance their chances of reelection. Hence, presidents of the chambers may derive position taking utility from fostering or hindering some government bills. Remarkably, presidents' preferences and position-taking incentives may affect the amount of changes made to governmental bills under either type of cabinet-parliament interaction and of cabinet decision making. Whichever the preferences represented in the cabinet and whoever the proposer, the presidents of the chambers may use their prerogatives in order to favour the government bills they prefer.

In the present paragraph, I focused on the ideological preferences of the presidents of the chambers, abstaining from formulating hypotheses that take into account changes in their powers. In fact, it does not seem straightforward to derive conjectures on the amount of modifications experienced by bills from the simple fact that presidents become stronger or weaker. For instance, the 1990 reform of the standing orders strengthened the president of the Italian lower chamber, who since then has the ability to impose an agenda when a unanimous vote in the Conference of Group Chairpersons does not pass. However, the president may want to exercise this power either to favour or to hinder government legislation. Probably, his behaviour will depend on his attitude towards the government, or the particular minister, which proposes legislation. In other terms, the political affinity between those actors turns out to be the key factor.

CHAPTER 2.
IDEOLOGICAL CONFLICT AMONG COALITION PARTIES

A recent line of research identifies ideological conflict within the cabinet and among ministers as the fundamental factor explaining the occurrence of modifications to governmental bills (Martin and Vanberg 2004, 2005). This body of literature focuses on *delegation relationships* within multiparty coalitions, and conceptualizes them within a principal-agent framework[56]. In this perspective, policymaking in parliamentary democracies can be understood as a chain of delegation that begins with the voters and ends with the civil service employees that implement government decisions, and in which each link attaches a principal to an agent (Strøm 2000: 266-267; Strøm, Müller and Bergman 2003, 2008). Remarkably, as this emerging research program acknowledges, the parties forming a coalition government have both to govern together and please their voters (Strøm and Müller 1999a). During their tenure, coalition partners continuously interact in the legislative process and use mechanisms such as legislative scrutiny of government bills to manage the delegation relationships between them and to influence policymaking[57].

Due to the delegation of important policymaking powers from the parliament to the cabinet and from the cabinet as a whole to individual ministers (Saalfeld 2000: 354), in appointing multiparty governments the parliamentary supporters of a coalition have to agree to delegate not only to their own party's cabinet representatives, but also to ministers from their party's coalition partners. Whereas in a single-party government all delegation to cabinet ministers is intraparty delegation and therefore parties should be able to successfully control their ministers, in multiparty coalitions delegation necessarily crosses party lines, and parties do not enjoy the same control over ministers from other parties. As a consequence, the implementation of the coalitional compromise[58] that makes the existence of the government possible is subject to the agency problems also known as '*ministerial drift*': ministers, acting as agents of the cabinet as a whole, may not work fully in the interests of their principal. More precisely, each minister enjoys a near monopoly on policy initiation within the jurisdiction of her portfolio (Gallagher, Laver, and Mair 2006: 43-44), and may

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[56] According to Lupia's (2003: 33) definition, delegation is 'an act where one person or group, called a *principal*, relies on another person or group, called an *agent*, to act on the principal's behalf'.

[57] Whereas most works in this program focus on the *policymaking* role of parliamentary institutions in helping parties to 'police' the coalition compromise, Martin and Vanberg (2008) emphasize the use of parliaments for the purpose of *communication* by coalition parties that wish to 'sell' the compromise to their constituencies.

[58] As Martin and Vanberg (2005: 95) suggest, it is possible to think about the *coalitional compromise* in several ways. On the one hand, there may be the written coalition agreements that would-be government parties negotiate during the coalition formation process and commit themselves to implement. On the other hand, when new unforeseen issues emerge during the tenure, the coalitional compromise can be interpreted as the policy that would result if government parties engage in a full-fledged bargaining process, each employing the resources at its disposal for influencing the final policy outcome.

attempt to use her discretion in drafting legislation to move policy in directions favoured by her own party, but that can be damaging for the interests of other coalition members[59].

As Thies (2001: 582) points out, multiparty executives face greater delegation problems than single-party executives. First of all, ministers in a coalition government are likely to have more *divergent policy preferences* than their colleagues in a single-party government, all else equal[60]. According to Strøm and Müller (1999a: 257), these different preferences are driven by three kinds of motivations: policy benefits, office benefits, and electoral advantage. While all of these are scarce goods, 'electoral advantage is even more strictly constant-sum', and thus although the electoral fortunes of coalition parties are likely to be positively related, 'commonly coalition parties are in some sort of mutual competition for votes'[61]. As Martin and Vanberg (2005: 94) put it, ministers' legislative initiative usually receives considerable media attention, and electoral calculations give ministers incentives to move policy in ways that appeal to their respective constituencies, or 'to *appear* to work toward providing such policies even when party leaders realize that they may not be able to deliver them in practice'. Facing these position-taking incentives, coalition parties are continually in competition with one another (see also Huber 1996b).

A second feature makes agency problems particularly severe in multiparty governments: the *difficulty of sanctioning* 'troublesome' ministers. While in single-party governments the party caucus can administer punishments such as reductions in campaign support, denial of the official party endorsement, or a lower position in the party list, in multiparty governments troublesome ministers cannot be sanctioned that way by their coalition partners (Thies 2001: 582).

In addition, ministers enjoy an *informational advantage* in their jurisdiction: in drafting legislation, they become informed about what is feasible in a given issue area, and which political outcomes will result from adopting particular policies, whereas the other cabinet members largely lack these resources, are therefore less informed and so cannot correct their colleagues in cabinet meetings. Each ministers may hence be tempted to exploit such an informational advantage and draft legislation that, wihout her colleagues' knowledge, favours her own constituency at the expense of the coalition policy compromise.

Other coalition parties, in turn, face strong incentives to manage delegation to 'hostile' cabinet ministers, thus enabling the coalition to implement the policy compromise on which it has agreed.

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[59] To put it in a slightly different way, ministers belonging to multiparty governments act as agents of *two potentially competing principals*: the party to wich they are affiliated and the parliamentary majority more generally (Müller and Meyer 2010: 1067; Strøm, Müller, and Smith 2010: 519).

[60] Since ministers in a single-party cabinet are all members of the same political party, they are supposed to have similar policy preferences. For accounts challenging this assumption, see, for example, Müller (2000: 320).

[61] As Strøm (2003: 76) highlights, this is especially true in pivotal systems, where a single party forms the core of the governing coalition and so 'coalition partners cannot assume that they are doomed to sink or swim together and often have electoral incentives to defect'.

For this purpose, coalition partners make use of several means of controlling the actions of ministers belonging to other parties. In their fundamental contribution, Kiewiet and McCubbins (1991: 27-37) identify four major classes of *accountability mechanisms*: (1) contract design, (2) screening and selection rules, (3) monitoring and reporting requirements, and (4) institutional checks (see also Aghion and Tirole 1997; Lupia 2003; Strøm 2003). The former two are *ex ante* mechanisms, that principals use to gather information about their agents before they act. Since they align preferences, such devices are appropriate for preventing 'adverse selection'[62]. Conversely, the third and fourth measures are *ex post* mechanisms, employed by principals after the effects of delegation have already been produced. By improving principals' capacity for observing the actions of their agents and the effects of such actions, they allow to deal with 'moral hazard'[63].

Recent scholarship on multiparty governments identifies three (non-mutually exclusive) institutional settings where to control each other's ministers and hence to mitigate agency loss within coalitions: the executive arena, the parliamentary arena, and the extraparliamentary arena (Strøm, Müller, and Smith 2010). In the following pages I discuss the most relevant accountability instruments outlined in the literature, focusing on those which can have a role in accounting for the changes made to governmentals bill during the legislative process. In particular, in the first section I examine in detail Martin and Vanberg's (2004, 2005) hypothesis, which is currently one of the most influential explanations of why government legislation is altered in parliament. Their argument is that legislative review serves as a means of monitoring hostile ministers in multiparty governments. The second and third sections are devoted to control mechanisms employed in the cabinet and in the legislature, respectively. Finally, in the last section I consider some possible ways of combining different accountability instruments. Remarkably, different mechanisms have different effects on the modifications made to government legislation: some of them are expected to increase the amount of observable changes, while others should reduce it. Mechanisms operating in the extraparliamentary arena are discussed in part while dealing with the other two arenas: in particular, coalition agreements are examined in combination with other control devices.

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[62] When the principal does not fully know the competencies or preferences of his agent or the exact demands of the task at hand (*hidden information*), it might be the case that the agent is unwilling to pursue the principal's interests because she desires a different outcome, and/or unable to pursue the principal's interests because her resoures are insufficient.

[63] If, after establishing the delegation relationship, the principal cannot fully observe his agent's actions (*hidden action*), the agent, once selected, may have incentives and opportunities to take unobservable actions that are detrimental to the principal's interests.

2.1 LEGISLATIVE REVIEW AS INTRACOALITION MONITORING MECHANISM

Focusing on the legislative arena, Martin and Vanberg (2004, 2005) argue that coalition partners use parliamentary scrutiny of government bills for the purpose of containing agency loss within multiparty cabinets. Indeed, as Huber and Shipan (2002, ch. 7) show in an analysis of legislative production in 19 parliamentary systems, coalition parties write detailed legislation in order to control each other[64].

According to Martin and Vanberg (2005: 97), there are several reasons for seeing legislative review as a powerful intracoalition monitoring device. One derives from the *size of the cabinet*: due to time and resource constraints, coalition partners may find it too costly to monitor hostile ministers from within the cabinet, and so they can be forced to employ mechanisms outside the cabinet such as legislative scrutiny. This is especially the case of smaller parties, that usually have only few junior ministers (JMs) to assign (Thies 2001: 589). Secondly, in parliamentary systems the explicit assent of parliament is required for all major legislation. Cabinet-level institutions may be used to correct ministerial drafts, but it is only when the *final parliamentary vote* takes place that such modified bills becomes laws. Thirdly, and most importantly, the internal organizational features of modern parliaments can provide considerable opportunities for counteracting ministerial discretion: many parliamentary countries with proportional representation rules and multiparty governments (Lijphart's [1999] 'consensus democracies') have *systems of strong standing committees*[65]. Commonly, powerful permanent committees have jurisdictions that correspond to those of cabinet ministers[66] and enable their members to acquire the policy expertise necessary to scrutinize legislation[67]. Moreover, committees possess broad powers: they can arrange hearings, summon witnesses, demand relevant documents, and propose amendmends (see also Mattson and Strøm 1995). Finally, the fact that works in committee remain typically hidden from public scrutiny reduces the costs of challenging and amending ministerial bills from within the coalition.

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[64] Remarkably, however, Huber and Shipan (2002: 183-187) focus on intracabinet problems arising during policy implementation, rather than during policy formulation. As the authors highlight, once a law is approved, individual ministers may want to use their privileged position in the department they head in order to influence its implementation. By contrast, the literature on ministerial drift emphasizes ministers' attempts to influence policy before legislation is approved by parliament – i.e, when they draft bills.

[65] As Powell (2000: 34, Table 2.2) shows, strong committee systems are highly and positively correlated to parliamentary systems that operate under PR and typically produce coalition governments. Conversely, majoritarian systems that largely rely on single-party governments typically feature weak committee systems.

[66] As a large number of studies demonstrate, contemporary parliamentary democracies present a close correspondence between the jurisdictions of ministries and those of legislative committees. Mattson and Strøm (1995: 261-263, Tab.8.1) present evidence of such a correspondence in West European parliaments, while Olson (2002) and Barkan (2003) find the same in many Eastern European and several African legislatures, respectively. Moreover, Martin and Depauw (2009: 34, Tab.1) show that committees parallel ministries in 25 of the 31 European democracies they analyze, and Carroll and Cox (2005) outline the same relation between committees and ministries in the 23 countries featuring multiparty governments they investigate (see below).

[67] See Krehbiel (1991), whose approach is introduced in the next chapter.

For all these reasons, coalition partners can effectively employ legislative scrutiny. This means that, once a certain governmental bill has been introduced to parliament, they can rely on members of their legislative factions to try to anticipate its possible consequences, to evaluate the justifications offered by the proposing minister, to take into consideration viable alternative policies, and to prepare amendmends. Therefore, the changes made to the government bills during the legislative process would be the evidence that a monitoring activity is at work.

Remarkably, previous comparative research and some recent works have highlighted the function of legislative institutions in strengthening the influence of opposition parties (Döring 1995a; Müller and Strøm 2000; Powell 2000; Saalfeld 1990, 2000; Strøm 1990a), or that of party backbenchers in the attempt to solve intraparty delegation problems (Saalfeld 2000: 364). For Martin and Vanberg (2004: 17), instead, parliamentary institutions are employed to manage an *intracoalition* and *interparty* agency problem.

Martin and Vanberg (2005: 94-96) model the delegation problem faced by multiparty governments as a game of complete information in which coalition parties are motivated by policy considerations, potential position-taking benefits and the costs they may incur in the policymaking process[68]. The authors consider a coalition composed of two parties confronting a one-dimensional policy space[69]. The cabinet relies on ministers to implement the coalition compromise, and the sequence of moves is as follows (see Bendor, Glazer and Hammond 2001: 241). The first move is made by the agent (a minister associated with one of the coalition parties), who gathers information and makes a proposal (a bill dealing with a certain policy area) to the principal (the entire cabinet, represented by the governmental majority in parliament). The principal, in turn, can either accept or correct the agent's proposal. In other words, the other coalition party, acting on behalf of the entire government, can either accept or amend the drafted bill before it becomes law.

In discussing the circumstances under which ministers are likely to use their discretion and those under which other coalition members are likely to counteract such moves through legislative scrutiny, the authors identify three possible scenarios. The first is *ministerial autonomy*: when the (resource and opportunity) costs of challenging the ministerial draft[70] are so large relative to the policy distance between the minister's party and the coalition partner, the latter is willing to tolerate the minister's ideal point rather than to attempt to restore the coalition compromise. It is the

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[68] Martin and Vanberg (2005) assume that it is not asymmetric information, but the incentives for position-taking that give the minister the opportunity to move away from the compromise policy. The actors move in a complete information situation, and agency costs depend only on the divergence between agent's and principal's preferences.

[69] Since each minister drafts legislation in her own policy area (see Laver and Shepsle 1996), the policy space faced by the actors is likely to be one-dimensional.

[70] These are the resources and opportunity costs that coalition partners pay when they decide to rewrite the minister's bill, thus challenging the ministerial proposal in the legislature instead of delegating to the executive (Martin and Vanberg 2005: 95; see also Strøm 2000: 272 on the costs of oversight).

scenario depicted by Laver and Shepsle (1996), although actually they predict ministerial autonomy for all levels of policy divergence[71]. A second possible outcome involves *limited ministerial drift*: if the costs of challenging the ministerial bill are not so large but parties are not so distant, the coalition partner is willing to accept some deviation from the coalition compromise. In this case, the minister can draft a bill which neither exactly coincides with the coalition compromise, nor induces her coalition partner to correct the bill in parliament because the costs of challenging and rewriting legislation are still present. Hence, the minister is able to exploit her agenda setting power to shift policy in a more favourable direction only to a certain degree. Finally, when the policy distance between the coalition partners grows large enough (and the costs of challenging the ministerial draft are not so large), the minister will choose to *take a position* by introducing a bill that corresponds to her own ideal point, thus prompting her coalition partner to revise the proposal in parliament.

The model shows that, when the ideological conflict within the cabinet is sufficiently severe, position-taking motives may drive ministers to introduce bills that deviate from the coalition compromise, thereby inducing their coalition partners to restore the agreed-upon policy by means of legislative review. More precisely, on issues that sharply divide cabinet parties the incentives both to deviate and to monitor are strong. In order to implement the coalitional compromise, the responsible minister would probably be required to present bills which are distant from her (constituency's) ideal point. Hence, she may be tempted to use her discretion in drafting bills to propose legislation that pleases her electorate. If passed into laws, such bills would easily impose significant agency loss on the rest of the coalition, since the minister's proposal is probably far from the preferences of the other coalition members. For issues which are less conflictual for cabinet parties, the reverse is true: the responsible minister would reap few position-taking benefits from proposing her favourite policy, and the agency loss associated with a small deviation would be relatively minor for coalition partners.

In the case of the agency problems to which coalition compromises are subjected, not all types of accountability mechanisms are likely to work: contracts will not be self-enforcing in the future; screening and selection through copartisanship are not feasible in multiparty governments; institutional checks typical of presidentialism are not present in parliamentary systems. The control measure employed is thus *ex post monitoring*: coalition partners make use of legislative review in order to restore the coalition compromise, doing what the full cabinet would have agreed to[72]. Martin and Vanberg's core hypothesis is thus the following:

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[71] In other words, Laver and Shepsle's (1996) ministerial autonomy emerges as a special case in Martin and Vanberg's model.

[72] Of course, under the assumption of complete information, ministers might anticipate legislative review by coalition partners, and thus the restoration of the original coalitional agreement. In this case, ministers would simply stick to the agreed-upon policies, and no monitoring activity (i.e., no changes) would be observed in the parliament. However, since

H.12 Ideological conflict within the cabinet: As ideological divergence between coalition partners becomes larger, the incentives for ministerial drift from coalition compromise increase, and thus the coalition partners will rely more heavily on legislative review.

Being interested in the degree of parliamentary scrutiny on government bills, in two related articles the authors take two measures as their dependent variables: the *length of the legislative process* (Martin and Vanberg 2004) and the *number of article changes* in government bills (Martin and Vanberg 2005). In other words, in the former case they consider all the several monitoring activities carried out throughout the legislative process: amendments by parliament, committee hearings, contact with outside experts and interest groups, etc. In the latter case, instead, they take the observable modifications as a proxy of the whole 'corrective' activity on government bills. Martin and Vanberg empirically test their argument using data from Germany (1983-1994) and the Netherlands (1982-1994), and find support for the general hypothesis that legislative scrutiny is used more extensively when the risk and opportunity of ministerial drift are greater. More in particular, as the level of policy disagreement between coalition parties increases, the legislative process becomes longer and the number of articles which are altered in ministerial drafts becomes higher[73]. Interestingly, they find no evidence that ideological conflict between the government and the opposition leads to legislative delay or article changes. Such a result contrasts with much of the conventional wisdom in comparative studies, according to which legislative institutions in 'consensus' democracies enable opposition parties to influence lawmaking (Martin and Vanberg 2004: 23; 2005: 102).

In addition, as Martin and Vanberg (2005: 100) suggest, the saliency of the issue addressed by government bills may play an important role in accounting for the changes made in the course of the parliamentary process. Indeed, it is position-taking utility which makes ministers introduce legislation even if they know it will be amended. Reasonably, position-taking incentives are stronger on more salient issues. Therefore, I derive the following hypothesis:

H.13 Saliency: We should expect to observe more changes on bills dealing with issues that are more salient for the parties' constituencies and hence for the parties themselves.

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coalition parties face position-taking incentives, under the circumstances indicated by the authors ministers may propose the ideal point of the party they belong to even when they know in advance that it will be amended to the coalition compromise.

[73] In a recent contribution on the national transposition of EU directives, Franchino and Høyland (2009) find that in West European parliamentary countries the ideological conflict inside the coalition increases the likelihood of parliamentary involvement in the process of trasposition, and thus the probabiliy of legislative review.

Two further hypotheses can be formulated following Martin and Vanberg's logic. First, quite obviously, ministerial drift poses more severe problems in multiparty than in single-party executives (see above). Therefore, as Martin and Depauw (2009: 3-4) emphasize, the incentives to employ monitoring mechanisms will be stronger in the former type of government. In other words,

> *H.14 Multi- versus single-party cabinets: All else being equal, governmental bills should be more extensively modified in parliament under multiparty governments than under single-party governments.*

Second, as a refinement of Martin and Vanberg's argument we can suppose that not all ministers are equally likely to deviate from the coalition compromise and thus to trigger a (parliamentary) reaction by other coalition parties: all else being equal, some ministers may be less susceptible to position-taking motives than others. As pointed out in paragraph 1.2.6, technical ministers are expected to derive lower utility from taking positions than their partisan colleagues. In addition, some ministers may be less risky agents than others because of the nature of the party they belong to. As suggested by Carroll and Cox (2005: 14-15), larger parties are less likely to be shadowed by their partners than smaller ones. In fact, whereas small parties often have parochial constituencies and thus may be more prone to take purely ideological or extremely distributive stances, large parties usually can credibly claim to internalize a broad array of interests and therefore turn out to be less risky agents. Accordingly,

> *H.15 Size of the minister's party: I expect more changes to bills during the legislative process the smaller the proposing minister's party is.*

Still focusing on the size of the parties involved in coalition policymaking, Martin and Vanberg (2005: 97) follow Thies' (2001: 589) logic and suggest that smaller parties should be more likely to amend government legislation than larger ones. Having just a small amount of senior and junior ministers to assign, smaller coalition parties may be unable to effectively control ministerial discretion and influence legislation at the cabinet level. Therefore, they will resort more to mechanisms operating in the parliament – most of all to amendatory activity. Although theoretically interesting, this hypothesis regards the probability of engaging in amendatory activity, and not the modifications actually made to government legislation. Hence, it deals with something which is not the primary concern of the present work[74].

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[74] In any case, such a hypothesis could not be tested in the present work because it would require a different research strategy, with the probability of presenting amendments as the outcome to be studied and single parties as units of

2.2 CABINET-LEVEL ACCOUNTABILITY MECHANISMS

As the scholarly literature on multiparty governments suggests, coalition parties set up a wide array of accountability instruments within the cabinet, through which they coordinate policy before legislation is introduced in the parliament. Such instruments represent *ex post* control devices, and are employed as *institutional checks*[75]. In principle, the allocation of ministerial portfolios among coalition members might serve as an ex ante control mechanism at the cabinet level. However, as Strøm, Müller, and Smith (2010: 523) argue, the mere assignment of ministries to coalition parties yields very small possibilities for mutual monitoring among them: collective screening of potential ministers to prevent problems of hidden information is rather rare (Müller and Strøm 2000: 574, Table 15.7), and in any case would be uneffective against hidden action. In addition, for coalition partners it is not so easy to replace troublesome ministers through cabinet reshuffles (see Huber and Martinez-Gallardo 2008). As a consequence, coalition parties resort to ex post mechanisms such as junior ministers and other cabinet-level tools.

2.2.1 Junior ministers

At the executive level, as shown by Thies (2001) and later confirmed by Martin and Vanberg (2005: 102-103) and Verzichelli (2008), coalition partners 'keep tabs' on each other by appointing *junior ministers* to hostile ministries. Junior ministers have access to much of the same information as the minister they are 'shadowing', and have the incentives to report such information to their own party. As a consequence, when a policy proposal drafted by a minister is submitted for approval in the government (for example in a meeting of the full cabinet), other coalition partners do not suffer any more an informational disadvantage about the policy implications of her proposal: they are able to discover whether or not each others' ministers are deviating from the coalitional agreed-upon policy and to correct ministerial proposals before they are introduced to parliament. This way, the coalition compromise can actually be implemented.

Thies (2001: 581) proposes a model of 'managed delegation', in which delegation to ministers is handled through executive-level control instruments such as interministerial committees, overlapping jurisdictions, and junior ministers, and contrasts it to Laver and Shepsle's (1996) 'ministerial government' model, whereby each minister enjoys virtual dictatorship over her jurisdiction and delegation equals to abdication. Focusing on a particular monitoring mechanism (the appointment of JMs from parties other than the party of the corresponding minister), he derives

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analysis. As I will show in the fifth chapter, the information I collected concerns each approved governmental law in Italy during the 1987-2006 period.

[75] The principal (the whole cabinet) delegates authority to an agent (the minister) who is checked by a second agent (a JM, or another cabinet-level conflict management body) with different policy preferences (Müller and Meyer 2010: 1076).

from the theory of managed delegation a number of testable hypotheses concerning the use of this delegation-control device (Thies 2001: 585-586)[76]. Evaluating his hypotheses against evidence from Italy (1970-1989), the Netherlands (1971-1994), Japan (1965-1996), and Germany (1966-1990), Thies finds that in the former three countries coalition partners actually keep tabs on each other's ministers: they systematically appoint JMs of different parties (or factions in the 1965-1990 Japanese single-party governments) to shadow the work of a hostile cabinet minister. In particular, this practice is found to be in use mostly in countries that have few institutional checks on ministerial discretion (i.e. where ministers are not already constrained as in the German case), and in the most important governmental departments (i.e. where the parties that do not hold the ministry have the most to lose from abdication to their coalition partners) (Thies 2001: 589-593, 595).

Thies' findings for Italy are consistent with Pridham's (1988: 55) suggestion that Italian JMs are appointed from parties other than their ministers' and are employed 'as a means of knitting together the coalitional relationship at the [ministry] level'. Thies' results are also confirmed by Giannetti and Laver (2005) in a more detailed and recent analysis of the appointment of Italian junior ministers. On the other hand, these findings contrast with Cotta's (1988: 129-130) and Furlong's (1990: 60) arguments, whereby Italian JMs are allocated as a mere distributional means to 'pay off' coalition parties and following a simple rule of proportionality (*'lottizzazione'*)[77].

2.2.2 Other cabinet-level control mechanisms

As outlined by the scholarship on coalition governments, a number of other institutional mechanisms may enable coalition partners to monitor each other at the cabinet level: inner cabinets, interministerial committees, cabinet committees, party summits, committees of parliamentary leaders (Andeweg and Timmermans 2008; essays in Müller and Strøm 2000). Moreover, overlapping jurisdictions between ministries (Thies 2001), prime ministerial government (Andeweg 2000), deputy prime ministers or finance ministers (De Winter, Timmermans, and Dumont 2000; Saalfeld 2000) may serve the same purpose.

Andeweg and Timmermans (2008: 270-272) classify conflict resolution mechanisms on the basis of their composition: they may include only cabinet ministers (e.g., inner cabinets and

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[76] It is worth noting that, while in the model of managed delegation JMs are expected to come from different parties than the ministers they shadow, ministerial government predicts that JMs will belong to the same party as their corresponding ministers. On their turn, office-seeking theories predict that the partisanship of ministers and JMs will be random, the only constraint being that each coalition party gets its fair share of each (Riker 1962; Strøm 1990b).

[77] For an office-seeking interpretation of Italian junior ministers, see Mershon (1996, 1997, 2001, 2002). In Mershon's view, JMs are appointed in such a way to compensate for possible imbalances in the distribution of ministerial portfolios among coalition parties. Such an interpretation is confirmed by Manow and Zorn (2004), who show that cross-party shadowing in the Italian case is nothing but a side-effect of distributional games between coalition parties.

interministerial committees)[78], include just non-cabinet members (e.g., committees of parliamentary leaders), or allow the presence of both (e.g., cabinet committees and party summits)[79].

Let us now concentrate on how, according to the available literature, these cabinet-level monitoring tools have been employed in Italy, which is the case under investigation in the present work. In general, Criscitiello (1993, 1994) emphasizes the role of such executive-level institutions in mitigating ministerial autonomy and thus managing conflicts between Italian coalition parties. Most of all, the rise in importance of an *inner cabinet* of key ministers ('*consiglio di gabinetto*') led to a lower degree of ministerial autonomy (a 'restricted' collegiality). While in the period prior to the 1980s 'ministers presided over their departments almost like barons', and the cabinet used to simply ratify decisions made by individual ministers, the use of inner cabinets from their first establishment in 1983 onward has increased the level of collegiality of Italian cabinets, thus containing ministerial autonomy (Criscitiello 1994: 192-193; see also Cotta 1988: 130).

As highlighted by the Italian scholarship, the same function has been carried out by *party summits*, or majority summits. In Italy, in particular, party summits are known as '*vertici*'. According to Criscitiello (1994: 188), given their great contribution to coordination and collegiality at the top of the executive branch, majority summits might be considered the 'efficient secrets' of the Italian model of government (see also Criscitiello 1993).

Concerning *overlapping jurisdictions*, Cotta (1988: 131) argues that 'some of the most important policy areas (for instance external relations and financial and economic affairs) have been fragmented into more than one ministry and allocated to the representatives of different parties. This has meant, in the best case, that the policy of the government in that area has been the result of long consultations between the Ministers (and also the parties and the ministerial bureaucracies) responsible for that area'.

With regard to the prime minister's role, a number of limited changes in the 1980s and 1990s transformed the governmental decision-making process in a more hierarchical direction, giving the Italian prime minister greater authority to limit individual ministers' autonomy (Verzichelli 2003: 462-463). In addition to those institutional changes, as Hine and Finocchi (1991: 85-88) point out, the strength of Italian prime ministers has been affected by the presence of the coalition partners'

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[78] Inner cabinets and interministerial committees are both composed of cabinet ministers only. However, the former are not issue-specific and typically include just the prime minister and coalition parties' leading ministers, while the latter are explicitly designed to deal with problems in a certain policy area and usually involve more ministers (even JMs).
[79] Party summits are non issue-specific bodies consisting of cabinet ministers and external party leaders, whereas cabinet committees are typically issue-specific and may include senior ministers, junior ministers and civil servants.

veto on a powerful prime minister. In absence of such a veto, e.g. in the cases of the governments headed by Forlani, De Mita and Andreotti VI in the 1980s, there were *strong prime ministers*[80].

As for *interministerial committees*, the expectations about their effects in Italy seem to be less clear: although these committees facilitated the coordination between smaller numbers of ministers, they also reduced the level of collegiality between ministers as a whole (Criscitiello 1994: 190). As Cotta (1988: 131) points out, a common interpretation is that in Italy such committees 'have been more an instrument for legitimizing the independent role of certain ministries vis-à-vis the cabinet than for effective coordination'.

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[80] Concerning the strengthening of the prime minister as an intracoalitional monitoring tool, several scholars have argued that such a mechanism would present some important problems, since the prime minister would not be able in any case to whip the ministers into line. Indeed, the prime minister must necessarily be from a single party, and the other coalition parties may have little reason to believe that he will faithfully pursue coalition-wide, as opposed to party-specific, goals (Müller, Philipp and Gerlich 1993: 232-236; Andeweg 2000: 382). According to Hallerberg (2000), delegation to a powerful Finance Minister to constrain the other ministers' spending appetites would present the same problem.

2.3 LEGISLATIVE LEVEL MONITORING MECHANISMS

Let us now (re)turn to the legislative arena. The present section deals with two fundamental accountability mechanisms outlined in the literature on policymaking in multiparty governments: strong committee systems and committee chairs.

Along with parliamentary scrutiny, these two instruments allow *ex post* control of coalition partners' behaviour. In particular, monitoring hostile ministers through legislative review, strong committees and committee chairs can be understood as *direct monitoring*. In this type of monitoring, which is also known as 'police-patrol oversight', the principal does much of the oversight himself by using audits, investigations, and other direct methods of monitoring. By contrast, in 'fire-alarm oversight' the principal provides third parties with the means and the incentives to gather information and report to him about the agent's actions (McCubbins and Schwartz 1984; see also Lupia and McCubbins 2000: 295; Strøm 2003: 63)[81]. Possible instances of fire alarms are interest groups, which may provide coalition partners with information on the consequences of governmental legislation.

Another police-patrol control mechanism outlined in the literature is represented by parliamentary questions and interpellations (see Strøm, Müller, and Smith 2010: 526-527; see also Wiberg 1995), while the requirement of an investiture vote for new governments may be considered as an ex ante legislative accountability mechanism (Bergman, Müller, Strøm, and Blomgren 2003). However, the analysis of these two intracoalitional control devices is beyond the scope of the present work.

2.3.1 Strong committee systems

Strong committees have been identified in the literature as an institutionalized and concrete solution to the problem of ministerial drift faced in multiparty government. Since the primary function of a strong committee system is to control and oversee the executive, the idea that strong committees are the best instrument through which the legislature can hold accountable the cabinet, individual ministers and bureaucrats has long been present in legislative studies (see, for example, Lees and Shaw 1979).

In a recent work, Martin and Depauw (2009) argue that establishing a system of powerful committees represents a structural solution to the problems posed by delegation to ministers within multiparty coalitions. Just as Martin and Vanberg (2004, 2005) do, the authors find a solution to ministerial drift at the legislative level. Yet, whereas Martin and Vanberg's concern is for how

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[81] As highlighted by McCubbins and Schwartz (1984), who coined the terms, fire-alarm oversight allows the principal to gather information at lower cost than police-patrol oversight. However, also oversight by third parties presents drawbacks (see Lupia and McCubbins 1994).

legislatures deal with some particular bill proposed by some particular cabinet minister, Martin and Depauw focus on how the internal structures of legislatures in parliamentary systems are arranged in order to revise government legislation. More precisely, Martin and Depauw's aim is to explain the variation in strength of committees across different legislatures.

As Martin and Depauw (2009: 5) put it, structured committee systems can monitor the executive in two fundamental ways. First, committees are able to scrutinize the legislation submitted by the government. As pointed out in the literature, in so doing they are more efficient and effective than the assembly as a whole because of the gains stemming from exchanges (Weingast and Marshall 1988) and from committee members' specialization (Krehbiel 1991)[82]. Second, committees can monitor the implementation of legislation and scrutinize also the non-legislative activities of individual cabinet ministers, in particular when each parliamentary committee shadows a certain government department. Indeed, once enacted by the legislature, government bills still need to be implemented, and this task is typically delegated to the minister heading the department under whose jurisdiction the bill falls. As Huber and Shipan (2002) have shown, legislation often leaves considerable discretion in the hands of the minister and her bureaucracy. According to Martin and Depauw (2009), legislatures featuring strong committees are better able both to revise governmental bills and to monitor ministers' post-legislative actions, while legislatures with weak committees are less able to carry out such review and oversight functions. Therefore, since the problems posed by ministerial drift prove to be more severe in multiparty governments than in single-party governments (see above), the authors' core hypothesis is that stronger committees are likely to be established in multiparty coalition systems, while weaker committees should be associated with systems characterized by single-party governments[83]. Martin and Depauw (2009: 12-14) empirically evaluate their argument using data from 31 advanced industrial democracies for the 1979-2009 period and, as expected, find that a significant proportion of the cross-national variation in the strength of parliamentary committees is explained by the type of government: as predicted, multiparty coalition systems tend to present powerful committees whereas single-party systems tend to present weak committees[84].

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[82] For a review of the different perspectives on legislative organization, see for example Shepsle and Weingast (1995) and Gamm and Huber (2002).

[83] The authors rely on a rational efficiency view of legislative structures, whereby legislative institutions are considered as endogenous. In particular, as devices designed by the parliamentary majority to solve certain fundamental problems. Since a parliamentary majority can typically change legislative structures, no majority will preserve a legislative organization that is disadvantageous (Cox 2006; Binder 1996; Krehbiel 1991, 2004).

[84] Remarkably, Martin and Depauw's (2009) theoretical argument and findings call into question some relations that have become conventional in legislative studies. Typically, in fact, powerful committees have been associated with oppositional influence (as, for example, in the case of Italy), and have been seen as compatible with weak parties (as in the U.S. Congress) but incompatible with the strong parties common in parliamentary systems (see the next paragraph). Instead, the authors argue that strong committees emerge to serve the needs of parties, and in particular the parties in government rather than those in opposition.

2.3.2 Committee chairs

On the basis of studies as Martin and Depauw's (2009) one, where it has been shown that committees provide considerable opportunities for counteracting ministerial discretion, it is also possible to develop hypotheses emphasizing the role of committee chairs as counterweights to cabinet ministers. Whereas Martin and Vanberg argue that coalition partners can use parliamentary scrutiny as a means of monitoring one another, a number of studies focus on the role of committee chairs in serving the same purpose (Hagevi 2000; Carroll and Cox 2005; Kim and Loewenberg 2005; see also Hallerberg 2000).

A specific case in which such a counterbalancing seems plausible is Sweden. As Hagevi (2000: 238) writes, 'during the preparation of a government bill in…the Swedish Riksdag, the responsible minister takes care to obtain the consent and strategic advice of representatives of the governing party on the relevant committee, particularly the chairman'.

As Carroll and Cox (2005: 5) put it, committee chairs are more able to monitor cabinet ministers when they are more powerful (having greater authority to delay or expedite bills referred to their committees), as well as when the committees are more specialized and better-informed (having better rights to extract information from their corresponding ministries). Therefore, under these conditions, each coalition party has incentives to chair the parliamentary committees that oversee the ministries held by its coalition partners. In their analysis of the patterns of committee chair appointments in the German Bundestag during a relatively long period (1961-1998), Kim and Loewenberg (2005: 1113-1121) show that the coalition parties in the German lower chamber distribute committee chair positions such that coalition members can monitor each other's cabinet ministers. In particular, although committee chairmanships are distributed among parties in proportion to their strength in the chamber, committee chairs turn out to be systematically drawn from different parties than the cabinet ministers they oversee.

Kim and Loewenberg's (2005) research is an attempt to explain the puzzle of the coexistence of strong parties and strong committees in the German Bundestag. The existence of an inverse relationship between committee and party power in legislatures was long considered as an axiom in the literature, in both congressional and parliamentary studies[85]. As for the United States Congress, for example, Weingast and Marshall (1988: 158-159) consider 'strong parties and strong committees' as 'substitutes' and regard the committee system as an institutional arrangement to ensure gains from exchange among legislators across time. Concerning parliamentary democracies, in their comparative analysis of the powers of committees and parties in eight national legislatures,

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[85] For the inverse relationship between the importance of committee arenas and the importance of party arenas in legislative research, see for example Mezey (1993: 349-350). Remarkably, as Mezey (1993: 349) stresses, this does not hold true in Germany and Italy, where strong parties and strong committees coexist.

Lees and Shaw (1979: 394) conclude that "where the committees are strongest...one finds the lowest level of party control over committees"[86]. Given the growing evidence that both parties and committees affect policymaking in Congress, during the 1990s congressional research has called into question such an inverse relationship. In particular, Kiewiet and McCubbins (1991) reject the question of whether parties are more powerful than committees and reconceptualize the relationship between them in a principal-agent framework, with committees regarded as agents of congressional parties. Investigating the appropriations process in Congress, they demonstrate that 'congressional parties have successfully managed the delegation of policy-making authority to their members serving on committees' (Kiewiet and McCubbins 1991: 233). In a related work, Cox and McCubbins (1993) analyze American congressional parties as procedural and floor voting coalitions and show that, in fact, congressional committees are the agents of the majority party[87]. According to Kim and Loewenberg (2005: 1106), in parliamentary systems with coalition governments committees may be agents of the parties as they are in the U.S. presidential system. More precisely, as the patterns of committee chairs appointment show, in the German Bundestag committees are employed by coalition parties as intracoalition monitoring tools.

Kim and Loewenberg's (2005) results are in line with what Carroll and Cox (2005) find in their study of 23 countries featuring multiparty governments. In their analysis, Carrol and Cox aim to assess whether, and under what conditions, committee chairs are used by coalition members to monitor hostile cabinet ministers. Following an approach similar to that employed by Thies (2001) in his study of junior ministers, the authors check whether committee chairs belong to parties other than the party of their corresponding cabinet ministers, more often than we would expect in any random distribution of committees[88]. Proceeding at the level of jurisdictional areas, for each country Carroll and Cox (2005: 8-10) look at the proportion of jurisdictions which are shadowed – i.e, jurisdictions where the responsible minister and the relevant committee chair are not copartisan. As expected, empirical evidence supports the thesis that committee chairs are systematically employed as counterweights to cabinet ministers: the proportion of jurisdictions that are shadowed is relatively high in several countries (Carroll and Cox 2005: 12, Tab. 1).

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[86] A typical example of this inverse relationship is the British House of Commons. Weingast and Marshall (1988: 158-159) suggest that, as the British case shows, "parties potentially provide an alternative means for enforcing agreements". Drawing on interviews with MPs, Jogerst (1990) shows that British backbenchers see and use the committees as instruments for strengthening their own role vis-à-vis their party's leaders and policies. It is for this reason that British governments have always worked to keep committees weak.

[87] In particular, Cox and McCubbins (1993) show that the majority party, when it is sufficiently homogeneous in political purpose, is able to seize legislative authority and (re)devise legislative institutions and practices (such as the committee system) in order to carry out the policy programs on which its members agree.

[88] In a random distribution of committees, ministers and committee chairs would be appointed independently of one another.

However, as the same authors acknowledge, the presence of high rates of shadowing does not necessarily mean that intentional balancing is at work. Indeed, there could be high proportions of shadowed jurisdictions simply because the government coalition consists of many parties. The higher the number of parties participating in a coalition, the lower the probability that any of them will get both the ministry and the committee chair in a given jurisdictional area. Therefore, in what they define as a preliminary empirical investigation, Carroll and Cox (2005: 14-17) test a number of possible explanations of why some jurisdictions are shadowed and other are not. In particular, they find that two factors which reflect the logic of 'keeping tabs on partners' have a significant effect on the probability of shadowing ministers: the *size of ministerial party* and the *strength of committees*. More precisely, the results show that larger parties are less likely to be shadowed by their partners than smaller ones (see above), while ministers are more likely to be shadowed in systems with strong committees[89]. Concerning the latter finding, as in Martin and Depauw (2009), the underlying logic is not that more powerful committees cause shadowing. Rather, where parties want to use committees in order to control one another, they devise stronger committees and, as a consequence, the rates of partisan shadowing turn out to be higher.

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[89] In addition, Carroll and Cox (2005: 14) include in their analysis two control variables: the number of parties in the governing coalition and the government share of committee jurisdictions. The latter variable takes into account the fact that, when a committee chair belongs to an opposition party, the corresponding jurisdiction inevitably results to be shared. Therefore, many chairs from opposition parties would artificially inflate the rates of shadowing. Both control variables have a significant effect: shadowing is more likely when the number of coalition parties is higher and when the share of comittee jurisdictions held by government parties is lower.

2.4 COMBINING MONITORING MECHANISMS

Undoubtedly, none of the aforementioned monitoring mechanisms can be universally valid, and those instruments are neither always available, nor cost-effective, for coalition partners. Indeed, it might be possible that some control devices are not present in the institutional design of some political systems. For instance, junior ministers are not permitted in Denmark, Finland, and Iceland (Verzichelli 2008: 260-261). More importantly, the measures employed for mitigating agency loss are themselves costly. As Müller and Strøm (2008: 185) point out, employing control mechanisms entails *transaction costs* (see Kreps 1990)[90]. In a recent contribution, Müller and Meyer (2010) discuss the array of instruments through which governing parties try to manage delegation to hostile ministers, arguing that the use of coalition control mechanisms is constrained by their respective costs. In particular, the authors argue, a number of factors may influence the costs of employing the available control instruments as well as the choice among them (see also Müller and Strøm 2008). First of all, a certain control mechanism may be chosen simply because it has been long and successfully used by prior governmental coalitions. Second, the gains from employing control measures increase when the government is a majority government, when there is considerable time before the next scheduled elections, and when bargaining in parliament is complex due to the large number of possible majority coalitions. Third, government parties are more likely to resort to control instruments if their policy preferences are heterogeneous and if the coalition includes the parliamentary median party. Fourth, the use of monitoring tools should be more likely the stronger the institutional prerogatives of the prime minister. Moreover, ex ante coalition agreements are less likely when institutional veto players exist, while ex post monitoring is more likely in the simultaneous presence of both coalitional agreements and institutional veto players. Finally, coalition partners are expected to rely more extensively on control mechanisms when the level of uncertainty about future elections is relatively high due to electoral volatility, and when the termination of prior coalitions was caused by policy or office conflicts or critical events (a fate they obviously seek to avoid) (Müller and Meyer 2010: 1083-1086).

Remarkably, although they can be treated separately from an analytical point of view, in real-world multiparty politics control mechanisms are probably used simultaneously. In other words, such instruments coexist and complement each other. Some of them can exclude one another, while some others can reinforce each other thus making monitoring more effective. The literature examined give us some clues on how coalition partners can combine the several control instruments at their disposal. In particular, parliamentary scrutiny can be combined with both ex ante and ex post devices, as well as with both executive level and legislative level mechanisms. In the

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[90] In Kiewiet and McCubbins' (1991: 25) terms, the principal incurs in 'agency costs'.

remainder of the paragraph, I discuss feasible combinations of accountability instruments and, when possible, I derive testable hypotheses for explaining the changes made to governmental bills in the course of the legislative process. As Figure 2.1 summarizes, control mechanisms operating in the parliamentary arena are expected to increase the overall amount of modifications, whereas those employed in the cabinet – with one possible exception – are likely to reduce it. Indeed, everything else being equal, legislative-level devices should enhance representatives' ability to revise government legislation, which will result in greater changes during the parliamentary process. By contrast, control mechanisms set up in the cabinet should manage the possible conflicts among coalition members in the pre-parliamentary stage. Once solved, such conflicts would not manifest themselves in parliament and, all else equal, would not lead to observable modifications to the initial bills.
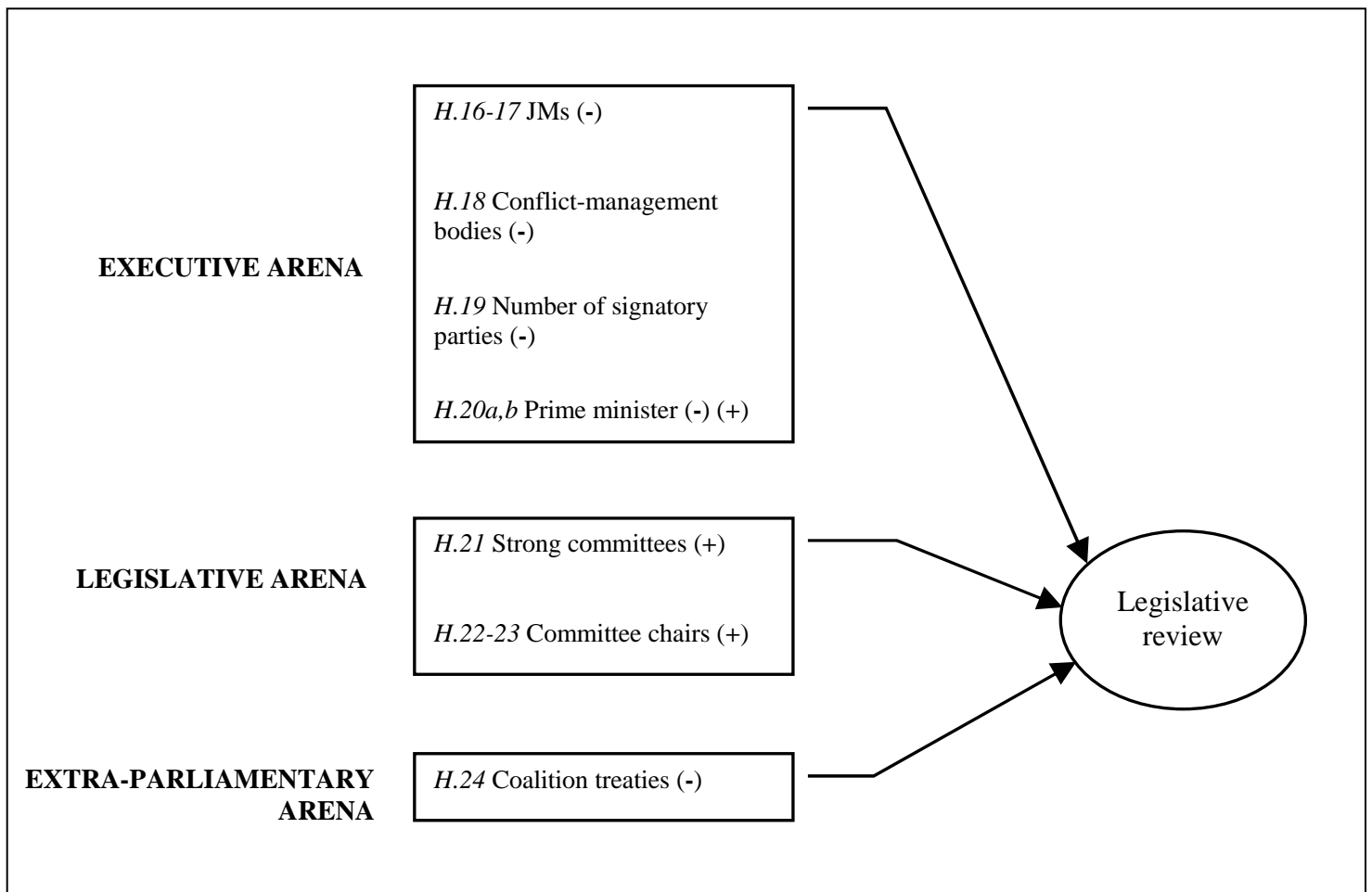
Figure 2.1
Effect of different accountability mechanisms on legislative review by type of instiutional arena.

2.4.1 Legislative review plus cabinet-level mechanisms

Following Thies' (2001) logic, the observable changes made to govenmental bills in parliament can be explained by the scarce information at coalition partners' disposal concerning the proposing minister's behaviour. When coalition members can gather such information by appointing junior ministers to a hostile ministry, they are enabled to exert control at the cabinet-level (e.g. in meetings of the cabinet or in the government department where the bill is drafted), and so they should be unlikely to make use of review in the legislative arena. As a consequence, it is possible to formulate the following hypothesis, which has been successfully tested by Martin and Vanberg (2005: 102-103) against data from Germany and the Netherlands:

> *H.16 Junior ministers (presence): We should expect the presence of a JM from a partner party in the ministry drafting a bill to reduce the level of changes made to the bill in the assembly.*

As a refinement of the previous claim, we can take into account in a more accurate way the ideological divergence between the JM and the minister he shadows. Indeed, the presence of a partner party in the drafting ministry should reduce the level of parliamentary scrutiny only insofar as the JM and the minister have divergent preferences. Instead, when their preferences are similar – in the extreme case, when they are copartisan – JMs may not be an effective means for counteracting ministerial discretion. Thus,

> *H.17 Junior ministers (preferences): I expect less modifications the more the ideological preferences between the proposing minister and her JMs diverge.*

Let us now turn to the wide array of other executive level mechanisms outlined in the scholarly literature on multiparty governments. Just as JMs do, these cabinet-level institutions should enable coalition partners to control each other in the pre-parliamentary stage, thus reducing the probability of monitoring in the legislature. As a consequence,

> *H.18 Other cabinet-level institutions: In presence of inner cabinets, cabinet committees, interministerial committees, party summits, or overlapping jurisdictions, government bills should be subject to a lower amount of changes in parliament.*

By the same logic, also the number of government parties that (by means of their respective ministers) formally co-sponsor a government bill can indicate the level of intracabinet control. The higher this number, the greater the probability that the proposal submitted to parliament

approximates the coalition compromise, thus making monitoring superfluous. Extreme cases are when the bill is sponsored by all the governing parties or by the prime minister. Unlike line ministers, the prime minister does not have the jurisdiction over a specific policy area. Instead, his typical task is supposed to be that of ensuring coordination among the other ministers (see Müller, Philipp, and Gerlich 1993). As a consequence, when a bill dealing with a particular policy area is presented by the prime minister, we can reasonably suppose that it is the entire cabinet which wants the approval of that bill[91]. Therefore,

> **H.19 Number of signatory parties:** *I expect less changes to government bills the larger the number of signatory parties.*

> **H.20a Prime minister's bills:** *I expect that the bills proposed by the prime minister should be less changed in parliament than the bills proposed by other cabinet members.*

As for prime ministers' role, Müller and Meyer (2010: 1086) interestingly suggest a different interpretation, arguing that the prime minister can be the member of the cabinet who is mostly subject to monitoring activities. In this case, the prime minister is assumed to be an agent of the entire coalition (and of the party he belongs to), rather than the representative of the whole government, and the (only) party in the coalition which holds the prime ministerial post is in a relatively privileged position[92]. In particular, given the institutional prerogatives they may exploit to favour their own constituencies and the media attention they usually receive, prime ministers are likely to be particularly risky agents for the entire cabinet[93]. Therefore, on their turn, the other coalition partners are likely to put considerable efforts into controlling prime ministers' actions (see also Müller and Strøm 2008: 192). All that said, it seems reasonable to put forward a second, opposite hypothesis involving prime ministers. In particular,

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[91] It is worth noting that both the hypotheses concerning the number of signatory parties and prime ministerial bills may also rest on a logic based on the *costs of decisions*. In a seminal work, Buchanan and Tullock (1962: 68-69) provide crucial insights into the relationship between the transaction costs of decision making and key features of the political system. According to the authors, the higher the number of actors involved in a decision, the higher are decision making costs (time and resources needed to reach an agreement). On the other hand, any decision presents external costs: as the number of actors involved in a decision becomes small, the external risks and potential costs for those affected by, but not participating in, that decision increase. This logic can be employed for understanding the lawmaking process: after a decision in the cabinet, one or more governing parties present a bill in the legislature, where the parties (both from the government and from the opposition) that were excluded from the decision amend the government bill in order to mitigate the costs they would pay if the bill were approved. Therefore, if the number of parties proposing a bill increases, the number of parties not participating in that decision necessarily decreases, and hence also the number of potential overseers becomes small. Similarly, bills that are signed by the prime minister should minimize external costs and hence the transformations undergone in parliament by those bills.

[92] By this logic, prime ministers are not supposed to be intracoalitional monitoring mechanisms.

[93] Of course, prime ministers' powers vary a lot across countries. See Bergman, Müller, Strøm, and Blomgren (2003); O'Malley (2007). However, prime ministers are undoubtedly the members of the cabinet who mostly receive media attention.

H.20b Prime minister's bills: *I expect that the bills proposed by the prime minister should be more changed in parliament than the bills proposed by other cabinet members.*

2.4.2 Legislative review plus legislative-level mechanisms

As previously noted, accountability mechanisms operating in the parliamentary arena reinforce each other, thereby making monitoring of hostile ministers more incisive. In particular, both powerful committees and committee chairs enable legislators to effectively revise governmental bills. Concerning the strength of parliamentary committees, we can follow Martin and Depauw's (2009) logic and hypothesize that

H.21 Strength of legislative committees: *The stronger are legislative committees, the more they are able to accomplish their review task, and thus the more we should observe changes to government bills in the parliamentary arena.*

Obviously, testing this hypothesis would require a comparative research design and cross-national data. Instead, in the present work I investigate a single country (Italy) whose system of committees does not seem to have changed over the considered time span (1987-2006).

As for committee chairs, several recent works emphasize their role as intacoalitional monitoring tools. In particular, as counterweights to cabinet ministers. Therefore, carrying Kim and Loewenberg's (2005) and Carroll and Cox's (2005) analyses one step further, I formulate the following two hypotheses concerning the role of committe chairs:

H.22 Committee chairs (presence): *We should expect a higher level of modifications made to a bill drafted by a certain minister when the committee to which the bill is referred is chaired by one of the minister's coalition partners.*

H.23 Committee chairs (preferences): *Taking into account the ideological preferences of the chair of the committee to which bills are referred, we should expect more modifications the more his preferences diverge from those of the drafting minister.*

While the former simply concerns the presence of a counterweight to the proposing minister, the latter is a more nuanced hypothesis and takes into account the ideological distance between committee chairs and corresponding ministers. Indeed, we should expect more changes to government legislation the more the chair's preferences diverge from those of the drafting minister.

The more they converge, the more committees are unlikely to be effective monitoring instruments, all else equal.

Thanks to their considerable powers in fixing the agenda and influencing legislation, Italian committee chairs do seem to be able to play such a role, thus making changes to government bills more or less likely to occur. Indeed, commitee chairs' substantial influence over lawmaking has commonly been considered one of the key features characterizing the Italian parliament (see, for example, Di Palma 1978: 72, 277-289).

2.4.3 Junior ministers, committee chairs and coalition treaties

In their empirical investigation of the patterns of committee chair appointments in the German Bundestag, Kim and Loewenberg (2005) formulate and test hypotheses involving two other intracoalition monitoring mechanisms described in the literature: junior ministers (Thies 2001) and coalition treaties (Müller and Strøm 2000, 2008).

Concerning the former, as expected the frequency of assigning committee chairs to shadow ministries controlled by a party's coalition partner is inversely related to appointing JMs to ministries held by its coalition partner. In other words, monitoring through committee chairs results to be an alternative at the legislative level to controlling through JMs at the executive level: since the chairs of the Bundestag committees are appointed only after the composition of government has been defined and hence in full knowledge of the identity of senior and junior ministers, coalition parties are likely to assign their committee chairs to shadow ministries in which they have not been able to place JMs (Kim and Loewenberg 2005: 1110)[94]. In line with these empirical results, we thus expect to find that Italian coalition parties use junior ministers and committee chairs as alternative monitoring mechanisms.

As for coalition treaties, Kim and Loewenberg (2005) find that the presence of such agreements increases the use of committee chairs in the German Bundestag as instruments for monitoring ministers. The existence of coalition agreements encourages the use of other monitoring tools: since, as Müller and Strøm (2000: 577) argue, 90% of the content of coalition treaties deals with matters of policy, coalition parties have an incentive to ensure that ministers stick to the agreed-on compromise, and hence they employ additional monitoring measures (Kim and Loewenberg 2005: 1123)[95].

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[94] This is consistent with Thies' (2001: 588) suggestion that parliamentary committees and junior ministers might be viewed as alternative monitoring mechanisms. He speculates that the unusually strong committees in the German Bundestag might be substitutes for junior ministers in keeping tabs on coalition partners.

[95] See Müller and Strøm (2008) for an estensive cross-national analysis of coalition agreements. Whereas, as the authors show, most West European multiparty governments rely on ex ante agreements, Italian coalition parties have almost

In general, the existence of an ex ante mechanism such as a coalition treaty should be positively related to the use of ex post measures such as the control instruments available to coalition parties. Therefore, since when a coalition treaty exists coalition parties have an incentive to enforce it and so put more effort into monitoring each other, I formulate the following hypothesis:

> *H.24 Coalition treaties: We should expect the presence of a coalition treaty to increase the amount of modifications made to government bills in parliament, as well as the appointment of junior ministers and committee chairs to monitor hostile ministers.*

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never made use of such documents. The only (partial) exceptions were in 1963 and 1978. The former case concerns the Moro I government, at the beginning of the centre-left phase. Although distributed by the DC, that agreement was not recorded in any official document. As for the latter, the Andreotti IV cabinet was a single-party government which was based on a 'national solidarity' agreement signed by all the major parties in parliament (with the exception of the neo-fascists). This agreement cannot be considered as a fully-fledged coalition agreement (Verzichelli 2000: 457-459). In any case, being outside the time span considered in the present work, I will not test the effect of these two coalition agreements on the use of other monitoring tools.

CHAPTER 3.
LACK OF INFORMATION

Let us now focus on a second crucial factor for explaining the empirically observable modifications made to government-sponsored bills in parliament: the limited level of information at political actors' disposal throughout the legislative process. Generally speaking, cabinet ministers may not know completely the other actors' preferences, and may be unable to perfectly anticipate the effects of laws. Hence, when they are introduced to parliament, governmental bills may reflect such lack of knowledge. Scrutiny in the legislative arena may thus allow actors to learn and to correct the initial proposals. This is possible because, although cabinet ministers are certainly not less staffed than ordinary members of parliament, the variety of origins and competences of the legislators and the specialization of the parliamentary committees provide the expertise needed to revise governmental legislation.

As Krehbiel argues in his fundamental 1991 volume on information and legislative organization, political actors may have only a limited knowledge of whether the policies they choose produce actually the outcomes they seek. Embracing an informational perspective on legislative institutions, Krehbiel (1991: 20, 66-70) conceptualizes *uncertainty* as incomplete information about the relationship between *policies* (i.e., objects of legislative choice such as bills and laws) and *outcomes* (i.e., consequences of enacted policies). Legislators are assumed to maximize their utility, which depends on the outcomes and not on the policies. Yet, legislators see and directly choose policies, but cannot choose outcomes. Indeed, initially legislators can just roughly foresee outcomes as a function of the policies under consideration[96]. To put it bluntly, legislators know what they want, but they do not know how to accomplish their goals. What is needed to solve this problem is *expertise* (or *specialization*), which is defined as precision of expectation about the relationship between policies and outcomes. Within the frame of informational theories, policy expertise is considered as a potential collective good, whose benefits for the entire legislature can be captured only if legislative institutions (*committees*) provide some legislators with incentives to specialize, gather information and share their expertise. Potential specialists are thus granted resources to better understand the relationship between policies and outcomes as well as to share such knowledge. A well-designed legislature is hence a "producer, consumer, and repository of policy expertise" (Krehbiel 1991: 62)[97].

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[96] Formally, let x be the outcome and p a policy. Legislators' forecast is $x = p + \omega$, where ω is a random variable whose precise value is unknown but whose distribution is known (Krehbiel 1991: 68).
[97] The *informational perspective* on legislative organization is a supply-side approach, and sees committees as (specialized) agents of production which solve informational problems (Gilligan and Krehbiel 1987, 1989; Krehbiel

Politicians' informational problems are well-known also in the scholarly literature on delegation in multiparty governments. In discussing the implications of the institutional features of parliamentary versus presidential constitutions for specific democratic agency problems, Strøm (2003) identifies incomplete information as one of the sources of agency loss, the others being divergent policy preferences and non-policy motivations such as leisure-shirking and rent seeking. More precisely, some critical information concerning the agent may be hidden from the principal's eyes: typically, the agent's competencies or preferences and/or the agent's actions. Such problems of asymmetric information between principals and their agents are present all along the parliamentary chain of delegation (Strøm 2003: 85-93), and are among the primary concerns of sevreal important studies of coalition politics under parliamentary governments. As Strøm, Müller and Bergman (2008) show, informational asymmetries – together with transaction costs – characterize all the stages of coalition politics[98].

All that said, we can imagine that parliamentary changes to government legislation are driven by an improvement of the decision makers' knowledge. This can be especially true for legislation addressing complex issues. If a bill deals with a complex subject, neither the proposing minister nor the rest of the cabinet are likely to take all the possible aspects into account in the draft version. However, during the debate in committees and on the floor legislators are engaged in a process of learning in which they discover aspects that previously were unknown (and, necessarily, not considered in original version of the bill). Therefore, they correct the bill in order to include this new information. This kind of parliamentary scrutiny somehow resembles what Heller (2001: 786) calls 'friendly amendments' – that is, amendments 'designed to correct technical or political flaws and omissions'. The hypothesis I put forward is the following:

> **H.25 Complexity:** *It is reasonable to expect more changes the more complex the subject of a governmental bill is*.

1991). In particular, legislative majorities do not always know which policy will achieve the desired outcome, and so they need expertise. Since policy expertise is costly, a majority grants special procedural prerogatives to committee members, who are thus willing to pay the costs of specialization. In other words, each legislator wants to be assigned to the committee which maximizes his capacity to effectively participate in the decision making process. As a consequence, committees should be composed of legislators sharing policy expertise in the same area. Krehbiel (1991) contrasts his approach with the other major interpretation of legislative organization: the *distributive perspective* (see paragraph 1.1.2). According to this view, which is a demand-driven perspective whereby committees are conceived of as agents of allocation, the organization in committees solves distributive problems (Baron and Ferejohn 1989; Fiorina 1981; Shepsle 1979; Shepsle and Weingast 1981; Weingast 1979; Weingast and Marshall 1988). In particular, committees secure benefits to legislators' constituencies, and thus increase their chances of being reelected. For this reason, representatives seek assignments to committees with jurisdiction over issues of vital concern to their constituents. As a result, we should expect committees to be composed of legislators with similar interests. A third view of legislative organization is Cox and McCubbins's (1993) *partisan perspective*.

[98] On the role of information and uncertainty in politics, see also Gilligan and Krehbiel (1989, 1990), Austen-Smith and Riker (1987), and Austen-Smith and Banks (1996).

The argument underlying this hypothesis seems particularly reasonable in the presence of problems of capacity in the cabinet: if the government agenda is crowded by provisions to examine and deliberate, the cabinet may lack the resources (especially time) for taking all (or most) necessary decisions. Therefore, cabinet ministers may find it convenient to delegate the learning activity to the parliament instead of improving the knowledge at the cabinet level.

Remarkably, explaining the changes made to government legislation on the basis of the lack of knowledge in the cabinet does not exclude the importance of position-taking incentives and conflict among political actors. On the contrary, it is possible to imagine that in some circumstances the two types of explanation reinforce each other. This is fairly straightforward if we employ the status quo and veto players approach. There can be situations in which the status quo is so far from the government that a policy change is desired by all the cabinet parties: there are a lot of policy alternatives which the governing parties unanimously prefer to the status quo. In these circumstances, the coalition parties may jointly choose to delegate to their parliamentary majority the definition of the *details of legislation*: the study in depth of possible implications, the evaluation of feasible alternatives, the inclusion of technical aspects, and all the final decisions on the conent of bills. Therefore, driven by position-taking utility, the cabinet can deliberate a generic and vague bill through which to convey to the electorate a symbolic message of internal cohesion and capacity to innovate. This allows governing parties to avoid investing time and energies in examining the same issue for a long time in the cabinet, and to concentrate their efforts on more controversial policies.

Apart from the complexity of the subject which is dealt with, it is possible to identify another factor that can limit the information at coalition parties' disposal when they draft bills and propose them to the cabinet. If a governmental bill addresses more than one policy area, then both the debate and the decision in parliament take place in a multidimensional policy space. Since the decision rule is the majority rule, the final outcome is not easily predictable by anyone (Plott 1967; McKelvey 1976; Schofield 1978), the bargaining process can last longer and more modifications can be made to the initial bill. Therefore,

H.26 Multidimensionality: I expect more changes to those bills which can be evaluated according to more than one policy dimension.

Individual legislators can use their personal competencies and the specialized expertise aquired in parliamentary committees for scrutinizing government-initiated bills. However, some representatives may be in a better position to do so: some of them may have better information on other actors' preferences and on the likely effects of laws, as well as a better knowledge of the rules

and practices of legislative processes. This informational asymmetry may depend on a number of legislators' personal properties, such as their parliamentary and pre-parliamentary political experience.

In his investigation of the effects of several individual properties on Italian representatives' propensity to introduce legislation, Zucchini (2001) evaluates the effects of MPs' parliamentary seniority, their role in committee, and their experience in the party and in local governments. In particular, he shows that *parliamentary seniority* has a clear influence on MPs' behaviour with regard to both presented and approved bills during the entire period considerded (1987-1998). Interestingly, the relation does not seem to be linear. The proportion of both presented and approved projects is significantly lower than the overall mean for new members, and significantly higher for deputies who have been in parliament for one or two legislatures. Instead, MPs with a seniority of three or four legislatures have a proportion which is not different from the mean of the population (except for the XII legislature), and in some cases the value for deputies who have been member of parliament for more than four legislatures is lower than the overall mean (Zucchini 2001: 66)[99]. As the author argues, 'legislative activity is the peculiar activity of those parliamentarians who are enough experienced to know the rules and practices of the legslative proceedings, but are not yet enough known and important to aspire to offices in the cabinet or leading roles in the party they belong to' (Zucchini 2001: 83).

The influence of the other explanatory factors seems to be less clear. Concerning the *role in committee*, being chair or deputy chair of a committee presents advantages especially for the proportion of approved projects, which is significantly larger than the overall mean. Yet, the relation holds just in the X and XI legislatures. However, as the high values of the standard deviations in the following two legislatures suggest, at least in some committees the chair and the deputy chair still have a fundamental role (Zucchini 2001: 68).

The variables dealing with pre-parliamentary experiences of MPs prove to have some effects on their legislative behaviour, but their influence seems to strongly diminish in the XIII legislature, after the fall of the Italian party system. Pre-parliamentary *experience in the party organization* has a systematic impact on the propensity to initiate legislation and on the probability of seeing that legislation approved. In fact, in all four legislatures, parliamentarians with party experiences at a national level have a proportion of both presented and approved projects which is significantly higher than the overall mean. However, in the XIII legislature, deputies with no pre-parliamentary party experience have proportions of both presented and approved projects that are not different

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[99] The Northern League is a perfect example of such a nonlinear relation: both in the case of presented and approved projects, its proportion is significantly lower than the overall mean in the XI legislature (when its members were newcomers), it increases in the XII and finally becomes non different from the mean in the XIII (Zucchini 2001: 66).

from the overall mean, thus losing the disadvantage they previously had. Also the effect of pre-parliamentary *experience in local governments* becomes weaker during the years of the transition to a new party system: having been a member of a municipal or provincial council has a positive impact only in the X legislature, while in the XIII legislature deputies with no experience in local governments present a proportion of projects which is not significantly different from the overall mean (Zucchini 2001: 67-68)[100]. Assuming that the variables influencing MPs' decision to initiate legislation affect in a similar way their decision to amend bills, I thus formulate the following set of hypotheses:

> *H.27 Legislators' parliamentary and pre-parliamentary experience: I expect that MPs should be more likely to alter legislation, just as they are to initiate it, when they have a relatively long (but not too long) parliamentary experience, and when they had some party experiences at a national level or in local governments before their election in the national parliament.*

Although theoretically interesting, the above mentioned hypotheses will not empirically tested in the present work. Indeed, they concern more legislators's probability of proposing amendments and successfully altering bills than the actual number of observable modifications.

It is rather easy to note that, among all the theoretical hypotheses discussed so far, those based on the lack of information are far fewer than those based on position-taking and conflict among actors. On the one hand, scholars interested in multiparty policymaking seem to stress much more coalition parties' divergent preferences (and the resulting conflicts) than their information problems. Such emphasis is of course understandable, given that, quite tautologically, the most important issue in coalition politics is that different parties govern together and have to make joint policy. On the other hand, however, information plays a fundamental role also in several of the explanations that I classified as based upon conflict. Leaving aside the combination of lack of knowledge and veto players approach I discussed above, uncertainty is one of the problems which are at the basis of the literature on accountability mechanisms employed in multiparty cabinets. As Strøm, Müller, and Smith (2010: 519-520) argue in a recent review, what make particularly difficult to control coalition partners are preference divergence, uncertainty and opportunism. Indeed, the use of several control

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[100] Zucchini (2001) provides further evidence that an informational logic is at work in the Italian parliament. In the second part of the same chapter, he analyzes Italian legislators' decision to become members of a certain committee. In particular, the author discusses and tests the hypotheses on the composition of committees generated by the two major alternative approaches on legislative organization: the distributive and the informational perspective. The data support the latter perspective: legislators' profession proves to be a key factor in their decision to become members of a certain committee and, as the study of the number of interventions in committee shows, legislators' propensity toward a certain committee due to their profession is reflected in a greater involvement in committee activities (Zucchini 2001: 71-82).

instruments is induced by the informational advantage each minister enjoys in her jurisdiction. For instance, junior ministers and other cabinet-level devices are employed as means of reducing the informational asymmetry between a minister and the rest of the cabinet. The same could be said for legislative level instruments such as committees and their chairs, whose powerful resources are employed to discover whether ministers are deviating from the coalition's agreed-upon compromise. While distinct from an analytical point of view, in real-world democratic politics the various sources of agency loss interact with each other, thus increasing the risks associated with delegation. Thus, divergent preferences between principals and agents are typically paired with and exacerbated by informational asymmetries favouring the agents (Lupia 2003: 37; Strøm 2003: 86).

It is worth spending some words also on technical ministers. Remarkably, technical ministers are not just the cabinet members who face least position taking incentives, but also those who have the best knowledge of the actual policy implications of laws. Their expertise in the issue at hand is a second reason for expecting less modifications to the bills they propose. When technicians initiate legislation, they draft bills which are well made from a technical point of view. Hence, even in case of complex subjects, these bills will not be extensively changed in parliament because all the technical information has already been included.

CHAPTER 4
CHANGES IN FORMAL RULES

As any other type of legislative behaviour, also the changes which actors make to governmental bills are influenced by the institutional rules regulating parliamentary life. Following North (1990), we can conceive of institutions as 'rules of the game': the procedural and structural mechanisms that actors use to influence policy outcomes. In line with rational choice theory, institutions constrain actors, providing them with larger or narrower opportunities, and modifying the incentive structure they face[101]. Conceptualized this way, parliamentary institutions affect legislators' ability to shape legislative outcomes. In particular, for our purposes, certain types of institutions – such as amendment rules or other procedures – affect representatives' ability to modify legislation.

As previously noted, legislators' ability to alter governmental bills is influenced by the type of amending rule employed as well as by other institutional arrangements. Generally speaking, more restrictive institutions reduce the possibility of modifying legislation in parliament. For the purpose of the present work, we can distinguish between two types of institutions: 1) the formal rules *directly* regulating the legislative process, and 2) other institutional arrangements which influence, but are only *indirectly* linked to, lawmaking. If we focus on the Italian case, the former include the type of amending rule employed as well as other rules which can be relevant: the internal rules of parliament, the presence or absence of secret voting, and the rules regulating special legislative processes such as the budgetary process. The latter include electoral rules, the strength of the committee system, and the type of democracy.

What should be evaluated is whether, and how, these institutional changes do affect Italian MPs' ability to amend government legislation. Indeed, when insitutional changes are accomplished by reforms of the rules, also behavioural changes take place[102]. Rational actors adapt their behaviour in response to the modifications occurred in the institutional setting, and may search for and adopt new strategies in order to pursue their goals[103].

In any case, many of the institutional explanations I introduce in the following pages are discussed just for purposes of completeness. Indeed, except for some important changes, the impact

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[101] For an introduction to the role of institutions in rational choice theory, see Weingast (2002).

[102] Within the rational choice theory, political institutions are analyzed as either exogenous or endogenous. The former approach is the one employed in the present section and studies how institutions affect individual interactions and choices. The latter, i.e. the neo-institutional perspective, maintains that institutions are themselves endogenous: rules and structures can be explained in terms of goal-oriented human behaviour. According to North (1990), for instance, institutions are 'man made rules', 'humanly devised constraints'.

[103] As Weingast (1992: 160) argues, this is unlikely to occur all at once. Since actors are substantially uncertain about what strategies, conventions, or rules will succeed, we should expect considerable experimentation, and also dead ends. However, when a strategy proves to be successful, it will be repeated and eventually adopted as optimal.

of most reforms in institutional rules cannot be empirically evaluated with my research design. As for the formal rules regulating the legislative process (i.e., the first set of institutional explanations), Italian ordinary legislation is approved under an open amending rule. However, as I will discuss, if legislators are enough impatient they may behave as if a more restrictive rule were in force in parliament. Concerning the formal changes in the standing orders, only the 1997 reform can be evaluated[104]. Moreover, the secret ballot was abolished in 1988, while my data concern the Italian governmental laws approved between 1987 and 2006 and thus include just one year of secret voting. Further, the impact of the reforms of the Italian budgetary process cannot be tested since budgetary laws are excluded from my sample.

With regard to the institutional rules external to the parliamentary process (i.e., the second set of hypotheses), the study of a single country does not allow to assess whether the strength of committees or the type of democracy affect legislators' ability to amend governmental bills. As for the latter factor, however, some scholars define the First Italian Republic as a consensual system and the Second Republic as a (more) majoritarian system. Another 'external' major change occurred during the period under consideration was the 1993 reform of the electoral system, which turned from a purely proportional representation system into a mixed one. Yet, as I will discuss, the conjectures that can be put forward on the basis of that electoral reform concern mostly the behaviour of individual legislators, the study of which is out of the scope of the present work.

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[104] Another major change is the 1996 verdict of the Italian Supreme Court, which prohibited the reiteration of decree-laws.

4.1 FORMAL RULES REGULATING THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS

4.1.1 Type of amending rule

Since more restrictive rules decrease representatives' ability to alter legislation in parliament, any change of amending rule from the open rule type to the closed rule type will decrease the amount of modifications made to government bills. Such a logic has been of primary importance for scholars relying on a distributive perspective of legislative institutions (see above, paragraph 1.1.2). In particular, in investigating how different rules influence the final allocation of benefits among districts, the theoretical literature on procedures has focused on two issues: the rules regulating the sequence of voting, and those setting the type of admissible amendments. Although voting procedures are clearly important because they establish who has an influence on the final legislative outcomes, and when, for the purposes of the present work amendment rules are more interesting[105].

In a series of fundamental works, Baron (1989, 1991) and Baron and Ferejohn (1989) address the issue of how legislatures reach agreements on how to choose distributive projects. In particular, Baron and Ferejohn's (1989) bargaining model takes into consideration the formal rules governing agenda formation and voting (i.e., the sequential nature of proposal making, amending, and voting) in legislatures with majority rule. The authors view policy, and the budget in particular, as a distributive problem among districts, and conceive of legislative bargaining as a process conducted according to the formal rules governing agenda formation and voting – that is, those which specify who may make proposals and how they will be decided. They point out that, although such rules and the structure of the legislature shape legislative outcomes, standard social choice theory finds voting equilibria that only rarely take these aspects into account. On the contrary, Baron and Ferejohn (1989: 1183) endogenize the institutional structure of both the agenda formation process and the voting mechanism, and in particular the amendment rule (closed versus open) employed by the legislature.

Their model shows that in a noncooperative, multisession, and multilateral game, equilibria exist, and that the structural element of the legislature that allows such equilibria is the sequential process by which proposals are made and voted on. Remarkably, whether the equilibrium is majoritarian (thus reflecting the majoritarian nature of the voting rule as predicted by Riker 1962),

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[105] As for the literature on timing of voting, see for example Ferejohn and Krehbiel (1987). Ferejohn and Krehbiel (1987) study in theoretical terms the determination of the size of the budget under the two alternative procedures regulating the order of voting: (1) vote first on the size and then on the composition of the budget; (2) vote first on the composition and then on the size of the budget. The result the authors reach is rather counterintuitive: it is not always the case that the size of the budget is smaller when legislatures follow the former procedure, relative to the case they follow the latter. More precisely, the size of the budget is in general not independent of the order of votes, but the relative size of the budget with different voting procedures depends on the distribution of legislators' preferences for the composition of the budget. Recently, Hallerberg and von Hagen (1997) have revisited this issue.

or universalistic (as expected by Weingast 1979), stems from the amendment rule used in the legislature. A closed rule implies that a proposal made by a member of the legislature is immediately voted on against the status quo: if the motion is approved, the legislature adjourns, while if it is rejected, the status quo prevails and the benefits are not distributed. Conversely, an open rule allows on the floor amendments to the proposed motion. As shown by the model, under a closed rule the equilibrium outcomes are majoritarian in nature, the first proposal is passed, and benefits are allocated to a minimal majority. Moreover, within the majority the author of the winning proposal achieves between half and two-thirds of the benefits. On the other hand, under an open rule, the bargaining outcome may be either universalistic (if the legislature is small and its members find delay in the passage of legislation to be very costly), or majoritarian (if the legislature is large and impatience is not substantial). In addition, the benefits are evenly distributed within the winning majority, and the member recognized to make a proposal has reduced agenda powers. However, she gets more benefits that any other member. Maintaining that the amendment rule employed in a legislature is endogenous, Baron and Ferejohn (1989: 1198-1199) predict that, unless there is no impatience, legislatures prefer a closed rule to an open rule. In fact, since legislators face strong incentives to use their opportunity to make a proposal securing benefits to their own constituencies, and under an open rule this may result in costly delay, a closed rule may be adopted to avoid that cost[106].

In their analysis of budget institutions as an explanation of cross-country variation in fiscal policy[107], Alesina and Perotti (1999: 20) show how Baron and Ferejohn's (1989) logic can be applied to the budgetary process in parliamentary systems[108]. Since in a parliamentary context the agenda setter in the budget process is the government, closed amendment rules strengthen the government and weaken the floor of the legislature. Under closed rules, the legislature cannot amend the size of the deficit, budgets are approved rapidly, and the outcome is closer to the preferences of the government, at the expense of minority groups in the legislature. Under open

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[106] Remarkably, as Baron and Ferejohn (1989: 1199) admit, at least in the U.S. Congress, emprirical evidence does not support this prediction. Neither chamber frequently employs a closed rule. However, in the House of Representatives a variety of rules to constrain the possibility of amending legislative proposals on the floor is used, and the Senate has increasingly resorted to unanimous agreements to limit time or amendment activity. In any case, as the authors put it, their results can be explained by the fact that the internal structure of the legislature (e.g., the committee system) is not included in their model.

[107] Alesina and Perotti (1999: 14) define budgetary institutions as 'all the rules and regulations according to which budgets are prepared, approved, and carried out'.

[108] According to Alesina and Perotti (1999: 18), the greater the number of actors enabled to influence budgetary politics, the more difficult it is to keep deficits under control. This depends on the budgetary procedures employed, e.g. the sequence of voting and amendments rules. Such procedures produce iterative collective action problems, in which rational legislators from both the government and the opposition continually face incentives to defect from austerity agreements and ensure particular benefits for narrow constituencies. Quite obviously, this occurs at the expense of collective fiscal austerity.

rules, by contrast, the approval of the budget is slower, budgets distribute benefits to larger majorities, and the allocation of benefits are less uneven[109].

As previously noted, the Italian parliament approves ordinary legislation under an open amending rule. However, as Baron and Ferejohn's (1989) model shows, there are factors which may induce legislatures to prefer more resctrictive amendment rules. One of these is *impatience*. Being impatient means discounting the utility of future payoffs. For the purposes of the present work, we can imagine that the more the actors involved in the legislative process are impatient, the more they are willing to accept the original text of the bills as proposed by government. Indeed, trying to correct the initial proposal could mean lengthening the debate in parliament, thus postponing its approval. It could even happen that, due to legislators' attempts to modify it, the bill is not approved at all. If it were the case, nobody would get anything. Therefore, since for impatient politicians having something now is better than having it in the future (and, of course, is better than having nothing), the initial bill will receive relatively few changes during the legislative process. Although the open amending rule is not formally changed, legislators tend to modify less the initial proposal, behaving as if a closed rule were in force.

For elected politicians, there is one major reason to be impatient: the approach of the end of their tenure because of new general elections. At the beginning of the parliamentary term, representatives reasonably expect to have enough time to alter government-sponsored legislation, thus being able to introduce the modifications they desire. By contrast, as the legislative term proceeds, they know that the time for altering bills in parliament is becoming smaller and smaller, and hence the value they assign to future benefits or policy achievements progressively decreases. In the extreme case when the end of the constitutional term is near, such a value is very close to zero[110]. As a consequence, it is possible to formulate the following hypothesis taking into account representatives' degree of impatience:

> **H.28 Impatience:** *We should expect less changes in parliament to governmental bills the more the legislative term progresses.*

4.1.2 Standing order reforms

Changes in the internal rules of parliament may have a considerable impact on legislators' ability to amend government-sponsored bills. The standing orders regulate legislative life and define the role

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[109] Therefore, as for the choice of rules, closed rules are more appropriate for countries with high debt and/or in periods of macroeconomic instability, when the rapid adoption of fiscal measures is needed. On their turn, open rules can be adopted in low-debt countries and/or in periods of fiscal stability, where concerns of allocative efficiency and fairness tend to be predominant (Alesina and Perotti 1999: 20).
[110] I do not consider here the possibility of strategic parliamentary dissolution (see Strøm and Swindle 2002).

of the actors moving in the legislature: individual MPs, parliamentary groups, committee and their chairs, presidents of the chambers, and the government. Modifications in internal rules may therefore grant government legislation more or less protection by leaving more or less room for amendatory activity.

The weakening of the government in the legislative process is commonly considered the main effect of the reforms of the *standing orders of both Italian chambers enacted in 1971*. As Capano and Giuliani (2003b: 12-13) point out in analyzing the evolution of the Italian parliament's role in the legislative process, the 1971 reforms formally ratified the praxis and theory of the 'centrality of parliament', producing the further weakening of government's position in the legislative process[111]. In particular, the changes strengthened the parliamentary groups (which were granted unequivocal protection at the expense of the government), their leaders (whose predominant role in determining the parliamentary agenda was formalized by the adoption of the unanimity rule in their conference), and the standing committees (which were given increased powers of inquiry and of governmental oversight)[112]. As a consequence, we should expect less modifications to government bills before the 1971 reforms than in the following period.

The internal rules of both Italian chambers underwent a number of changes also during the 1980s and 1990s. Remarkably, *in 1997 the standing orders of the Chamber of Deputies were reformed*, in an attempt to strengthen the government in the legislative process. The unanimity in the conference of the leaders of parliamentary groups was replaced by a quorum of three-quarters of all representatives (although when the quorum could not be reached, the power to plan the parliamentary activities was delegated to the president of the chamber), the government was given the chance to notify parliament formally of its priorities, and important restrictions on speech times, on the timing of the legislative process and on the selection of amendments were introduced (see Capano and Giuliani 2003b: 14). To sum up, we should hence expect more changes made to governmental legislation in the period 1971-1997 than in the periods before and after it.

However, as previously noted, only the impact of the 1997 reform can be evaluated. Moreover, most of all, it is not clear whether any expectation concerning the 1997 reform is plausible. Indeed, the literature on Italian lawmaking suggests that the reforms of parliamentary rules introduced during the 1980s and 1990s did not succeed in strengthening the government in the legislative process. As Capano and Giuliani (2003b: 15) argue, in spite of all these changes, the government

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[111] For a similar interpretation of the 1971 reforms, see also Cotta (1994: 74); Hine (1993: 188-189); Zucchini (2005: 11-12). See also D'Onofrio (1979); Della Sala (1988, 1993, 1998); Leonardi, Nanetti, and Pasquino (1978).

[112] Moreover, according to Capano and Giuliani (2003b: 12-13), the 1971 reforms were the institutional prerequisite for the subsequent changes in the political framework – that is, the formation in 1976 of a government (Andreoti III) supported by the Communists. In addition, after 1971 parliamentary activities were increasingly conducted in consensual-assemblearistic manners, thus making the legislative process totally exhausting, inefficient and ineffective.

has not been granted adequate powers to lead the discussion, and in the amendatory process it is still in a weak position vis-à-vis individual MPs. It is the leaders of parliamentary groups and the presidents of the chambers, and not the executive, who actually have the legislative agenda power. In addition, individual legislative initiative remains unrestricted, and the powers of committees have not been reduced but widened[113]. Also in Zucchini's (2005: 10) view the changes in formal rules occurred in the last decades did not succeed in strengthening the government in the parliamentary process. Indeed, the government has been able to strengthen its lawmaking role only by using delegating laws, exceptional instruments as decree-laws, or disputable practices as maxi amendments.

4.1.3 Abolition of secret ballot

The drastic curtailment in the use of secret voting in 1988 has been undoubtedly one of the most fundamental reforms in the internal rules of the Italian parliament, and probably the most important change regarding voting and amendments. The abolition of secret ballot strengthened the position of Italian governments in the legislative process, making them better able to control their parliamentary majorities and defend their own bills from amendments (and failures) in the legislature.

Until 1988, the secret voting was required for the final vote on any bill in the Chamber of Deputies, while in the Senate it had to be adopted if asked for by at least 20 representatives – that is, by a medium-size opposition party. Importantly, in both houses it was possible to ask for the secret vote at any stage of the legislative process, and also on amendments. Only the government, by calling a vote of confidence, was able to stop secret voting. However, in the Chamber, whenever the government made particular articles of bills issues of confidence (thus allowing for an open roll-call), still a secret vote on the final bill was required. And this could happen even in the case the bill itself consisted of just one article, as many bills converting decrees into laws do. In other words, it was possible to have two votes on exactly the same text: in the first vote, by open roll-call, the government could obtain a positive vote on the question of confidence attached to the (unique) article; in the second vote, the 'final' vote on the full text, the bill could be defeated by the secret voting (see Hine 1993: 191; Zucchini 2005: 16; Manzella 2003: 338).

Clearly, during the First Republic the secret voting was widely used to the detriment of government legislation, and thus prevented Italian governments from effectively controlling their

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[113] In Capano and Giuliani's (2003b: 15) words, '20 years of reform of internal procedures had proven incapable of substantially affecting the historically rooted consensual style that characterises parliamentary life'. According to Cotta (1994: 83), although several reforms in rules and procedures have been undertaken, during the last four decades 'a considerable degree of institutional inertia has prevented these changes from affecting too deeply the balance of powers within the executive-legislative subsystem'.

parliamentary majorities (see, for example, Cotta 1988: 137; Cotta 1994: 68; Furlong 1990: 1963; Hine 1993: 190-193). In paricular, as Forestiere and Pelizzo (2004: 4-5) stress, the use of secret votes favoured the practice of the so-called '*franchi tiratori*', or 'snipers': members of parliament who vote against their party's position, or against the government's position (when their party is a member of the governing coalition). Under secret ballots, backbenchers were able to defect without being politically punished by their party leaders: since there was no official record on how backbenchers voted, party whips were unable to identify defectors, who therefore could not be sanctioned. This way, as Fedeli and Forte (2007: 312) point out, snipers were able to reduce Italian governments' control over their parliamentary majorities' voting behaviour, and in the legislature secret coalitions involving MPs from both the majority and the opposition frequently formed, mostly for rent seeking purposes. During the 1980s, on three notable occasions (Cossiga in 1980, Spadolini in 1982, and Craxi in 1986) snipers even provoked the downfall of the government (Hine 1993: 190-191).

The 1988 reform abolished the secret ballot, whose use was confined to bills affecting civil liberties. As Cotta (1994: 79) points out, the purpose of the reform was to make Italian governments better able to control their supporting coalition in the legislature, preventing dissenters from defecting without any sanctions[114].

Since the abolition of secret ballot is commonly associated to the strengthening of the government in the legislative process, and to the curtailment of MPs' ability to influence government legislation, it seems reasonable to expect to observe less modifications to government bills after such a reform than before, all else equal.

4.1.4 Budgetary reforms

Italian budgetary process has changed several times since its first introduction in 1978. The reforms mainly regarded the content of the financial law, the amendment regime, and the documents and bills to be examined in parliament throughout the process (see Verzichelli 1999; Verzichelli e Vassallo 2004; Zangani 1998). They attempted to develop a rational and planned approach to public expenditure which would have yielded better economic results and a reduction in the micro-distributive legislation produced (see Hine 1993: 180; Zucchini 2005: 19). According to Hine (1993: 182), the fundamental problem in the Italian budget procedure has been the permeability of the

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[114] According to Zucchini (2005: 16), a remarkable consequence of the abolition of secre ballot is the strengthening of the *question of confidence* as an instrument in the hands of Italian governments. As previously noted, before 1988 governments could not attach any question of confidence to the final voting since the vote on the question of confidence could not be secret. Thus, in two separate votes on the same texts, governments could be defeated on the same bill on which they already won a vote of confidence. Moreover, in the author's view, the 1988 reform made the practice of maxi amendments more convenient.

parliament to the demands coming from a multiplicity of interests. In the author's view, two other features exacerbate this problem: Italian administrative and parliamentary tradition, which places more emphasis on procedures and legal controls than on economic management; and a wide array of procedural opportunities within the legislature which may encourage extensive parliamentary activity throughout the amendment process and the passage of the budget.

It would be thus interesting to evaluate whether, and to what degree, an important reform introduced in 1988 has been able to mitigate the key problem of the Italian budget procedure, making modifications to the financial laws less likely to occur.

Until 1978, Italy did not actually have any financial law, and the budget discussed in parliament was limited to the budget of the central government. Due to the lack of any financial legislative instrument, the Italian parliament probably enjoyed a considerable ability to intervene in the economic and financial planning and on all money bills (see Zucchini 2005: 19). The financial law was introduced in 1978, when the *first budgetary reform* ocurred. The reform increased the room for the discussion on the budget in parliament, and organized the budgetary process as the discussion and approval of two legislative instruments: the budget and the financial law for the subsequent year. Since the budget law is the formal law allocating expenditures and revenues on the basis of the existing laws, whereas the financial law may change the existing legislation affecting revenues and expenditures, thus shaping yearly the entire fiscal picture, the latter is the venue in which the amending pressure is actually exerted, while the former is barely modified (see Fedeli and Forte 2007: 310, n. 1). However, the 1978 reform had effects rather different from those intended. As Zucchini (2005: 19-20) stresses, legislators were still able to freely amend the financial bill (both in the committee and on the floor), and the section fixing the overall spending could be voted at the end of the process. Indeed, as pointed out by Hine (1993: 185-186, 195), since the finance bill, unlike ordinary legislation, was guaranteed to pass, legislators began to see it as a reliable channel through which to promote their (individually) minor spending provisions. Therefore, once they understood this, legislators increasingly subjected the financial bill to a 'bombardment of amendments', which very often drastically altered the parameters originally proposed by the government, and in such a way that the control of the borrowing requirement resulted more and more difficult to manage[115]. As a consequence, the 1978 attempt to regulate Italian budgetary process by concentrating expenditure proposals into a single annual finance bill did not succeed in producing better financial outcomes and less micro distributive legislation (indeed, it produced the so called financial omnibus laws).

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[115] In Hine's (1993: 185) words, the autumn budget cycle became 'an unedifying, and for the government's busy parliamentary managers anarchic, scramble of favours exchanged across factions, parties of the majority, and not infrequently across the boundaries of government and opposition'.

The room for amendatory activity during the Italian budgetary process seems to have been reduced in 1988. In 1988, with the *second budgetary reform*, the Document of Economic and Fiscal Planning (DPEF) was introduced. The DPEF fixes the balance of the consolidated budget of the central government sector, and the government has to present it before the budgetary session, in July. Once approved by the parliament, the DPEF thus constrains the balance of the financial law. In addition, the 1988 reform extended the scope of the financial law to the consolidated budget of the 'central government sector' which, among others, includes the social security institutions. Moreover, after 1988 both the DPEF and the financial law were able to affect the whole consolidated budget of the 'public administration', including the lower level governments (regions, provinces, municipalities) and the public health-care institutions (see Fedeli and Forte 2007: 312).

Putting forward hypotheses regarding the budgetary process, it would seem thus reasonable to expect to observe more changes to financial bills before the second budgetary reform (i.e. in the 1978-1988 period), than after it[116].

It is worth noting that, according to Zucchini (2005: 19-20), the 1988 reform, as well all the other changes in the Italian budgetary procedures, has strengthened the agenda setting power of the presidents of the chambers and of the Budget Committees, without improving so much the role of the executive. On the one hand, through the DPEF governments are able to limit the range of the parliamentary action, since they can constrain the balance of the financial law at the beginning of the budgetary process. On the other hand, however, the most fundamental filtering functions in the following stages are carried out by the parliamentary bodies.

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[116] The years before 1978 cannot be considered because, as previously noted, the legislative instrument of the financial law was introduced in Italy only in 1978.

4.2 'EXTERNAL' INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS

4.2.1 Electoral reforms

Two electoral reforms took place during the 1987-2006 period: the reduction of preference votes in the PR electoral system in 1991 and the adoption of a mixed electoral system in 1993 (see D'Alimonte and Chiaramonte 1995; Katz 1996).

In investigating the role of the Italian parliament in the budgetary process, Forestiere and Pelizzo (2004) test the effect of the changes in the electoral rules occurred in Italy at the beginning of the 1990s on the legislature's ability to influence the national budget. According to the authors, parliaments' powers to shape, alter, and modify the budget are constrained by both institutional and political factors. On the institutional side, rules such as those concerning amendments and voting procedures prove to be fundamental (see, for instance, Alesina and Perotti 1999); on the political side, fragmentation and ideological polarization in the legislature are crucial factors (Forestiere and Pelizzo 2004: 2-4). As the authors put it, the Italian parliament provides a perfect setting for testing the effect of institutional and political factors on the parliament's ability to amend financial legislation, since in Italy major reforms in both the institutional design and the party system have taken place over the last 20 years (Forestiere and Pelizzo 2004: 4).

In particular, the institutional reforms included the abolition of the secret ballot in 1988 (see above), the 1990 revision of the parliament's decentralized agenda setting process with the strengthening of the presidents of the chambers (see above), and the *reduction of preference votes in the electoral system in 1991*. As for the latter reform, in 1991 a national referendum reduced the number of preferences that voters could express on the ballot to only one (from a maximum of three or four), thus producing a proportional representation system with single preference which was completely revised in 1993. However, the 1991 change was important, since up to the reform the multiple preference voting system considerably affected the political behaviour of both voters and representatives. In fact, since a higher number of preference votes could make a difference for a legislative seat, inter-party competition was coupled with particularly strong intra-party competition: in order to get the highest number of preferences, individual legislators were strongly induced to secure benefits for their own constituencies, as well as to gain popularity and name recognition (Forestiere and Pelizzo 2004: 6).

On the other hand, at the beginning of the 1990s Italy experienced changes in the party system associated with the *1993 electoral system reform*. As Forestiere and Pelizzo (2004: 6-7) stress, together with strongly inducing legislators to secure benefits for their own constituencies, up to the 1990s the Italian PR electoral system produced extensive fragmentation and polarization in the

party system – that is, an extremely high number of effective parties in the legislature and an extremely high percentage of support for the extreme left-wing and extreme right-wing parties, respectively. Such a highly fragmented and polarized party system resulted in a relatively undisciplined parliament. In particular, the high number of parties made bargaining costs within parliament quite high, providing individual MPs with incentives to defect from party mandates and from governmental discipline. Moreover, the presence of extreme ideological polarization made it difficult to reach encompassing collective decisions, leading individual legislators to logroll particularistic policies and approving bills reflecting a variety of interests. The 1993 electoral reform had an impact on the party system, reducing its fragmentation and polarization.

Forestiere and Pelizzo test whether the parliamentary influence over the Italian budgetary process has been affected by the institutional reforms and/or the changes in the electoral and party system. Their empirical results show that the institutional factors (the 1988 abolition of the secret vote, the 1990 revision of the parliament's decentralized agenda setting process, the 1991 reduction of preference votes), taken together, reduced the ability of the parliament to amend government budgetary bills. On the contrary, the political factors (lower legislative fragmentation and legislative polarization) did not prove to have any significant impact (Forestiere and Pelizzo 2004: 7-8)[117].

Thus, Forestiere and Pelizzo (2004) empirically evaluate the effect of the changes in the electoral rules occurred in Italy at the beginning of the 1990s on the parliament's ability to modify budgetary bills. Indeed, they do it only in partial and indirect ways. Partial, because they put all the three institutional reforms they consider into the same index, and therefore they are not able to assess the specific impact of each factor (in particular the reduction of preference vote). Indirect, because the impact of the 1993 electoral reform is not empirically evaluated *per se*, but through its effect on legislative fragmentation and polarization.

In any case, we can follow Forestiere and Pelizzo's (2004) logic (at least in part) and put forward conjectures involving the effects of electoral systems reforms on MPs' ability to alter government legislation[118]. In particular, we should expect the 1991 reduction of preference vote to make legislators less likely to scrutinize government bills[119]. In addition, as for the 1993 electoral reform leading to a (quasi)plurality system, since its introduction we expect more (presented) amendments from legislators elected in majoritarian districts than from those elected by the proportional rule. Indeed, the former must demonstrate a greater attention to the local interests of

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[117] Incidentally, Forestiere and Pelizzo (2004: 7, 10, tab. 1) also show that the Italian parliament has not always been a 'rubber stamp' on financial policy. Instead, at times it has been an important actor in determining spending prorities.
[118] Although Forestiere and Pelizzo (2004) consider amendments on budgetary bills, their argument can be applied to governmental bills in general.
[119] In any case, it is worth noting that the PR system with single preference produced by the 1991 referendum was used only once, in the 1992 elections.

their districts than the latter (Zucchini 2001: 65). In other words, the introduction of a (quasi)plurality electoral system increased the importance of communication between each representative and his own constituency (Giuliani and Capano 2001: 18-22).

Trying to put it all together, legislators should be more likely to (try to) alter governmental bills before 1992 and after 1994, and in the latter case my expectation concerns only those elected in plurality districts. However, it seems not possible to formulate hypotheses comparing the pre-1992 situation with the post-1994 one. Representatives elected both in the PR system with multiple preferences and in the majoritarian districts of the mixed system faced strong incentives to send signals to their own consituencies.

4.1.2 Type of democracy

According to Martin and Vanberg (2005: 105), in addition to preference divergence between coalition parties and the set of control variables they include in their analysis, a number of institutional rules and coalition-specific features may be relevant in explaining the modifications made to government bills: the majoritarian versus consensus nature of democracy, the presence and strength of legislative institutions supporting the role of legislators in the lawmaking process, and the type of government coalition.

Let me now concentrate on the first factor, the other two having already been discussed in pevious paragraphs. *Consensus democracies*, with PR electoral systems and multiple parties in government, typically enable coalition parties to extensively revise government legislation. They do so by providing a number of parliamentary institutions (above all, a large number of powerful committees with jurisdictions that shadow those of government ministries) that strengthen the role of legislators during the lawmaking process. Conversely, *majoritarian democracies* commonly feature relatively few committees with policy jurisdictions that only weakly correspond to those of government departments and limited ability to modify government bills. The instruments at coalition parties' disposal to correct their coalition partners are thus relatively weak. Therefore, in majoritarian systems we should expect that multiparty governments either rely more on cabinet-level tools, or do not monitor coalition partners at all, as in a 'ministerial autonomy' regime[120].

Martin and Vanberg (2005: 98) cannot investigate the impact of the three above mentioned factors, since they hold them as fixed in their analysis. In fact, the authors control for these factors by choosing two very similar cases – that is, by adopting a 'control by design' strategy. They select two consensus countries (Germany and the Netherlands), with PR electoral systems, multiparty

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[120] In any case, the type of democracy and the strength of the legislative institutions (committees) are only partially correlated. Indeed, as Martin and Vanberg (2005: 105) suggest, also among consensus systems there is variation in the strength of legislative institutions.

governments, and powerful legislative committees. Moreover, in the considered period (1983-94 and 1982-94, respectively) those two countries were characterized by majority government coalitions only.

Analyzing a single country, as I do, would typically make it impossible to assess the impact of alternative types of democracy. On the basis of Lijphart's (1999) conceptual map, I should simply consider Italy as a consensus democracy[121]. However, as emphasized by some scholars, a number of changes occurring in the mid-1990s may have moved Italy more towards the majoritarian type: the adoption of a quasi-plurality electoral system in 1993 (see above), the establishment of a bi-polar party system (Newell 2000), the emergence of clear electoral majorities after elections (Bartolini and D'Alimonte 1998), and government alternation (Zucchini 2005, 2006)[122]. Since in majoritarian systems executives are normally able to strictly control the passage of their bills throughout the legislative process,

H.29 Type of democracy: Government bills should be more extensively modified in the First Republic than in the Second Republic.

It is worth noting that such an argument leads to expectations which are opposite to those derived from the hypothesis dealing with government alternation (H.4). Compared to the First Italian Republic, in the Second Republic we should expect less changes to government legislation if we take into account the type of democracy, and more changes if we consider the possibility of alternation.

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[121] More precisely, on Lijphart's bidimensional map, Italy is fairly close to the consensus ideal type of democracy in the dimension concerning executives and parties, which is more relevant for the purposes of this work. On the other dimension, the federal-unitary one, Italy is rather in the middle (Lijphart 1999: chapter 13).

[122] See also Gundle and Parker (1996); Di Palma, Fabbrini, and Freddi (2000). For an alternative view stressing the persistence of consensual practices, see Capano and Giuliani (2001a,b; 2003a,b).

PART II.
METHODOLOGY

CHAPTER 5.
DATA AND OPERATIONALIZATION

I will test the hypotheses outlined in the literature and discussed in the previous chapters against evidence from Italy. More precisely, I use a dataset tracking the legislative history of all the governmental laws introduced in the Chamber of Deputies during the 1987-2006 period. My research strategy thus involves a theoretically comprehensive specification and an extensive empirical design – that is, many explanatory variables and a relatively large number of cases[123].

The present chapter addresses some relevant methodological issues. In the first section, I motivate the selection of Italy as a case study and introduce the original dataset on Italian governmental legislation against which I conduct my empirical analysis of the modifications made to government bills. Then, in the second section, I spell out and discuss the operationalization of my dependent variable – *government bill changes* – and show some simple descriptive statistics. The third section, finally, is devoted to the operationalization of the independent variables derived from the theoretical explanations that I discussed in the previous chapters. In particular, after clarifying which of the discussed hypotheses cannot be tested with the present research design, I will illustrate in detail how I measured the right-hand-side variables included in my analyses.

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[123] See Müller, Bergman, and Strøm (2008: 33-35).

5.1 THE DATASET

5.1.1 The Italian case

The choice of analyzing Italy as a single case study undoubtedly presents both advantages and disadvantages. As for the former, although being a single country, Italy provides considerable variation with regard to some of the crucial theoretical explanations of amendatory activity previously discussed. First of all, the sample of bills is likely to exhibit substantial variance in terms of *ideological divergence within the cabinet*. This would allow to test Martin and Vanberg's (2005) hypothesis, which is currently one of the main (and most popular) theoretical explanations of the changes made to governmental bills during the legislative process. Given the relatively large number of parties traditionally involved in coalition governments and the cabinet instability typical of the Italian political system since the end of World War II (Verzichelli 2003: 452-456, 465), a considerable amount of variation in ideological divergence across government-sponsored bills is likely to be registered in Italy. In fact, such variation derives from two sources: ideological divergence can vary (1) across the policy areas addressed by different bills (for any given government) and (2) with changes in the party composition of the government or in the party controlling a particular ministry. In addition, investigating Italian government-sponsored legislation allows to assess the impact of two explanatory factors in terms of which most of the other parliamentary countries would not offer enough variation: government alternation and technical ministers. As for *alternation*, Italy is the only (West European) parliamentary country to experience a change from a pivotal party system to an alternational party system. Such a 'majoritarian miracle' was made possible in Italy by the adoption of a mixed electoral system in 1993 (Bartolini and D'Alimonte 1998)[124]. Therefore, in this respect, Italy is more than just a single case study: featuring two distinct electoral systems[125] and two extremely different party systems, it can be split into a 'First' Republic (up to 1994) and a 'Second' Republic (from 1994 onwards)[126]. Italy stands out from the other parliamentary countries concerning *technical ministers*, too. According to Andeweg and Nijzink (1995: 159), non-partisan ministers have become extremely rare in Western Europe. Moreover, in the few countries where non-partisan ministers are sometimes appointed, usually they are sooner or later enlisted by one of the governing parties. By contrast, technical ministers (and

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[124] According to Bartolini and D'Alimonte (1998), the other majoritarian miracle was the emergence of a clear governmental majority in the elections from 1994 onwards.

[125] Indeed, in 1952 the Italian electoral system was reformed in a more majoritarian way. However, the PR system was soon re-established.

[126] The XI and XII legislatures (1992-1994 and 1994-1996, respectively) are commonly considered as a transition period between the First and Second Italian Republic (see Cotta and Isernia 1996). Here, 1994 is considered as the beginning of the Second Republic because in that year the new electoral system came into force, almost all the old governing parties disappeared and new or previously excluded parties won (or had the actual possibility to win) the elections (see Morlino 1996).

even entirely technocratic cabinets) are not so rare in Italy. Leaving the various experts participating in ordinary partisan governments aside, a (quasi)technical government (Ciampi) was first formed in 1993, with the prime minister and more than half ministers who were non-partisan, while a government entirely composed of technicians (Dini) was formed in 1995[127]. In addition, as Andeweg and Nijzink (1995: 160) argue with reference to the Ciampi government, many of Italian technical ministers are truely non-partisan.

A second major advantage in studying Italy is the substantial variation in terms of *coalitional attributes* offered by the dataset. This would make it possible to assess the impact of different types of government (minority, minimum winning, oversized, technocratic) on the changes made to governmental legislation during the parliamentary process, thus making an original contribution to the literature. Indeed, the studies that acknowledge the importance of parliamentary scrutiny of government bills – first of all Martin and Vanberg's (2004, 2005) works – have not considered minority governments yet. By definition, minority governments must depend on at least one 'external' party to stay in office. Thus, if Martin and Vanberg's (2005: 58) logic holds, as an extension we should expect that the external supporting parties will behave just like coalition partners in majority governments, making use of legislative review in order to monitor ministers affiliated with one of the parties in office[128]. Being interested in isolating the impact of preference divergence inside the cabinet on the level of legislative review, Martin and Vanberg select two very similar cases (Germany and the Netherlands) which enable them to exclude possible effects produced by different institutional arrangements and coalitional attributes. The choice of Italy as a single case study allows instead to evaluate the effects of the type of coalition.

Moreover, analyzing the Italian case can be interesting because it represents a test for Martin and Vanberg's (2005) explanatory hypothesis, which perhaps is currently the most influential one. As the authors point out, the institutional settings of the two countries they select resemble those of almost all European democracies. Their explanatory logic can hence be extended to other European parliamentary systems (Martin and Vanberg 2005: 98). Indeed, their argument may reasonably be expected to work in Italy, since the Italian legislature seems to provide a particularly powerful setting for engaging in parliamentary scrutiny of governmental bills. As Verzichelli (2003: 458) points out, the Italian parliament provides a number of important instruments for counteracting ministerial discretion: legislators of both chambers have at their disposal screening and investigative

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[127] Further, also the Amato I government (1992), which came before Ciampi's one, is not considered as fully partisan. Although nominated as a representative of his own party (PSI), Giuliano Amato enjoyed discretion in forming the cabinet, and the 'partyness' of his government became weaker and weaker during the mandate. Verzichelli (2000: 443) speaks of a 'semi-technical government. See also Cotta and Verzichelli (1996) and Fabbrini (2000).

[128] Concerning minority governments, the parliamentary support coalition may include the parties that supported the government on its formal investiture, or those that offered external support to it. See Laver's (2006: 128) definition of the parliamentary support coalition for the government.

powers as well as tools for monitoring and requiring reports of ministers' activities. The former include the *investigative powers* of permanent and ad hoc committees, through which members of parliament can extract information form the government. Also, representatives can put written and oral questions to the government, and initiate urgent interrogations[129]. As for the latter, both chambers feature a system of *strong standing committees* that closely correspond to ministerial jurisdictions (Aberbach, Putnam, and Rockman 1981; Mezey 1993; Gallagher, Laver, and Mair 2006)[130]. Committees can investigate executive actions in their area of competence (for example, they can invite senior and junior ministers to present periodic reports), thus enabling members of parties in a committee to acquire the policy expertise necessary to revise complex legislation. Italian legislative committees have even explicit lawmaking powers: they can give final approval to some legislation without having to refer it to the full parliament (Manzella 2003: 127-129). Moreover, a few bicameral committees (committees for vigilance and control) supervise cabinet action on specific issues (e.g. telecommunications, information agencies, security). A further monitoring tool at legislators' disposal is the so-called 'filter' or 'horizontal committees' (the Budget committee and the Institutional Affairs committee), whose main task is to monitor the reliability of all proposals on the parliamentary agenda with the existing norms concerning budgetary and constitutional constraints (Verzichelli 2003: 458-459; Della Sala 1993: 162)[131]. As Della Sala (1993: 162-171) argues, the 1971 reform of the parliamentary rules of procedure enhanced the committees' powers of control and oversight, producing an increase in their scrutiny activities and a parallel decrease in their lawmaking activities.

Of course, the choice of the Italian case presents also certain drawbacks. Most of all, studying a single country makes it impossible to empirically evaluate the effect of alternative institutional arrangements on legislators' ability to amend governmental bills: for example, the nature of democracy (consensus versus majoritarian, in Lijphart's [1999] terms) (but see paragraph 4.1.2), or the type of legislative institutional arrangements (strong versus weak committee systems). Moreover, the units of analysis, time frame and level of analysis chosen in the present work do not even allow to test hypotheses concerning changes in the formal rules regulating the legislative process or external to it. As previously noted, the impact of different amending rules as well as that of reforms of the Italian budgetary process cannot be assessed since I consider only ordinary legislation initiated by governments. Also, neither the 1971 major reform of the standing orders nor

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[129] As stressed by Verzichelli (2003: 458), such control mechanisms have traditionally been used very extensively, and even by government MPs.

[130] In Strøm's famous volume on minority governments, the Italian committee system is placed among the ones that give the opposition more influence over policy: on the index of the potential for oppositional influence based on the properties of parliamentary committees, Italy scores four points over five, following only Norway (Strøm 1990a: 73).

[131] As Manzella (2003: 324) points out, more recently also the Labour committee and the European Affairs committee have been given similar 'filtering' powers.

the 1988 abolition of secret ballot is within the chosen time span (1987-2006). Further, the only 'external' major change occurred during the period under consideration, the 1993 reform of the electoral system, yields expectations concerning mostly individual legislators' behaviour, which is not investigated in the present work. However, since such an electoral reform led to an alternational party system, I can evaluate one of its fundamental, although indirect, effects (see paragraph 1.1.4).

5.1.2 The time frame (1987-2006)

As for the time frame of my empirical analysis of Italy, I chose to concentrate on the government legislative production between 1987 and 2006. I opted for such a time priod for having a reasonable amount of variation in some key explanatory factors. Indeed, longer periods of time allow more variance in the explanatory variables, while shorter periods of time avoid possible temporal effects. Therefore, in order to evaluate the effect of a pivotal versus an alternational party system, I included two First Republic legislatures (X and XI) and two Second Republic legislatures (XIII and XIV), together with the somehow 'troublesome' XII legislature (see below).

In addition, testing the theoretical hypotheses based upon the conflict among the actors involved in the legislative process requires reliable measures of parties' policy preferences. Taking a longer period (i.e., starting before 1987) would have presented problems in this respect. Indeed, apart those collected by the Manifesto Research Group/Comparative Manifestos Project, I could not have data on the ideological positions of parties across several policy areas (for the problems of MRG/CMP's data for the Italian case in this time span, see below)[132].

Finally, it is worth noting that during the 1987-2006 period no single-party government took office in Italy: with the exception of the non-party Dini's government in 1995, all the Italian cabinets in the considered years involved more than one party (see H.14). However, extending the time span of my analysis in order to include at least one single-party executive would have been rather demanding. Since the nearest single-party government (Fanfani VI in April 1987) lasted just 11 days, I would have needed to include the Andreotti's IV cabinet, going back to 1978.

5.1.3 The sample of governmental bills

In order to empirically analyze the modifications made to government-sponsored legislation in the course of the parliamentary process, I constructed an original dataset in which the units of analysis are approved governmental laws.

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[132] The expert surveys conducted before Laver and Hunt's (1992) one considered either one or a few policy dimensions (Morgan 1976; Castles and Mair 1984).

Since the information concerning government bills introduced (as first reading) in the Senate is not available for the entire period investigated[133], I restricted the analysis to those governmental laws that have been introduced in the Chamber of Deputies. In any case, analyzing just one of the two branches of the Italian legislature (especially the Chamber of Deputies) is a common approach in the literature on Italian (as well as other countries') parliament and political system. Indeed, the Italian parliament is conventionally considered as a symmetrical legislature because both chambers perform identical functions (for our purposes, they have the same role in the legislative process). Moreover, although elected on a somewhat different basis, the political composition of the two houses has almost always been identical. Hine (1993: 189-190), for example, defines the Italian parliament as a case of 'perfectly co-equal bicameralism'.

In addition, I excluded constitutional laws, budgetary laws, annual Community Acts and laws ratifying international treaties and agreements, since the parliamentary dynamics leading to their approval are radically different from the rest of government legislation. Italian constitutional laws are approved with qualified majorities and after being examined twice in either chamber. During the budgetary process (especially after the 1988 reform), the Italian parliament has to pass a complex series of (mutually related) bills in a pre-determined sequence in which each any step is scheduled very strictly and the scope for amendatory activity is limited *a priori* (Manzella 2003: 344-352; Zucchini 2005b: 19-20; Fedeli and Forte 2007: 312-315). The Community Act (*legge comunitaria*) is a yearly government-initiated statute through which Italy is supposed to carry out all its European obligations. Although approved by parliament according to the ordinary process, Community Acts are extremely different from ordinary laws: actually they become voluminous packages containing delegation clauses and specifying the measures through which the cabinet will transpose each European directive (see Fabbrini and Donà 2003; Giuliani 2006). Finally, Italian parliament approves the laws ratifying international treaties and agreements without the possibility to amend them. This happens because, of course, national legislatures cannot alter the content of treaties on which the representatives of two or more countries agreed. Therefore, in this case, the same possibility of conflicts among actors or modifications to the bills does not exist (Manzella 2003: 371-373)[134].

Remarkably, my dataset includes also laws converting executive decree-laws. According to the Italian Constitution (art. 77, cc. 2-3), in extraordinary cases of necessity and urgency, the government can promulgate decrees that have the immediate force of laws and have to be converted

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[133] In particular, the texts of the bills introduced in the Senate are available in electronic format only from 1996 onward. See http://www.senato.it/ricerche/sDDLa/nuova.ricerca?parms.legislatura=16 (accessed April 30, 2011).
[134] In principle, the Italian parliament has the possibility to refuse to ratify a treaty, but actually it never happens (Manzella 2003: 373).

into laws by the parliament within sixty days (otherwise, decrees would lose their effects). Therefore, just after issuing a decree, the government introduces to parliament a bill to convert the decree into law. On its turn, the parliament can either convert without modifications, amend, or reject the decree. Therefore, the process through which bills converting decree-laws are approved differs from the ordinary procedure: since decrees have to be converted into laws within sixty days, their discussion and approval are given top priority in the committees and on the floor. However, the literature on Italian legislative production seems to agree on seeing decree-laws as just 'reinforced bills' (De Micheli 1997: 166; see also Manzella 2003: 359). Given the difficulties in controlling the ordinary legislative process, Italian governments make extensive use of decree-laws to legislate on ordinary matters in spite of the requirements of necessity and urgency (see. for example, Cazzola and Morisi 1981; Vassallo 2001).

All that said, the final dataset used for my empirical analisys of government bill changes in Italy (1987-2006) consists of 716 governmental laws.

5.2 THE DEPENDENT VARIABLE

Operationalizing the *government bill changes*, i.e. the dependent variable, requires some kind of comparison between the final version of the bill adopted by the legislature and the original version drafted by the proposer. Counting how many amendments have been approved during the legislative iter of a governmental bill would not be particularly useful for this purpose. One reason is that amendments can vary considerably in their scope: a single amendment can change just a small aspect of a bill as well as a major part of it. Moreover, not all the modifications made to government bills we observe during the parliamentary process derive from amendments. Indeed, it may happen that the initial text of some bill is absorbed into the text of some other bill (*assorbimenti*), or that two or more bills are unified into a new one (*testi unificati*). As a consequence, the simple number of accepted amendments could not provide a satisfactory measure of the overall amount of transformations undergone in parliament by government legislation.

In their article, Martin and Vanberg (2005: 99) measure the level of legislative review as the number of article changes, which is the sum of all the articles altered, deleted or added to the draft version of the bill. According to the authors, who analyze German and Dutch legislation, this measure captures somehow the policy significance of modifications because bills are subdivided into several articles, each dealing with a specific issue. However, Martin and Vanberg's operationalization does not seem to be particularly suitable for the Italian case, since it does not take into account some typical features of Italian parliamentary process and legislation. First of all, the use of the so called '*maxi amendments*', through which a number of articles in the drafted bill are turned into a single article in the final law[135]. In an extreme case, a bill made up of a certain number of articles can be at last approved as a single-article law. In such a situation, while the bill is passed without any actual modification in the text, Martin and Vanberg's measure would indicate a relatively high degree of change.

In addition, it is not straightforward that articles are the logical policy subunits of Italian bills. Although bills are normally voted article by article, often more than one aspect is addressed by a single article. Indeed, each single article is subdivided into smaller parts called *commi*, which deal with more specific aspects of the bill. Thus, we can have an article change either because the article is entirely modified, or because just one *comma* (or a part of it) is altered. If we employ Martin and Vanberg's measure, these two situations will lead to exactly the same outcome: one article change. By the same logic, however, a measure counting the number of modified *commi* would present the

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[135] Since the 1990s, Italian cabinets made increasingly use of maxi amendments. As several works highlighted, maxi amendments have been employed, together with delegating laws and decree-laws, as circumventing tactics – that is, techniques to circumvent the ordinary legislative process (see Zucchini 2005b).

same risks: although more accurate than Martin and Vanberg's solution, it would treat partial changes of subsections as entire changes of subsections.

Given the problems posed by any operationalization relying on sections or subsections of articles, I decided to look at the most basic units in the text of bills, and thus to measure my dependent variable as the number of *words* that are changed (i.e. added, deleted or modified) during the legislative process.

A simple option is just to compare the number of words in the draft version and in the final version of a law. Yet, this measure would consider just words that are added or deleted, and not words that are substituted. In order to solve this problem, I (1) compute for each single word appearing in either version the absolute difference between the number of times it occurs in the draft bill and the number of times it occurs in the final law, and (2) sum all these absolute differences. This way we take account of substituted words, but we overestimate their number, which results to be twice as the actual value[136]. For this reason, I (3) compute the absolute difference between the number of words in the original bill and the number of words in the final law in order to get the *number of added or removed words*, (4) subtract this quantity from the sum of the absolute differences calculated in the second step and divide the result by two, thus finding the actual *number of substituted words*. Finally, I (5) add the number of substituted words to the number of added or removed words, and obtain the total number of changed words[137]. To sum up, the dependent variable is defined as the overall number of changed words and calculated as follows:

Government bill changes = n. of added words
+ n. of removed words
+ n. of substituted words.

Let me give a simple example to illustrate how I computed the values for the depedent variable (see Table 5.1). Imagine that a bill addressing some particular issue (e.g., the redefinition of the subjects studied in the primary school) is drafted by a certain minister (the minister of education) and presented to parliament for approval. Suppose that such a bill, in its original formulation, is made of 100 words, while the law finally approved by the parliament (after the amendatory activity has occurred) amounts to 170 words. Following the above mentioned steps, with the help of a software for content analysis I (1) count how many times each word appears in the drafted bill and how many times it appears in the final law (columns II and III in the table) and

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[136] In other terms, words that are substituted would be counted twice: once as words appearing in the original text but not in the final one, and once as words appearing in the final text but not in the original one.
[137] Changes in the spelling, capitalization and punctuation have not been counted as modifications.

then I calculate the absolute difference between these two values (column IV)[138]. Adding together all these differences (2), I achieve the sum the of absolute differences, which equals to 110. Then, I (3) get the number of added or removed words by calculating the absolute difference between number of words in the two versions: | 170 – 100 | = 70. Hence, the number of substituted words (4) is obtained by dividing by two the difference between the sum of the absolute differences and the number of added or removed words: (110 – 70)/2 = 20. Finally, I (5) add up the two quantities calculated in the third and fourth steps and obtain the value of government bill changes: 70 + 20 = 90.

WORD	BILL	LAW	ABS. DIFFERENCE
...	...	...	...
Education	1	0	1
School	0	3	3
Teachers	5	7	2
...	...	...	...
SUM of ABS. DIFFERENCES			110

Table 5.1
Calculating the number of bill changes. An example.

It is worth spending some words on how I measured the government bill changes in the case of decree-laws. As explained in the previous section, immediately after the promulgation of a decree-law the government presents a conversion bill in parliament. Then, the legislature has three options: 1) approve the conversion bill without modification, thus converting the decree in its original formulation; 2) approve the conversion bill with a number of possible modifications and a provision saying that the decree is altered (i.e., the decree is converted with amendments)[139]; 3) reject the conversion bill, which means dismissing the decree (see Cox, Heller, and McCubbins 2005)[140]. Hence, with regard to my dependent variable, I need to compare two initial texts (the conversion bill and the original decree) with two final texts (the conversion law and the converted

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[138] This can be done with any software for counting word frequencies. For example, Yoshikoder and Jfreq, which are free and can be easily found on William Lowe's webpage (http://www.williamlowe.net/software/).

[139] The conversion bill is typically very short, often with just one article. Most of the time, the original conversion bill (i.e., the text of the bill presented by the government) simply states that a certain decree-law is converted. Similarly, the final conversion law (i.e., the text of the law finally approved) may sometimes include some actual changes, but it usually says just that the decree is approved with or without modifications and refers to an enclosure for the details of such changes. Of course, if the decree is converted without amendments, the texts of the conversion bill and that of the conversion law coincide. In any case, when the parliament debates on the conversion bill, it actually discusses the content of the decree-law.

[140] Since my dataset includes just approved government bills, the third option is not of the interest of this work.

decree). In order to do it, I calculated the number of changed words separately for the pair conversion bill-conversion law and for the pair original decree-converted decree, and then I added these two values together.

Undoubtedly, my operationalization of the changes made to governmental bills during the legislative process prensents drawbacks. To begin with, there are words such as "not" that, if added or removed, may completely change the meaning of sentences. Moreover, my measure is subject to problems of language ambiguity, which are however common to all computer-based techniques of content analysis[141]. More generally, just as Martin and Vanberg (2005), I am not dealing with the substantive content of legislation: by counting the number of changed words, I look simply at what is modified in the text of bills during the legislative process, and not at the actual policy significance of these transformations. However, given the increasingly technical and specialized nature of modern legislation, understanding the actual policy impact of each change made to a certain bill seems to require a prohibitive effort by researchers. This is especially true when the analysis concerns a relatively large number of bills dealing with several policy areas, as in the present case[142]. In addition, my measure can be easily coded by other researchers. On the whole, there seem reasons to believe that the number of changed words is a fairly reliable measure, as well as more refined and appropriate for the Italian case than Martin and Vanberg's operationalization.

Since it counts the number of changed words, the dependent variable is an integer that is bounded below by zero and unbounded above[143]. As Table 5.2 shows, its distribution is strongly asymmetrical and skewed to the right (the mean is more than the median)[144]. While their mean length is 1673 words (see below, Table 5.5), government bills in my sample present on average 681 changed words, and at least 170 words are changed in half of the bills. Moreover, most governmental bills in the sample are altered during the legislative process, since just 14% of them are passed into law without any modifications. However, as the high standard deviation indicates, they are modified according to very different degrees.

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[141] For a discussion, see for example Laver and Garry (2000).

[142] As noted in the theoretical chapters of this work, in modern parliamentary systems legislatures have increasingly delegated policymaking powers to cabinets, and in particular to individual ministers. As a result, only the minister responsible for a given policy area has the knowledge necessary to adequately understand the policy impact of a certain bill (Laver and Shepsle 1994, 1996; Gallagher, Laver, and Mair 2006).

[143] Having no upper limit, the variable enables to distinguish between a situation in which the whole text of a bill is substituted and one in which the whole text is substituted and extra words are added, that I consider as a more extensive change.

[144] As Table 5.2 displays, the value of skewness is very high and positive, indicating that the distribution is strongly skewed to the right. Symmetric distributions such as the normal have a skewness of 0. Kurtosis measures the heaviness of the tails of a distribution, and in a normal distribution it is equal to 3. Being much greater than 3, the value in the table indicates that the distribution of the number of changed words is heavily tailed.

Percentile	Number of changed words
0	0
15	1
30	51
Median	169.5
70	513
85	1251.25
100	21617

Mean	681.0489	N.	716
St. Dev.	1584.592		
Variance	2510933		
Skewness	7.496076		
Kurtosis	86.82006		

Table 5.2
Government bill changes. Descriptive statistics.
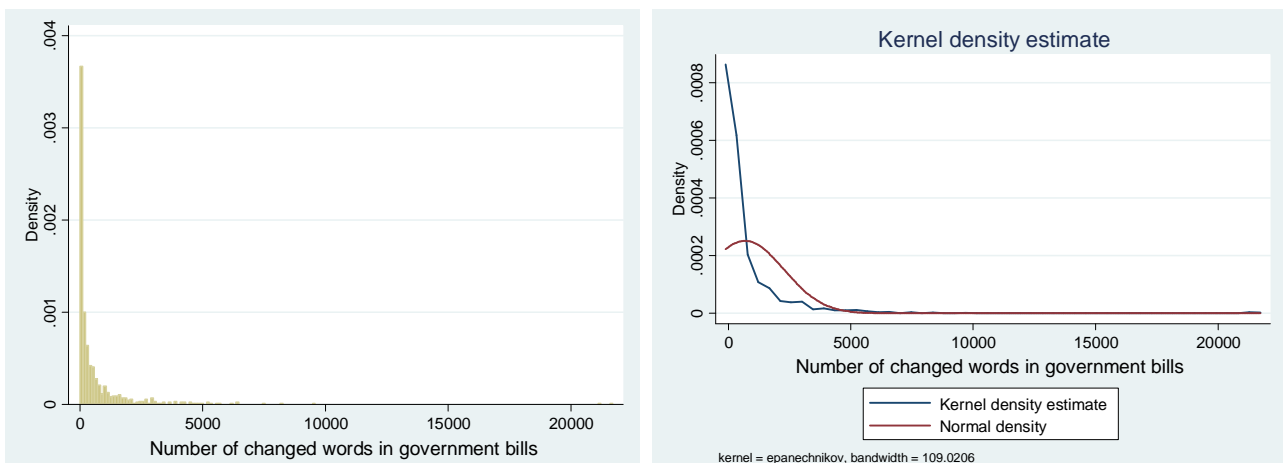
Figure 5.1a,b
Government bill changes. Distribution.

Figure 5.1a,b displays the distribution of government bill changes through a histogram and a kernel density plot, respectively[145]. Clearly, my dependent variable is far from being normally distributed. As a check, I run two common statistical tests for normality: a Shapiro-Wilk W test and a Skewness-Kurtosis test. Both allow to safely reject the null hypothesis that government bill changes follows a normal distribution[146].

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[145] Unlike histograms, kernel density plots approximate the probability density of variables independently of the number of bins and of the choice of origin.

[146] In the Shapiro-Wilk test, the statistic W is the ratio of the best estimator of the variance to the corrected sum of squares estimator of the variance. It ranges from 0 to 1, with 1 indicating normality (Shapiro and Wilk 1965). For government bill changes, W is equal to 0.4326 and the p-value, which is based on the assumption that the distribution is normal, is 0.000. The Skewness-Kurtosis test performs three tests for normality: one based on skewness, another based

Interestingly, if we look at the distribution of the dependent variable across different periods, we can note that modifications tend to increase over time. This is observable in Table 5.3, which displays, for each of the legislatures that I consider, the mean and median number of changed words as well the mean and median *degree of word change*[147]. While the former is the dependent variable calculated as explained above and used in the analyses of the next chapter, the latter is the same variable divided by the number of words in the initial bill[148]. This second measure allows me to discuss the descriptive statistics controlling for the different length of bills: since longer texts are more likely to receive extensive modifications than shorter texts, we might observe an increase in the number of changed words over time simply because government bills tend to include more and more words. In any case, Table 5.3 shows that in the last two legislatures included in the sample (XIII and XIV) both the median number of changed words and the median degree of word change become twice as much as their value in the first two legislatures (X and XI). Therefore, the amount of changes does not seem to increase just because bills become longer (see also Figure 5.2). Although less pronounced because of the influence of extreme values, this is true also if we look at the mean.

	n.	Number of changed words (mean)	Degree of word change (mean)	Number of changed words (median)	Degree of word change (median)
1987-2006	716	681.0489	0.5051722	169.5	0.1970581
X leg. (87-92)	233	453.103	0.4415325	110	0.1515152
XI leg. (92-94)	80	502.1375	0.4688768	119	0.1587733
XII leg. (94-96)	80	654.625	0.3410373	139.5	0.1090443
XIII leg. (96-01)	185	770.7243	0.5720786	256	0.2807018
XIV leg. (01-06)	138	1064.732	0.6391202	266.5	0.3141653
I REPUBLIC (87-94)	313	465.6358	0.4485215	117	0.1542428
II REPUBLIC (94-06)	403	848.3548	0.5491715	225	0.2436236

Table 5.3
Number of changed words and degree of word change. Mean and median by legislature.

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on kurtosis, and then a combination of the previous two tests. In my data, the probability of incorrecting assuming normality is 0.000 in all three tests.

[147] Since the distribution of the dependent variable presents a heavy tail on the right, the median should be used instead of the mean. Being less sensitive to outliers, in such a situation the median is a better measure of central tendency than the mean.

[148] The degree of word change has a distribution very similar to government bill changes. The results from these and the previous tests are available upon request.
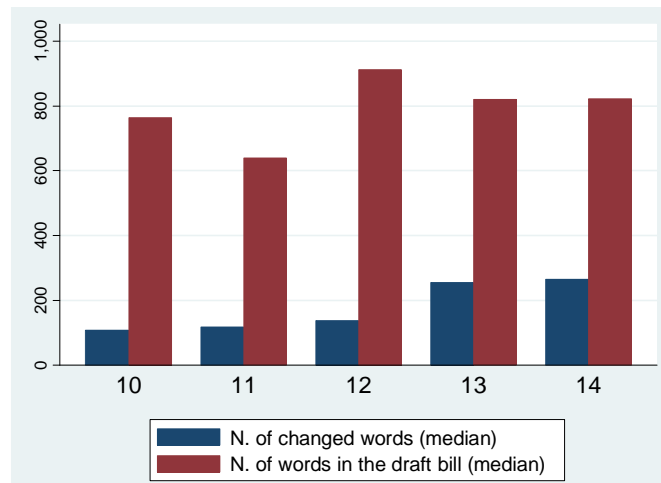
Figure 5.2
Number of changed words and number of words in draft bills. Median by Legislature.

In other words, during the Italian Second Republic governmental legislation appears to be more subject to modifications than during the First Republic[149]. This holds if consider either the number of changed words or the degree of word change, and if we employ either the mean or the median (last two rows of Table 5.3). In order to assess whether there is a statistically significant difference in the distribution of government bill changes between the First and the Second Republic, I use a Wilcoxon-Mann-Whitney test. This test allows to compare the distribution of a variable in two independent groups on the basis of the ranking of the observations of both groups. Unlike the independent samples t-test which assumes that the variable is a normally distributed interval variable, Wilcoxon-Mann-Whitney test is non-parametric and only requires an ordinal variable. In my case, the results suggest that there is a significant difference in the distribution of the number of changed words between the First and the Second Republic ($z = -3.424$ and $p = 0.001$), and that in particular government bills are altered more in the latter period than in the former one[150]. A test for equality of medians leads to the same results[151].

Remarkably, as Figure 5.2 shows, such a difference between First and Second Republic concerns both bills converting decree-laws and ordinary ones. The picture is the same even if we

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[149] As previously noted, I consider the somehow exceptional XII legislature in the Second Republic.

[150] The Wilcoxon-Mann-Whitney test ranks the observations of both groups from smallest to largest, sums the ranks from one group, and compares this actual rank sum to the rank sum expected under the null hypothesis of identical distributions between groups. In my case, the actual rank sum of the Second Republic is higher than its expected value, while the actual rank sum of the First Republic is lower than its expected value. I carried out the same test for the degree of changes and the results are the same.

[151] It is a non-parametric test, in which the null hypothesis assumes that the samples (groups) are drawn from populations with the same median.

look at the bills introduced by each government included in our sample: as displayed in Figure 5.3, the legislation sponsored by the centre-right and centre-left governments of the Second Republic is more extensively altered than the legislation proposed by the previous governments[152].
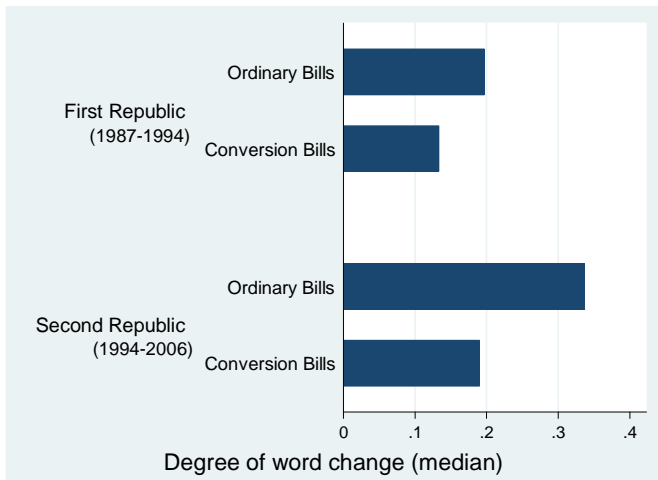
Figure 5.2 Degree of word change. Median by type of law and political system.
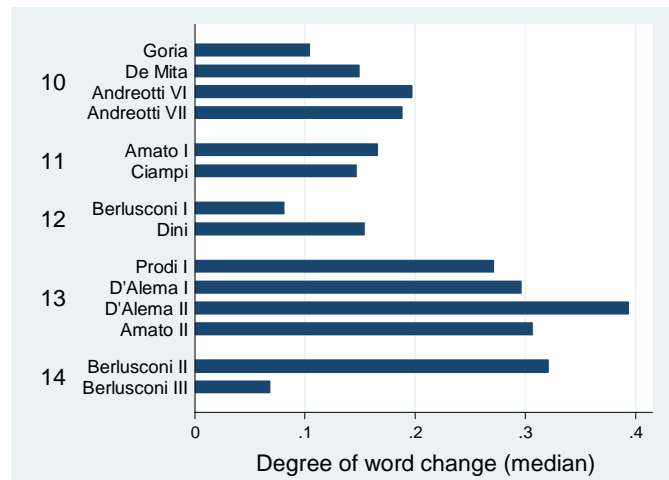
Figure 5.3 Degree of word change. Median by governments.

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[152] It is worth noting that all the nine bills introduced by the Berlusconi's III government and included in my sample are bills converting decree-laws.

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5.3 THE INDEPENDENT VARIABLES

Let me now discuss how I operationalized the explanatory hypotheses presented in the first four chapters, as well as a number of control variables that I included in my empirical analysis of changes of government bills in Italy. As discussed in the theoretical part of this work, the modifications occurring in parliament may stem from three general explanatory factors: I) some kind of conflict between the actors involved in the legislative process induced by position taking incentives; II) the limited level of information at political actors' disposal throughout the parliamentary process; III) institutional factors such as the rules directly regulating the legislative process and other institutional arrangements influencing lawmaking.

However, as previously pointed out, my research design does not allow to empirically evaluate most of the hypotheses dealing with institutional rules. In particular, the decision of focusing on ordinary governmental legislation makes it impossible to investigate the effects of different amending rules as well as that of the reforms in the Italian budgetary process. Moreover, the chosen time span prevents from assessing the impact of the standing order reform in 1971[153] and the abolition of secret ballot in 1988. Further, studying a single country does not allow to take into consideration the strength of committee systems.

In addition, I will not test the hypotheses relying on individual legislators' level of knowledge (H.27). The explanations in that set deal more with representatives' ability to amend governmental bills than with the number of observed modifications.

Concerning the array of control mechanisms highlighted in the literature on multiparty coalitions, in the present work I concentrate on committee chairs and (of course) scrutiny of government bills at the legislative level, as well as on junior ministers and prime ministers at the cabinet level. With regard to the other cabinet-level control instruments (H.18), my data would not allow enough variation: Verzichelli and Cotta (2000: 458-459, Tab. 12.5) show that from 1963 onwards all the Italian government made use of coalition committees and party summits[154]. Moreover, as previously noted, coalition treaties (H.24) have almost never been used in Italy.

Finally, the lack of data for the entire period under investigation does not allow to test the hypothesis concerning the relationship between the amount of changes made to government bills and the length of debate in the cabinet (H.6). Indeed, information on the duration of cabinet meetings (*Consigli dei Ministri*) is available only from 1996 onwards[155].

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[153] As for the effect of the 1997 reform of standing orders, see the next chapter.
[154] To be precise, however, their data do not go beyond 1998.
[155] See http://www.sitiarcheologici.palazzochigi.it/ (accessed April 30, 2011).

5.3.1 Independent variables based upon conflict

With regard to the explanatory hypotheses I will test in the next chapter, let me start with the operationalization of those which are based upon position taking utility and some kind of conflict between the actors participating in the legislative process. Several explanations in this set concern ideological conflicts between political actors, which I measured as absolute policy distances between them weighted by the salience of the issue addressed by the bill. In this respect, a number of points deserve some clarification.

First of all, for the position of parties on different policy dimensions I used the expert surveys conducted by Laver and Hunt (1992) and Benoit and Laver (2006)[156]. An important alternative source of party positions is the Manifesto Research Group/Comparative Manifestos Project (Budge, Robertson, and Hearl 1987; Budge et al. 2001). However, the scores provided by the MRG/CMP appear hardly plausible for Italian parties during the period considered here. For instance, if we use the left-right positions calculated according to Laver and Budge's (1992) approach, in 1992 the PDS (i.e., the former Communists) is to the right of the DC and has the same position as the PLI (Liberals), while in 1996 the PPI (the left-wing component of the former Christian Democrats) is the rightist party in parliament, even to the right of Forza Italia. Therefore, I opted for Laver and Hunt's (1992) and Benoit and Laver's (2006) expert surveys. For each party, these data provide information on both position and saliency scores on a 20-point scale in several policy dimensions. In general, in order to measure the variables dealing with ideological conflict, I assigned each governmental law to one of the policy domains identified by the expert surveys[157], and then I calculated the absolute difference between the positions of the relevant actors on the issue under consideration. This captures the fact that the degree of conflict among political actors may vary according to the particular policy area dealt with by government legislation.

Second, in order to take into account the *saliency* of the policy area addressed by legislation (H.13), I weighted the ideological distances thus obtained by an issue-specific measure of salience. In particular, by using the saliency scores provided by Laver and Hunt's (1992) and Benoit and Laver's (2006) expert surveys I proceeded as follows. For each party in parliament, (1) I calculated its average saliency across all the policy dimensions. Hence, (2) I divided the party's saliency score on a dimension by that party's average saliency found in the first step and repeated this for all the dimensions, thus achieving the party's relative saliency on each dimension. After this, for each party (3) I computed its proportion of seats in the parliament, and (4) on each policy domain I

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[156] In the present work I assume that parties are unitary actors. For the empirical plausibility of this working assumption, see Laver (2002: 203). See also Laver and Schofield (1990: chapter 2).

[157] In particular, I used Laver and Hunt's (1992) scores for the 1987-1994 period and Benoit and Laver's (2006) scores for the 1994-2006 period.

multiplied the party's relative saliency by its proportion of parliamentary seats, thus obtaining the party's weighted relative saliency. Then, (5) I achieved the overall saliency of a certain dimension by adding up the weighted relative saliency of all parties on that dimension. This measure follows the same logic as Martin and Vanberg's (2005: 100, n. 18) government-specific measure of salience, and is constructed in such a way that relatively more salient issues in parliament present values greater than 1, while less salient issues display values smaller than 1[158]. Finally, (6) each ideological distance was multiplied by the salience of the issue addressed by the bill found in the fifth step.

Third, concerning the proposers' policy positions, each bill (in the original version submitted to parliament) is assumed to represent the ideal point of who decided on its content at the cabinet level. As argued in the introduction to the theoretical part, the hypotheses based on ideological conflict maintain either that each minister autonomously drafts and presents to parliament all the bills falling under her policy jurisdiction, or that cabinet decisions are compromises agreed upon by all the governing parties. The proposer's policy position is measured in the former case as the policy score of the drafting minister's party, and in the latter case as the government mid-range (see Tsebelis and Chang 2004).

Fourth, the hypotheses based on ideological conflict may involve also actors for which we do not have policy scores. It is the case of technical ministers and technical junior ministers, who by definition do not belong to any party. The same can be said of 'independent' politicians, who – although not being policy experts – do not represent any party in particular (e.g., Giuliano Amato in the governments in office during the XIII legislature). On the basis of the available biographical information on the web, they have been assigned the score of the party which seems the closest to their policy preferences. As a last option, I gave non-partisan ministers and JMs the prime minister's score and the minister's score, respectively.

Finally, since bills can be proposed by more than one minister, I consider the first signatory as the proposing minister. Moreover, as previously illustrated, my sample includes bills converting decree-laws. Formally, the first signatory of conversion bills is always the prime minister, regardless of which minister actually drafts them. Therefore, for conversion bills I consider the second signatory as the proposing minister. The premier is considered the proposer of a conversion bill only if he is the only signatory of it.

All that said, *conflict with parliamentary majority*, i.e. the policy divergence between the proposing minister – or the government compromise – and the parliamentary median voter in H.3a,b has been calculated as the (saliency-weighted) absolute difference between the score of the

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[158] Since the size of parliamentary parties varies both across legislative terms and within each legislative term, I recalculated this issue-specific measure of salience each time a new government was formed.

proposing minister's party – or the mid-range position of the government – and the score of the party controlling the median legislator in the Chamber.

By the same logic, *conflict with opposition* in H.7a,b has been operationalized as the (saliency-weighted) absolute distance between the minister's position – or the government mid-range – and that of the farthest opposition party. In particular, among opposition parties I did not consider parliamentary groups with less than 20 legislators, since these parties are usually constrained in their ability to influence legislation (for instance, they do not take part in the meetings of Conference of Group Chairpersons). As an alternative, I measured conflict with opposition also as the distance between the minister – or the mid-range in the cabinet – and the largest opposition party. This would allow to take into consideration the influence of FI and PDS/DS when at the opposition during the Second Republic, and most of all the Communists' leverage during the First Republic.

Concerning *presidents of parliament* (H.11a,b), ideological conflict has been operationalized as the absolute difference between the proposing minister's score – or the government mid-range – and that of the president of the Chamber of Deputies. I multiplied this measure by the issue-specific value of salience.

Committee chair's distance in H.23 is the (saliency-weighted) distance between the drafting minister and the chair of the standing committee to which the bill is referred in the Chamber (during the first reading). In cases where the governmental bill is jointly referred to two committees, I took the average between the positions of the two chairs' parties.

As for *ideological conflict within the cabinet* (H.12), which is Martin and Vanberg's (2004, 2005) main explanatory variable, I followed Franchino and Høyland (2009: 612) and measured it as the distance between the proposing minister's party and the farthest coalition partner's party. Similarly, *junior minister's distance* in H.17 has been calculated as the distance between the minister submitting the bill and the JM who is farthest from her in the same ministry. This variable is equal to 0 if the proposing minister is not 'shadowed' – that is, either when there is not any JM in the drafting ministry, or when the minister and her JMs are copartisan. Deputy ministers are considered as junior ministers, and deputy prime ministers are treated as JMs appointed to the prime minister. Both variables were weighted by the issue-specific measure of salience.

Junior minister's presence (H.16) and *Committee chair's presence* (H.22) are dummy variables. For any given bill proposed by a certain minister, the former is equal to 1 when a JM from a partner party is present in the drafting ministry, while the latter is 1 when a chair from a partner party heads the committee to which the bill is referred.

I calculated the *number of signatory parties* (H.19) as the number of different parties with at least one minister among the signatories of a bill, whereas *Prime minister's bill* (H.20a,b) is a dummy variable whose value is 1 when the prime minister is the first signatory of the bill (for decree-laws, see above).

Concerning H.5, I counted the *number of coalition parties* in each Italian government during the 1987-2006 period assuming that a coalition party is a party that has at least a representative with voting power in cabinet meetings (*Consigli dei Ministri*) (Müller, Bergman, and Strøm 2008: 6). In other words, I excluded those parties which have only junior ministers. The distance between coalition parties is instead calculated as the *government ideological range* – that is, the absolute difference between the score of the extreme coalition party on the left and that of the extreme coalition party on the right.

Quite trivially, the *size of the minister's party* (H.15) is the number of seats controlled by that parliamentary group in the Chamber of Deputies[159], whereas the dummy *technical minister* (H.10) takes the value 1 when the first signatory is a minister who does not represent any party[160]. In order to identify technical ministers, I drew on Verzichelli and Cotta's (2000) data on the distribution of cabinet ministerships in Italy up to 2000. For succeeding years, I identified technical ministers trying to follow the authors' logic. In addition, I checked those data with two other sources: the information on the composition of governments (1945-1998) provided by Woldendorp, Keman, and Budge (2000), and the websites of the Italian government, the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate of Republic.

Turning now to other types of conflict among political actors, *minority government* (H.1) is a dummy variable taking the value of 1 if the government proposing the bill does not control a majority in the Chamber, and 0 otherwise. In my sample, only Dini and Prodi I cabinets are minority governments.

As far as *distributive conflict* (H.2) is concerned, the variable is a dummy whose value is 1 when the bill contains at least one pork barrel clause, and 0 otherwise. In order to build this measure, I checked whether the bill included benefits for particular professional categories, interest groups, organizations, places or persons.

I operationalized the alternation hypothesis (H.4) with the dummy *Second Republic*, which is 1 for bills presented and approved during the XII, XIII and XIV legislatures (1994-2006), and 0 for bills presented and approved during the X and XI legislatures (1987-1994). In other words, I

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[159] See http://legislature.camera.it/.

[160] In principle, technical ministers may happen to be members of some party. See, for example, Alberto Ronchey, who was a technical minister in Amato I and Ciampi cabinets although belonging to the PRI (the Republicans). What distinguishes technical ministers is that they are in the cabinet because of their policy expertise, and not because they are the designated representatives of some coalition party.

considered the Italian First Republic as a pivotal party system and the Second Republic as an alternational party system.

According to the hypothesis concerning conflict over ministerial responsibility (H.8), we should expect more changes to bills addressing those policy issues on which more than one ministry may draft legislation. I constructed a measure of the degree to which a domain is shared by different ministries in the following way. First, I classified all the governmental laws approved in the period under investigation according to the micro-issues identified by the Comparative Policy Agendas Project[161]. Then, I computed for each of these micro-categories the Rae's (1967) index of fragmentation: for every micro-issue I calculated, as a relative frequency, the number of times a ministry proposed a law, I squared these frequencies and add them up[162]. Finally, I calculated the complement to 1 to make the variable run in the direction I was interested in. The resulting variable can be considered as a measure of *conflict over ministerial responsibility*: the closer the value of the Rae index becomes to 1 (its maximum value), the more that micro-issue is disputed by different ministries; the more it approaches 0 (its minimum value), the more that micro-issue can be considered as the exclusive jurisdiction of a single ministry. Table 5.4 provides a simple example for the micro-category 107, "Taxation, Tax policy, and Tax Reform".

Drafting ministry	Abs. Freq.	Rel. Freq.	Square of Rel. Freq.
Budget	1	0.0227	0.000515
Finance	31	0.7045	0.49632
Justice	1	0.0227	0.000515
Interior	1	0.0227	0.000515
Labour	8	0.1818	0.033051
Prime minister	1	0.0227	0.000515
Treasury	1	0.0227	0.000515
Total	44	1	0.531948

Table 5.4
Rae's index for conflict over ministerial responsibility. An example.

Finally, it seems particularly hard to find a measure of the degree to which ministers are captured by the department they head (H.9). Although this hypothesis undoubtedly deserves a more

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[161] In building this variable, I used all the 1574 governmental laws approved in the 1987-2006 period, and not only those introduced in the Chamber of Deputies. However, constitutional laws and laws ratifying international treaties are still excluded.
[162] To take account of the changes occurred in the number and names of Italian ministries, I calculated this variable for three different periods: 1987-1996; 1996-2001; 2001-2006.

nuanced measure, as for now I built a dummy indicator of *departmental capture* which is based on the available biographical information on the proposing ministers. By looking on ministers' personal pages in the institutional (and also non-institutional) websites, I checked whether the proposer had some work experiences or studies in the same policy area as the one which is under her jurisdiction. If the answer was positive – for instance, when the minister of labour worked in trade unions – I assigned the value 1. If it was negative, I assigned the value 0. My argument is that the more ministers are familiar with the issues under their jurisdiction (and hence with the relevant administrative agencies and interest groups in that area), the more they are likely to identify with the interests of the departments they head.

5.3.2 Independent variables based upon the lack of information

As for the second major explanatory factor, the informational problems confronted by political actors, the dummy *complexity* (H.25) becomes 1 if the bill includes more than one aspect regarding the subject at issue. For instance, the variable is equal to 1 when a bill dealing with basic education includes provisions about both school leaving age and the construction of new schoolhouses. Remarkably, a possible alternative measure is suggested by Giuliani and Capano (2001: 26-29). In analyzing the content and complexity of legislative initiative in Italy during the 1987-1998 period, the authors employ a measure of complexity which is based on how Italian parliamentary offices classify the content of laws. Depending on the issues it addresses, each bill is assigned a number of subjects. Since, as they argue, Italian parliamentary offices classify laws in an accurate manner, the number of subjects which are attributed to a bill can be taken as a measure of its complexity. However, as Giuliani and Capano (2001: 27-28) note, that classification system was modified in 1992. Therefore, although probably more refined than mine, such a measure cannot be employed in the present work.

In order to operationalize the multidimensional nature of a bill (H.26), I simply counted the *number of consulting committees* to which the bill is referred in the first reading. Reasonably, when a bill deals with multiple policy areas, more than one committee is in charge of discussing it.

5.3.3 Independent variables based upon changes in the formal rules

Turning now to the explanatory hypotheses which focus on changes in formal rules, my research design allows to test just two of these hypotheses: impatience and the type of democracy. Legislators' *impatience* (H.28) is operationalized as the number of days between the introduction of a certain bill and the scheduled end of the legislative term. Let me underline that the Italian parliament is often dissolved before the natural end of its 5-year term, and that legislators might

hence be caught unawares by an early dissolution. Indeed, during the period of time I consider, two legislatures were dissolved before their constitutional end: the XI and the XII. In both cases, however, we can quite confidently assume that legislators knew when the parliament would have been dissolved: the last government in both the XI and the XII legislature (Ciampi's and Dini's cabinets, respectively) was expressly appointed to carry out a particular task within a precise time period[163].

The *type of democracy* (H.29) is instead a dummy taking the value 1 for bills presented and approved during the Second 'majoritarian' Republic. Remarkably, the government alternation (H.4) and type of democracy (H.29) are measured by the same indicator.

5.3.4 Control variables

The *length of the initial bill* and the *policy area* which the bill deals with are incorporated as control variables in my analyses. As for the former, which is measured as the number of words in the drafted version, longer bills are obviously more likely to be modified than shorter ones. Concerning the latter, it might be the case that bills addressing a certain policy area always face more changes than others. This could occur, for instance, because the issues within that policy domain are inherently more complex, or because in that policy area outside lobby groups and advisory bodies provide legislators with the information needed to propose changes to government bills[164]. The effect of the specific policy area addressed by the bill can be controlled in (at least) two ways. On the one hand, it is possible to create a number of separate dummy indicators, one for each policy domain. On the other hand, we can assume that the data are grouped into clusters (i.e. the different policy areas), and that data in one cluster are more similar to one another than to data belonging to another cluster. Hence, in the analyses we can estimate standard errors that are robust to such clusters. In both cases, the different policy areas can be identified following either the macro-issues of the Comparative Policy Agendas Project or the classification made in Laver and Hunt's (1992) and Benoit and Laver's (2006) expert surveys.

Finally, also the type of governmental coalition could be incorporated as a control variable. In particular, together with the dummy for minority governments (see above), I could include in the empirical tests a dummy for *oversized governments*. This variable takes the value of 1 when the government coalition contains more parties than those which are strictly necessary for controlling a majority in the Chamber of Deputies. As displayed in Table 5.5, it happened in 9 of the 14 cabinets

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[163] Both the Ciampi and Dini governments were temporary executives formed to introduce certain reforms before early elections. Economic and electoral reforms in the former case; economic and pension reforms in the latter case.
[164] In other words, in certain policy areas external interest groups may act as 'fire alarms': they may provide parliamentary parties and legislators with information on the possible consequences of government-sponsored bills, thus making modifications to ministerial drafts more likely to occur.

which were in office in the period under investigation. The analyses, therefore, should include the two dummies for minority and oversized governments, leaving the minimum winning governments out as the reference category. However, I do not have any specific expectations about the effect of oversized executives on the changes made to government bills. Most of all, for the present purposes it does not seem really meaningful to distinguish between oversized and minimum winning. The only theoretically relevant distinction appears to be the one between minority and majority governments (see paragraph 1.1.1). Indeed, large part of Italian executives from 1987 to 2006 were oversized. In addition, the variable *oversized governments* is strongly associated with the dummy *minority governments* as well as with several measures of conflict. Therefore, in my analyses I include just a dummy for minority cabinets.

	Name of government	N. of bills	Type of government
X legislature	Goria	61	Oversized
	De Mita	78	Oversized
	Andreotti VI	69	Oversized
	Andreotti VII	25	Oversized
XI legislature	Amato I	44	Minimum winning
	Ciampi	40	Minimum winning
XII legislature	Berlusconi I	37	Oversized
	Dini	44	Minority
XIII legislature	Prodi I	118	Minority
	D'Alema I	34	Oversized
	D'Alema II	9	Minimum winning
	Amato II	23	Oversized
XIV legislature	Berlusconi II	125	Oversized
	Berlusconi III	9	Oversized
		716	

Table 5.5
Name and status of cabinets (Italian Chamber of Deputies, 1987-2006)

Table 5.6 summarizes the hypotheses I will emprirically evaluate in the next chapter and provides descriptive statistics for the corresponding independent variables. Descriptive statistics for indicators of policy domains (based on Policy Agendas) are given in Table 5.7.

	Variable	Description	Min.	Median	Max.	Mean	St. dev.
	Conflict among actors						
H.1	Minority governments	1 if minority cabinet	0	0	1	0.226	0.419
H.2	Distributive conflict	1 if at least one pork barrel clause	0	0	1	0.405	0.491
H.3a	Conflict with	Distance gov.midrange – parl.median	0	2.981	10.122	2.719	1.241
H.3b	parliamentary majority	Distance minister – parl.median	0	1.310	11.488	2.449	3.081
H.4	Alternation	1 if Second Republic (1994-2006)	0	1	1	0.563	0.496
H.29	Type of democracy						
H.5	Number of governing	N. of parties in the coalition *	4	4	8	4.699	1.113
	parties and range	Ideological range in the coalition	0	7.15	12.5	6.419	2.553
H.7a		Distance gov.midrange – farthest opp.party	1.181	8.951	16.582	8.719	2.296
	Conflict with opposition	Distance gov.midrange – largest opp.party	0.027	7.766	11.790	7.509	2.727
H.7b		Distance minister – farthest opp.party	0.496	8.411	15.952	8.771	3.291
		Distance minister – largest opp.party	0	7.260	13.661	6.927	3.679
H.8	Conflict over ministerial responsibility	Rae's index on Policy Agendas' micro-categories	0	0.444	0.864	0.361	0.275
H.9	Departmental capture	1 if minister is susceptible to be 'captured'	0	0	1	0.341	0.474
H.10	Technical minister	1 if a technical minister proposes the bill	0	0	1	0.182	0.386
H.11 a,b	President of the chamber	Distance gov.midrange – Chamber president	0	3.935	15.634	4.724	3.349
		Distance minister – Chamber president	0	5.277	15.634	4.789	3.230
H.12	Ideological conflict within cabinet	Distance minister – farthest coalition partner	0	5.830	12.350	5.924	2.831
H.15	Size of minister's party	Number of seats in the Chamber **	3	161	234	133.759	77.841
H.16	JM's presence	1 if JM from a coalition partner *	0	1	1	0 .949	0 .219
H.17	JM's distance	Distance minister – farthest JM	0	2.780	12.350	4.104	3.542
H.19	Number of signatory parties	Number of parties co-sponsoring the bill *	0	1	3	1.046	0.532
H.20 a,b	Prime ministerial bill	1 if proposed by PM	0	0	1	0.142	0.350
H.22	Committee chair's presence	1 if comm.chair from a coalition partner	0	1	1	0.767	0.423
H.23	Committee chair's distance	Distance minister – comm.chair	0	1.688	15.634	2.783	3.435
	Lack of information						
H.25	Complexity	1 if the bill deals with multiple items	0	0	1	0.225	0.418
H.26	Multidimensionality	Number of committees	0	4	13	4.226	2.483
	Rules						
H.28	Impatience	Number of days between introduction and end of legislative term	53	939	1844	961.432	534.691
	Control variables						
	Length of bill	Number of words in the bill	25	792	36685	1672.659	2717.392
	Oversized governments	1 if oversized cabinet	0	1	1	0.644	0.479

* Calculated excluding Dini's non-partisan cabinet (N = 672).

** The size of proposing minister's party is calculated only for non-technical ministers (N = 586).

All ideological distances are weighted by issue-specific saliences.

Table 5.6
The independent variables. Descriptive statistics.

Policy issue (Comparative Policy Angendas Project)	Freq.	Percent
Agriculture	40	5.59
Banking, Finance, and Domestic Commerce	45	6.28
Civil Rights, Minority Issues, and Civi	16	2.23
Community Development and Housing Issue	15	2.09
Culture policy issues	29	4.05
Defense	44	6.15
Domestic Macroeconomic Issues	64	8.94
Education	33	4.61
Energy	16	2.23
Environment	27	3.77
Foreign Trade	11	1.54
Government Operations	104	14.53
Health	35	4.89
Immigration	11	1.54
International Affairs and Foreign Aid	45	6.28
Labor, Employment	28	3.91
Law and Crime	80	11.17
Public Lands and Water Management	9	1.26
Social Welfare	7	0.98
Space, Science, Technology and Communic	11	1.54
Transportation	46	6.42
Total	716	100.00

Table 5.7
Policy domains (Comparative Policy Agendas Project). Descriptive statistics.

PART III.
EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS

CHAPTER 6
ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

In this chapter I present an empirical analysis of the changes made to Italian government bills in the course of the legislative process from 1987 to 2006. The first section introduces the statistical technique employed. As illustrated in the previous chapter, the outcome I am interested in is the number of words which are changed in the text of a governmental bill during the parliamentary process. Therefore, I use an event count model, which is the standard approach in political science studies concerned with the number of events that occur over a particular period of time (King 1989a,b; Long 1997). After motivating the choice of a non-linear model, I discuss the basic logic of count models and illustrate the advantages of employing a particular model within this class: the *negative binomial regression*. I then show how this model can be specified and estimated.

In the second section, I present the results of my analyses and discuss them in light of the theory reviewed in chapters 1-4. In particular, I first examine a set of models which empirically evaluate Martin and Vanberg's (2005) argument that ideological conflict within the coalition increases the amount of changes made to governmental bills during the legislative process. After this, I turn to models which include policy distances involving the parliamentary median voter, under both ministerial discretion and collective cabinet responsibility. Then, I compare the results from the latter models with those from the previous models, trying to give an overall account of the changes made to government legislation during Italian parliamentary processes.

6.1 EVENT COUNT MODEL

My dependent variable counts the number of words changed in governmental bills during the legislative process and takes only non-negative integer values (see Figure 5.1a,b). Therefore, in order to test the explanatory hypotheses discussed in the theoretical part of this work, I use an event count model.

An event can be understood as the realization of a point process governed by some specified *rate of occurence* of the event (Cameron and Trivedi 1998; 2). The number of events (or, equivalently, the number of times an event has occurred) is the total number of such realizations in a fixed domain, and the domain can be a time interval – day, year, or some other particular interval – or a cross-section – a geographic unity, an individual, or else (King 1988: 838). In my case, the number of events is the total number of words that have been added, removed, or substituted in the text of a governmental bill throughout the parliamentary process.

As King (1988) illustrates, using an ordinary least square (OLS) regression model for count outcomes leads to several problems. First of all, the model would be misspecified: assuming a linear relationship, OLS may produce also negative predictions for the number of events[165]. Moreover, any linear model would quite unrealistically assume that going from 0 to 1 event is the same as going from, say, 50 to 51 events, or from 200 to 201 events. Secondly, the estimators would be highly inefficient, insufficient, inconsistent, and biased, even in infinite samples[166]. Remarkably, neither logging the dependent variable nor taking its square root would solve such problems.

Hence, a non-linear model is more appropriate. Indeed, the data generation process of event counts can be assumed to be a Poisson process (see King 1988: 860; Cameron and Trivedi 1998: 5-6), and the most basic way for modeling count variables is the Poisson regression model (PRM). In the PRM, the number of events follows a Poisson distribution with a mean that is a function of the independent variables according to a model that forces expected counts to be positive[167]. More precisely, for observation $i = 1,..., n$, let y_i be a random variable indicating the number of times an event has occurred – or, equivalently, the number of events occurred – in a fixed domain, so that only the values 0, 1, 2,... occur with non-zero probability. Let μ_i be the expected number of times that an event has occurred – or, equivalently, the mean of y_i or expected count – in that domain. The

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[165] Forcing negative fitted values to zero through a 'truncated linear' model would not be an acceptable solution, since it would make implausible assumptions at and near the cut-off point (King 1988: 845-846).

[166] Let $\hat{\theta}$ be an estimator of the parameter θ. $\hat{\theta}$ is an *unbiased* estimator of θ if the average of the estimates generated across repeated experiments equals the parameter θ – that is, if $E(\hat{\theta}) = \theta$. $\hat{\theta}$ is *consistent* if its sampling distribution collapses to a spike over the true parameter θ as the sample size approaches infinity – i.e., when $\hat{\theta} \rightarrow \theta$ in probability. If $\hat{\theta}$ and $\tilde{\theta}$ are two consistent estimators of θ, $\hat{\theta}$ is more *efficient* than $\tilde{\theta}$ if $\text{Var}(\hat{\theta}) < \text{Var}(\tilde{\theta})$. An estimator is asymptotically efficient when its variance is the smallest possible among consistent estimators. Finally, an estimator is not *sufficient* when it does not use all available information in the estimation.

[167] In the present section, I mostly follow Long's (1997) exposition and notation.

PRM is defined by two equations. First, the number of events y_i is drawn from a Poisson distribution with a conditional mean that depends on i's observed characteristics:

$$\Pr(y_i \mid \mathbf{x}_i) = \frac{\exp(-\mu_i)\mu_i^{y_i}}{y_i!} \tag{6.1}$$

Second, the expected count μ_i varies across observations as a function of a vector of explanatory variables $\mathbf{x}_i$ according to the following structural equation:

$$\mu_i = E(y_i \mid \mathbf{x}_i) = \exp(\mathbf{x}_i\boldsymbol{\beta}) \tag{6.2}$$

Where $\mathbf{x}_i$ is a vector of k exogenous regressors that are thought to determine y_i, and $\boldsymbol{\beta}$ is a k x 1 vector of coefficients. Taking the exponential of $\mathbf{x}_i\boldsymbol{\beta}$ ensures that μ_i is positive, which is necessary because counts can be only non-negative (for a discussion of alternative functional forms, see King 1989a: 121-124)[168].

Remarkably, by the property of the Poisson distribution, in the PRM the conditional variance equals the conditional mean:

$$\mathrm{Var}(y_i \mid \mathbf{x}_i) = E(y_i \mid \mathbf{x}_i) = \mu_i \tag{6.3}$$

This is known as *equidispersion*, and is a consequence of two assumptions made in the PRM about the process generating the counts. In particular, the probability that an event occurs is assumed to be constant during the observation period (*homogeneity*), and independent of all the previous events occurred during that observation period (*independence*)[169]. If these assumptions do not hold, the variance is not equal to the mean and the count variable does not follow the Poisson distribution. We would have either *overdispersion* (variance greater than the mean) or *underdispersion* (variance lower than the mean). Although the estimates will still be consistent (and usually very similar), they will be inefficient, and with incosistent standard errors (Gourieroux, Monfort, and Trognon 1984).

Indeed, the assumptions of homogeneity and independence rarely apply, and therefore equidispersion is hardly found in real-world data. The conditional variance is most of the time greater than the conditional mean (overdispersion), and hence the PRM would very often underestimate the amount of dispersion in the outcome[170]. Overdispersion in the distribution of the

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[168] To estimate $\boldsymbol{\beta}$, the effect of the explanatory variables on the dependent variable, the method of maximum likelihood is used. For ease of illustration, here I do not report the (log-)likelihood function. For details, see Long (1997: 223); Maddala (1983: 52).

[169] For a comprehensive discussion of all the assumptions made in the PRM concerning the process which generates counts, see King (1989b).

[170] I focus on the case of overdispersion, which is more relevant for the purposes of the present chapter. For event count models taking into account underdispersion, see King (1989b: 769-771).

count variable can result from the following two circumstances. The first is *unobserved heterogeneity* and violates the homogeneity assumption: individuals in the sample come from a heteogeneous population in which individuals have constant but different probabilities to experience events. The second is *positive contagion* and violates independence: the occurrence of an event increases the probability of subsequent occurrence of similar events.

In my case, the requirements of homogeneity and independence are probably violated: most of all, it seems rather implausible to assume independence between the occurrence of successive events. Without doubt, rewriting ministerial drafts in parliament is a costly activity. If legislators want to propose changes to the original bill, and especially if they want these changes to be successful, they have to gather (at least some of) the relevant information. Moreover, they may need to coordinate their efforts, or reach agreements with other individuals or groups in the parliament. In doing so, they incur resources and opportunity costs. Reasonably, we can imagine that once a change has been made to the original bill, the costs of making further modifications become marginally lower. In other words, a process of positive contagion seems at work when legislation is examined in parliament. This produces overdispersion in the counts – i.e., in the number of changed words that we observe at the end of the legislative process.

Using a PRM in presence of overdispersion in the outcome produces standard errors that are biased downward and results in spuriously large z-values and spuriously small p-values (Cameron and Trivedi 1986; King 1989). A standard solution to account for overdispersion is the negative binomial regression model (NBRM), whose distribution allows the conditional variance to exceed the conditional mean. In particular, the degree of overdispersion is estimated as a parameter from the data.

In what follows, I derive the NBRM on the basis of unobserved heterogeneity (Greenwood-Yule distribution). The NBRM could be derived also from positive contagion (Pólya-Eggenberger distribution), with exactly the same results: since both processes lead to the same probability distribution of counts (see Neyman 1965: 5), the resulting regression model is identical.

While in the PRM the function relating the mean μ_i and the covariates $\mathbf{x}_i$ is parametrically exact and no other source of stochastic variation is considered, in the NBRM such a function is itself stochastic. In other words, the NBRM adds a random error, ε_i, which is assumed to be uncorrelated with $\mathbf{x}_i$. As a consequence, whereas in the PRM the conditional mean of y_i given $\mathbf{x}_i$ is known and it is equal to $\mu_i = \exp(\mathbf{x}_i\boldsymbol{\beta})$, in the NBRM μ_i is replaced by the random variable $\tilde{\mu}_i$:

$$\tilde{\mu}_i = \exp(\mathbf{x}_i\boldsymbol{\beta} + \varepsilon_i) \tag{6.4}$$

In the NBRM, therefore, variation in $\tilde{\mu}_i$ has two sources. The first is observed heterogeneity – i.e., the observed variation in $\mathbf{x}_i$ across sample members as in the PRM. The second is the unobserved heterogeneity introduced by ε_i. The error ε_i can be thought of either as the effect of some unobserved variables omitted from the model (Gourieroux, Monfort, and Trognon 1984), or as other sources of pure randomness (Hausman, Hall, and Griliches 1984)[171].

From equations 6.2 and 6.4, we can easily obtain

$$\tilde{\mu}_i \; = \; \exp(\mathbf{x}_i\boldsymbol{\beta}) \exp(\varepsilon_i) \; = \; \mu_i \exp(\varepsilon_i) \; = \; \mu_i\delta_i \tag{6.5}$$

Where $\delta_i = \exp(\varepsilon_i)$. As in the linear regression, to identify the model an assumption about the mean of the error term is to be made. In the case of the NBRM, the assumption is

$$E(\delta_i) = 1 \tag{6.6}$$

Under this assumption[172], we can easily see that the expected count in the NBRM is the same as the expected count in the PRM. That is,

$$E(\tilde{\mu}_i) = E(\mu_i\delta_i) = \mu_i E(\delta_i) = \mu_i \tag{6.7}$$

However, as previously noted, the PRM underfits the amount of dispersion in the outcome and thus produces standard errors which are somehow deflated.

In the NBRM, the number of events y_i given both $\mathbf{x}_i$ and δ_i is still Poisson-distributed. In particular, the density is

$$\Pr(y_i \,|\mathbf{x}_i, \delta_i) = \; \frac{\exp(-\tilde{\mu}_i)\tilde{\mu}_i^{\;y_i}}{y_i!} \; = \; \frac{\exp(-\mu_i\delta_i)(\mu_i\delta_i)^{\,y_i}}{y_i!} \tag{6.8}$$

Yet, δ_i is unknown and therefore we cannot compute $\Pr(y_i \,|\mathbf{x}_i, \delta_i)$. Such a problem is solved by the following two steps. First, assume that δ_i is drawn from a gamma distribution. Second, compute $\Pr(y_i \,|\mathbf{x}_i)$ as a weighted combination of $\Pr(y_i \,|\mathbf{x}_i, \delta_i)$ for all values of δ_i, where the weights are determined by $\Pr(\delta_i)$ – i.e., the probability of each value of δ_i. In other terms, the probability of y_i is calculated as a mixture of two probability distributions: Poisson for the outcome, and gamma for the unobserved individual heterogeneity. After calculations that I do not report here (for details, see Long 1997: 231-232; Cameron and Trivedi 1998: 70-79), the result is the negative binomial probability distribution:

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[171] In the PRM, all individuals with the same values of $\mathbf{x}_i$ have the same values of μ_i. In the NBRM, instead, for a given combination of values in $\mathbf{x}_i$ the expected count is not unique but it is randomly distributed as $\tilde{\mu}_i$.
[172] Remarkably, the equation 6.6 for the NBRM corresponds to the requirement that $E(\varepsilon_i) = 0$ in the linear regression model.

$$Pr(y_i \,|\mathbf{x}_i) = \frac{\Gamma(y_i + \alpha^{-1})}{y_i! \; \Gamma(\alpha^{-1})} \left(\frac{\alpha^{-1}}{\alpha^{-1} + \mu_i} \right)^{\alpha^{-1}} \left(\frac{\mu_i}{\alpha^{-1} + \mu_i} \right)^{y_i} \tag{6.9}$$

Where $\Gamma()$ is the gamma function[173] and α is the dispersion parameter. $\alpha \geq 0$, and higher values of α determine higher values of the conditional variance of y_i. While in the negative binomial distribution the expected value of y_i is the same as in the Poisson distribution, the conditional variance differs depending on the value of α. In particular,

$$E(y_i \,|\mathbf{x}_i) = \exp(\mathbf{x}_i\boldsymbol{\beta}) = \mu_i \tag{6.10}$$

$$\mathrm{Var}(y_i \,|\mathbf{x}_i) = \mu_i \left(1 + \frac{\mu_i}{\alpha^{-1}} \right) = \mu_i \,(1 + \alpha\mu_i) = \mu_i + \alpha\mu_i^2 \tag{6.11}$$

Given that μ_i is positive (see equation 6.2) and α is non-negative, when α is different from zero the conditional variance of y_i is always higher than the conditional mean μ_i. In other words, for a given mean, the variance of the negative binomial distribution exceeds the variance of the Poisson. This allows the NBRM to predict low and high counts with larger probabilities, thus fitting overdispersed data better than the PRM (see Long 1997: 233-234)[174].

It is worth noting that if $\alpha = 0$ the NBRM reduces to the PRM: the conditional variance in equation 6.11 would become $\mathrm{Var}(y_i \,|\mathbf{x}_i) = \mu_i$ as in the Poisson, and the density function in equation 6.9 would reduce to that in equation 6.1 (Cameron and Trivedi 1998: 71).

The NBRM can be estimated by maximum likelihood. More precisely, the likelihood function for the NBRM is the following:

$$L(\boldsymbol{\beta} \,| \, \boldsymbol{y}, \mathbf{X}) = \prod_{i=1}^{N} Pr(y_i \,|\mathbf{x}_i)$$

$$= \prod_{i=1}^{N} \frac{\Gamma(y_i + \alpha^{-1})}{y_i! \; \Gamma(\alpha^{-1})} \left(\frac{\alpha^{-1}}{\alpha^{-1} + \mu_i} \right)^{\alpha^{-1}} \left(\frac{\mu_i}{\alpha^{-1} + \mu_i} \right)^{y_i} \tag{6.12}$$

Since $\mu_i = \exp(\mathbf{x}_i\boldsymbol{\beta})$, the log-likelihood is derived by taking the logarithms of the equation and substituting $\exp(\mathbf{x}_i\boldsymbol{\beta})$ for each occurrence of μ_i. The resulting log-lokelihood equation can be

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[173] For the definition of the gamma function, see for example Cameron and Trivedi (1998: 374-375).
[174] As Cameron and Trivedi (1986: 32-33) show, several variance functions are possible with the NBRM. The most commonly used is that in equation 6.11, which is quadratic in the mean and is called NB2 by Cameron and Trivedi. Another option is the NB1, where $\mathrm{Var}(y_i \,|\mathbf{x}_i) = \mu_i + \alpha\mu_i$.

maximized with numerical methods. The gradients and Hessians of the log-likelihood are given by Lawless (1987).

Remarkably, estimating the NBRM allows to test for overdispersion in the data. Since when α is zero the NBRM reduces to the PRM, it is possible to check for overdispersion through a one-tailed z-test of $H_0 : \alpha = 0$.[175] In order to test such a hypothesis, we can use a likelihood-ratio (LR) test. If $\ln L_{\text{NBRM}}$ is the log-likelihood from the Negative binomial model and $\ln L_{\text{PRM}}$ is the log-likelihood from the Poisson model, then $G^2 = 2(\ln L_{\text{NBRM}} - \ln L_{\text{PRM}})$ is a test of $H_0 : \alpha = 0$ (Long 1997: 236-237). If the test shows significant evidence of overdispersion, the data are better estimated using a NBRM than a PRM[176].

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[175] The test is one-tailed for the following reason. Given that $\alpha \geq 0$, all the negative values of α have a probability of 0. Therefore, the asymptotic distribution of $\hat{\alpha}$ is truncated, being just half of a normal distribution.

[176] As an alternative, Cameron and Trivedi (1990) introduce a number of tests of overdispersion which are based on residuals from the PRM and do not require estimation of the NBRM.

6.2 RESULTS

In this section I present the results of my analyses. In order to test the hypotheses discussed in the first four chapters and operationalized as explained in chapter 5, I ran a set of negative binomial regressions. The estimates of the coefficients from these models are reported in the tables below and then discussed. Before turning to this task, however, let me make some preliminary remarks.

Firstly, the models presented in the following two paragraphs incorporate at the same time variables based on all the three major explanatory factors of the modifications made to governmental bills during the legislative process: conflict among actors, lacking information and institutional rules. However, not all the variables measuring ideological conflict among actors can be simultaneously included in the same model. The reasons are both theoretical and technical. On the theoretical side, 'ideological' hypotheses rely on logics which are different: some of them assume that the conflict resulting in changes to the initial bill is between the proposing minister and other actors, while others maintan that the relevant conflict revolves around the parliamentary median voter. Moreover, in the latter case, we can assume that cabinet decision making follows either ministerial discretion or collective responsibility. On the technical side, some of the variables measuring idelogical conflict are strongly correlated, and therefore it is not possible to include all of them in a single model (see below). Given these kinds of problems, I specified three different models, which correspond to three different combinations of the variables dealing with ideological conflict. Model A, which is presented and discussed in paragraph 6.2.1, incorporates three ideological variables measuring distances between the proposing minister and the other relevant actors (coalition partners, JMs, and opposition parties). This allows to evaluate Martin and Vanberg's (2004, 2005) argument about ministerial drift. The other two models, instead, test the hypothesis of conflict with parliamentary majority and include distances involving the median voter in the legislature. In particular, the initial bill is assumed to reflect the minister's ideal point in model B, and the coalition compromise in model C. These last two models are examined in paragraph 6.2.2.

Secondly, I ran the three models using Huber-White robust standard errors, which provide correct standard errors also in the presence of problems of model misspecification[177]. In addition, in order to control for the policy area addressed by the bill, I ran the same models including dummies for policy domains (both from the Comparative Policy Agendas Project and from expert surveys). Another option would be to use clustered standard errors. However, this might not be a good choice in the present case. Indeed, the cluster-robust standard error estimator converges to the true standard error as the number of clusters – and not the number of observations N – goes to infinity. Also,

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[177] These standard errors are also known as 'sandwich' standard errors. See Arminger (1995: 111-113) for a mathematical treatment.

clusters should have roughly equal size. As Kezdi (2004) shows, 50 clusters (with roughly the same size) are often enough for accurate inference. Yet, in my case the number of cluster is rather small: it is 14 if I use the dimensions of expert surveys, and 23 if I follow the macro-issues of the Policy Angendas. Moreover, the size of clusters varies a lot according to both classifications (see Table 5.7 for domains from Policy Agendas). Therefore, using cluster-robust estimators for my analyses may produce very incorrect inference: the estimates of standard errors may be highly biased downward, leading to over-rejection of the null hypothesis that the coefficients are zero (see Wooldridge 2003; Cameron, Gelbach, and Miller 2006). For these reasons, using a fixed-effects model might be a better option.

Thirdly, not all the hypotheses discussed in the theoretical part of this work can be tested using the full sample of government bills on which I collected information. The explanations concerning the *number of governing parties* (H.5), the *number of proposing parties* (H.19), and the *presence of a hostile junior minister in the drafting ministry* (H.16) assume that the executive is partisan. As previously noted, this is not the case with Dini's technical cabinet. As a consequence, I empirically evaluated these three hypotheses in a subsample of bills which excludes those presented under Dini's government. By a similar logic, the effect of the *size of the minister's party* (H.15) can be assessed only if the proposer belongs to some party. This hypothesis has thus been tested excluding bills introduced by technical ministers.

Finally, the XII legislature (April 15, 1994 – May 8, 1996) seems rather exceptional, and including it in the analyses could influence results concerning some of my hypotheses. Most of all, it could affect the estimated coefficients of *alternation* (H.4) and *technical minister* (H.10). As for the alternation hypothesis, the XII legislature cannot be easily placed in the Second Republic and is probably better understood as a transitional period. Without doubt, that legislature does not belong to the First Republic: in 1994 almost all the prior governing parties disappeared together with with a 45-year long pivotal party system, and elections held under a quasi-plurality rule were won by new or previously excluded parties. However, the XII legislature is fairly different from the following ones, and undoubtedly does not present the characteristics of a true alternational system. Indeed, after a 8-month center-right government (Berlusconi I: May 10, 1994 – January 17, 1995), a fully technical executive was formed (Dini). This leads us to the hypothesis dealing with technical ministers, who are supposed to face lower position-taking incentives than their partisan colleagues. Of course, this logic does not work in the "anomalous" Dini's government (January 17, 1995 – May 16, 1996). For these reasons, I controlled for the effect of the "troublesome" XII legislature by running separate analyses which exclude it.

In the tables which follow, cell entries are the estimated negative binomial regression coefficients (with standard errors below). Since the NBRM is a non-linear model, the parameter estimates only provide information about the direction of the relationships, and do not allow an immediate interpretation of the magnitude of the effects. By looking simply at the coefficients, all we can say is that a positive sign implies that an increase in the level of the independent variable increases the number of changes made to the ministerial draft during the legislative process. Conversely, a negative sign implies that an increase in the independent variable decreases the amount of modifications.

In order to give a substantive interpretation of my results, for the most relevant among the following models I also re-express the effect of the explanatory variables in terms of percentage changes in the expected number of word changes in a bill for a change in an independent variable. More precisely, let $\mu = E(y|\mathbf{x}) = \exp(\mathbf{x\beta})$ be the expected count, as in equation (6.2). Then, the percentage change in the expected count for a δ unit change in x_k, holding other variables constant, is calculated as

$$100 \times \frac{E(y \mid \mathbf{x}, x_k + \delta) - E(y \mid \mathbf{x}, x_k)}{E(y \mid \mathbf{x}, x_k)} = 100 \times [\exp(\beta_k \times \delta)] \qquad (6.13)$$

Where the effect of a change in x_k is independent of the level of x_k, and of the level of any other variable. I set δ equal to one unit for dummy indicators and for the number of consulting committees, and equal to one standard deviation for all the other variables.

Togeher with the number of observations N and the information criteria (AIC and BIC), at the bottom of the tables I report the parameter α, which estimates the dispersion of the outcome variable. Let me recall that if this parameter is zero, then there is equidispersion in the data and the NBRM reduces to the simpler PRM. When it is greater than zero, there is overdispersion and the negative binomial model is preferred to the Poisson.

In both the following paragraphs, the tables report results of negative binomial regressions ran using robust standard errors and fixed effects on the policy domains identified by the Comparative Policy Agendas Project (coefficients estimates for the issue-specific intercepts are available upon request). Results of analyses with policy dummies from expert surveys and with clustered standard errors are available upon request (in any case, the results remain the same). In addition, in both paragraphs I present the results of models estimated in particular portions of my sample. This allows to evaluate theoretical hypotheses that cannot be tested in the full sample of bills on which I collected information. Further, I also show the results of analyses excluding the XII legislature, which I ran as a robustness check.

6.2.1 Who counteracts ministerial drift?

In the present paragraph I discuss different specifications of model A, which tests – along with other relevant hypotheses – Martin and Vanberg's (2005) argument about the (positive) impact of intracabinet conflict on the level of changes made to government-sponsored legislation in the course of parliamentary processes. In particular, I first present the general results of my analyses (Tables 6.1a,b and 6.3a,b), and then show the results for hypotheses that can be tested only excluding non-partisan cabinets or technical proposing ministers (Table 6.4 and 6.5).

In their analysis on the number of article changes, Martin and Vanberg include three theoretically crucial variables: a variable measuring ideological division inside the coalition, a measure of the conflict between government and opposition, and a dummy indicating the presence of a hostile JM in the ministry drafting the bill. Following their logic, I initially incorporated *conflict within cabinet*, *conflict with opposition*, and *junior minister's distance* (Model A.1). These variables, which are weighted by an issue-specific value of saliency, measure the distances between the proposing minister and the farthest party in the coalition, in the opposition, and in the drafting ministry, respectively.

While the former two measures are constructed in almost the same way as Martin and Vanberg's ones, the variable concerning JMs is different[178]. I chose *JM's distance* (H.17) instead of *JM's presence* (H.16) for a number of reasons. First of all, a continuous measure of distance is more accurate than a simple dichotomous indicator. Second, using the distance seems a more appropriate (and meaningful) way to operationalize conflict within the drafting ministry in the Italian case: in Italy, where the number of both coalition parties and ministries has always been relatively large, it is almost always the case that a JM from a partner party is present in the ministry drafting the bill (see Verzichelli and Cotta's 2000 tables on the distribution of junior ministerships in Italian coalitions)[179]. Third, the effect of *JM's distance* can be evaluated using the full sample of bills. By contrast, as previously noted, *JM's presence* is a more questionable measure when a non-partisan executive is in office, and thus can be safely incorporated only in analyses which exclude Dini's government.

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[178] Indeed, I operationalized the variables measuring conflict within the cabinet and with the opposition in a slightly different way from Martin and Vanberg (2005). In particular, I considered only opposition parties with at least 20 MPs, and not all of them (see paragraph 5.3.1). Moreover, all my distances are weighted by an issue-specific salience, while Martin and Vanberg (2005: 100) use coalition-specific and opposition-specific values. I opted for an issue-specific weight for ease of uniformity. In fact, it would have been rather problematic to strictly follow Martin and Vanberg's operationalization in the case of the ideological distances included in Models B and C – for instance, the distance between the proposing minister and the parliamenary median party.

[179] For 89% of the bills in my sample there is – at least – one hostile JM in the drafting ministry. This percentage increases up to 95% if we exclude non-partisan Dini's cabinet, where by definition the possibility of hostile JMs is not admitted (see Table 5.6). As Martin and Vanberg (2005: 99, Table 1) report, hostile JMs are fairly less frequent in Germany and the Netherlands (55%).

Model A.2 and A.3 isolate the separate effects of *conflict within cabinet* and *junior minister's distance*, whereas Model A.4 is specified in order to check for some possible influence of my measure of *departmental capture* on the coefficients of *technical minister*. Technical ministers should be more inclined to departmental capture than political ministers, since by definition they are expert in the policy domain under their jurisdiction and they are not linked to a particular constituency they have to please. Indeed, these two variables are strongly associated: running a Chi-square test, the Chi-square with one degree of freedom is 159.2623, and p is 0.000. As for models A.5 and A.6, they add *committee chairs' presence* and *president of Chamber*, respectively. In the case of committee chairs, I opted for a dummy (H.22) instead of a continuous measure of policy division (H.23) because the latter is correlated with JM's distance (0.457, p = 0.000). Moreover, while in Italian coalitions ministers are almost always shadowed by a hostile JM, the same is not true for committee chairs: for any given proposing minister, JMs can be – and usually are – more than one, while the chair of the committee to which the bill is referred is almost always one. Table 6.3a,b report results of the same analyses reran excluding the observations from the XII legislature.

Table 6.2 reports the parameters from Model A.2 (with fixed effects), which I take as a benchmark, re-expressed in terms of percentage changes in the expected number of words changed in a bill.

All that said, a first message I draw from the following tables is that my results are rather stable. In particular, they prove to be robust to different model specifications, to the inclusion of dummy variables for policy domains, and to the exclusion of the XII legislature. In addition, in all the models the dispersion parameter α is positive, which implies that a Negative binomial regression is more appropriate than a Poisson regression[180].

Let me start with the hypotheses involving ideological conflict among actors. First of all, my data only partially seem to support Martin and Vanberg's (2005) hypothesis that ideological divisions inside the coalition increase the amount of changes made to governmental bills during the legislative process (H.12). Although their variable *conflict within cabinet* is positive and statistically significant when *JM's distance* is omitted (Model A.3 with fixed effects), it falls to insignificance once I include that measure of conflict with junior ministers (Model A.1). Indeed, these two variables are fairly and positively correlated (Pearson correlation coefficient is 0.660 with p = 0.000), since they both measure ideological divisions among parties in the coalition.

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[180] I also ran Poisson goodness-of-fit tests for the following models. The Chi2 is always extremely high (always around 500,000, with p = 0.000), indicating that counts are overdispersed and therefore a PRM is not a good option. Moreover, let me note that the Wald chi-square statistic, testing the null hypothesis that all regression coefficients in the model are simultaneously equal to zero, has p = 0.000 in all the models displayed in this chapter. In other words, the null hypothesis is always rejected.

Depndent variable: *Number of changed words*	MODEL A.1		MODEL A.2		MODEL A.3	
Independent variables	Coeff. (robust s.e.)	Coeff. (robust s.e.) – Fixed eff. Policy Agenda	Coeff. (robust s.e.)	Coeff. (robust s.e.) – Fixed eff. Policy Agenda	Coeff. (robust s.e.)	Coeff. (robust s.e.) – Fixed eff. Policy Agenda
Minority	0.163	0.296	0.232	0.242	0.110	0.253
	0.196	0.191	0.183	0.178	0.195	0.190
Distributive conflict	0.015	-0.037	0.012	-0.034	-0.011	-0.061
	0.124	0.120	0.124	0.120	0.124	0.120
Conflict within cabinet	-0.025	0.019	–	–	0.010	0.048*
	0.031	0.032			0.024	0.025
JM's distance	0.052**	0.040*	0.044**	0.047**	–	–
	0.023	0.023	0.018	0.018		
Conflict with opposition	-0.010	-0.016	-0.015	-0.014	-0.001	-0.008
	0.018	0.020	0.018	0.020	0.018	0.020
Committee chair's presence						
President of Chamber						
Alternation	0.327**	0.368***	0.341**	0.361***	0.406***	0.413***
	0.139	0.140	0.140	0.139	0.133	0.134
Prime ministerial bill	0.445***	0.416**	0.431**	0.431***	0.400**	0.379**
	0.172	0.163	0.171	0.158	0.169	0.159
Technical minister	-0.393**	-0.475***	-0.396**	-0.474***	-0.426**	-0.487***
	0.173	0.182	0.173	0.182	0.173	0.182
Conflict over ministerial responsibility	-0.002	0.054	0.017	0.040	-0.023	0.043
	0.233	0.225	0.234	0.222	0.236	0.227
Departmental capture	-0.026	0.000	-0.033	0.008	0.007	0.016
	0.143	0.151	0.143	0.149	0.142	0.150
Complexity	0.390**	0.411***	0.392**	0.410***	0.399**	0.423***
	0.153	0.145	0.154	0.145	0.155	0.146
Multidimensionality	0.166***	0.157***	0.165***	0.158***	0.161***	0.154***
	0.031	0.030	0.031	0.030	0.031	0.030
Impatience	-0.000	-0.000	-0.000	-0.000	-0.000	-0.000
	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Length of bill	0.000***	0.000***	0.000***	0.000***	0.000***	0.000***
	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Constant	4.722***	4.569***	4.643***	4.635***	4.608***	4.475***
	0.303	0.377	0.274	0.357	0.296	0.372
Alpha	2.638	2.535	2.640	2.536	2.651	2.541
AIC	9,552.358	9,558.058	9,550.907	9,556.305	9,554.508	9,558.004
BIC	9,625.537	9,722.711	9,619.512	9,716.384	9,623.113	9,718.083
N	716		716		716	

note: *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Table 6.1a
Negative binomial regressions on government bills changes. Italy 1987-2006 (all cabinets and ministers).

Depndent variable: *Number of changed words*	MODEL A.4		MODEL A.5		MODEL A.6	
Independent variables	Coeff. (robust s.e.)	Coeff. (robust s.e.) – Fixed eff. Policy Agenda	Coeff. (robust s.e.)	Coeff. (robust s.e.) – Fixed eff. Policy Agenda	Coeff. (robust s.e.)	Coeff. (robust s.e.) – Fixed eff. Policy Agenda
Minority	0.233	0.242	0.240	0.245	0.237	0.253
	0.183	0.178	0.183	0.178	0.184	0.181
Distributive conflict	0.014	-0.035	0.002	-0.042	0.002	-0.043
	0.124	0.120	0.124	0.120	0.124	0.120
Conflict within cabinet	–	–	–	–	–	–
JM's distance	0.043**	0.047***	0.045**	0.048***	0.045**	0.046**
	0.018	0.018	0.018	0.018	0.018	0.019
Conflict with opposition	-0.015	-0.014	-0.015	-0.014	-0.015	-0.015
	0.018	0.020	0.018	0.020	0.018	0.020
Committee chair's presence			-0.152	-0.137	-0.150	-0.142
			0.144	0.144	0.144	0.143
President of Chamber					-0.005	0.009
					0.021	0.023
Alternation	0.342**	0.361***	0.346**	0.363***	0.330**	0.392**
	0.138	0.139	0.140	0.139	0.164	0.164
Prime ministerial bill	0.441***	0.429***	0.413**	0.413**	0.419**	0.401**
	0.167	0.154	0.175	0.161	0.176	0.165
Technical minister	-0.412***	-0.470***	-0.337*	-0.417**	-0.324*	-0.438**
	0.157	0.158	0.180	0.191	0.195	0.207
Conflict over ministerial responsibility	0.014	0.041	-0.010	0.022	-0.010	0.023
	0.234	0.221	0.240	0.224	0.240	0.224
Departmental capture	–	–	-0.054	-0.008	-0.054	-0.009
			0.140	0.148	0.140	0.147
Complexity	0.390**	0.410***	0.407***	0.419***	0.407***	0.418***
	0.153	0.145	0.154	0.145	0.155	0.144
Multidimensionality	0.165***	0.159***	0.163***	0.156***	0.163***	0.157***
	0.031	0.030	0.031	0.030	0.031	0.030
Impatience	-0.000	-0.000	-0.000	-0.000	-0.000	-0.000
	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Length of bill	0.000***	0.000***	0.000***	0.000***	0.000***	0.000***
	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Constant	4.640***	4.639***	4.758***	4.733***	4.782***	4.694***
	0.274	0.353	0.292	0.368	0.307	0.374
Alpha	2.640	2.536	2.637	2.534	2.637	2.534
AIC	9,548.953	9,554.308	9,551.945	9,557.618	9,553.901	9,559.488
BIC	9,612.984	9,709.813	9,625.124	9,722.271	9,631.654	9,728.714
N	716		716		716	

note: *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Table 6.1b
Negative binomial regressions on government bills changes. Italy 1987-2006 (all cabinets and ministers).

In more than half of the laws in my sample (381 out of 716), the proposing minister's distance from the farthest coalition partner and that from the farthest JM coincide[181]. As a consequence, keeping both variables in the same model could be problematic. In particular, it might reduce the precision of my estimates since the more two independent variables are correlated, the greater their standard errors will be (compare the standard errors of JM's distance and conflict within cabinet in Models A.2 and A.3 to those in Model A.1). In subsequent models, I thus dropped conflict within cabinet, since its effect seems rather weak and unsteady: comparing Models A.3 and A.1, when we include JM's distance the coefficient is no more significant, the sign switches from positive to negative (in the specification without fixed effects), and also the magnitude changes. In contrast, JM's distance (H.17) has a much more stable effect: its coefficient is positive and significant in all the models – even when conflict within cabinet is included – with stable standard errors and magnitude[182]. This seems to suggest that in the Italian case it is the policy divisions inside the drafting ministry – and not the overall ideological conflict within the coalition – which increase the amount of modifications made to government bills in parliament. In particular, as Table 6.2 displays, for a standard deviation increase in the distance between the proposing minister and her farthest JM, roughly 3.5 points on the 20-point scales of expert surveys, the average number of word changes in a government bill increases by 18%, holding all the other variables constant.

Remarkably, against the original expectation (H.17), the sign of the coefficient of JM's distance is always positive, which implies that Italian JMs might not exactly behave as suggested by Martin and Vanberg. What seems to happen is that Italian JMs inform their own party about the policy implications of bills, allowing them to correct the initial proposals in parliament.

With regard to the role of opposition parties, as in Martin and Vanberg's (2005) analysis the *ideological conflict between government and opposition* (H.7b) does not have effects on the transformations experienced in parliament by ministerial drafts. Indeed, the coefficient has also the wrong sign[183]. This finding contrasts with the influence that, according to several scholars, opposition parites are able to exert on lawmaking in parliamentary systems (Döring 1995a; Powell 2000; Strøm 1990a). Most of all, it does not support the idea that during the amendatory process Italian governments need to renegotiate the content of their bills also with opposition parties (Capano and Vignati 2008).

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[181] I also reestimated Model A.1 using JM's presence instead of JM's distance and excluding Dini's non-partisan cabinet ($N = 672$). The results are the same as Model A.3. The variable JM's presence has always a positive sign but is never significant. Results are available upon request.

[182] My choice is supported also by the values provided by the information criteria. Both Akaike (AIC) and Bayesian (BIC) criteria suggest that Model A.2 (with just JM's distance) is the one which best fits the data.

[183] I reran all the analyses of this chapter using the *conflict with the largest opposition party* instead of that with the farthest opposition party (see paragraph 5.3.1). This does not alter my findings (results available upon request).

Leaving aside Martin and Vanberg's argument, let me now comment the results for the other hypotheses tested in the models. To begin with, government bills proposed and approved during the Italian Second Republic are altered more extensively than those passed into law in the previous period. This is consistent with the hypothesis that, due to farther positions of the status quo, changes to governmental bills should be greater in an *alternational party system* than in a pivotal party system (H.4). Table 6.2 indicates a 44% increase in the number of word changes in the Second Republic. This finding is at odds with the conjecture that during the Italian Second Republic governments should be better able to control the passage of their legislation throughout the parliamentary process (H.29). Such an argument assumes that a shift from a consensus to a more majoritarian type of democracy took place in Italy in the mid-1990s[184].

Independent variables	Percentage change in the expected number of word changes
Minority	27.4
Distributive conflict	-3.4
JM's distance	18.2**
Conflict with opposition	-4.4
Alternation	43.5***
Prime ministerial bill	53.9***
Technical minister	-37.8***
Conflict over ministerial responsibility	1.1
Departmental capture	0.8
Complexity	50.6***
Multidimensionality	17.2***
Impatience	-4.1
Length of bill	87.9***

Table 6.2
Percentage change in the expected number of word changes.
(coefficients from Model A.2 – fixed effects)

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[184] This result contrasts also with the hypothesis that less changes should occur after the 1997 reform of the Italian standing orders (see paragraph 4.1.2).

Quite surprisingly, the bills which are intoduced by the *prime minister* are more extensively altered than those proposed by line ministers (the expected number of word changes increases by more than 50%). This contrasts with the expectation that prime ministers should ensure coordination among governing parties at the executive level (Andeweg 2000), such that prime ministerial bills should represent coalition agreed-upon compromises (H.20a). On the contrary, my data suggest that, instead of pursuing coalition-wide goals, prime ministers are the members of cabinet who are most susceptible to position taking incentives, and hence are most likely to present legislation that will be modified in parliament (H.20b). Indeed, prime ministers are the cabinet members who mostly receive media attention.

Conversely, as expected the bills drafted by *technical ministers* prove to be the least likely to be amended in parliament (H.10). There is about a 38% reduction in the number of word changes in bills which are introduced by technicians. Since such ministers do not use legislation in order to send signals to the electorate, they propose policies which are the closest to the coalition agreed-on compromise among the set of the technically feasible options. For this reason, coalition parties refrain from revising the initial proposals in parliament.

Taken together, the last two results provide enticing insights into Italian cabinets. If they want to implement the agreed-upon compromise, the members of Italian multiparty governments cannot safely rely on prime ministers, who prove to be the most risky agents for the entire coalition and are thus the subject of extensive monitoring activity. Indeed, prime ministers do not seem to behave as intracoalitional monitoring mechanisms (see Müller and Meyer 2010). However, the parties participating in Italian executives can place the highest trust in technical ministers, who use their expertise in order to pursue the goals of the coalition and hence are the least risky agents for the entire government.

Concerning Models A.5 and A.6, two prominent parliamentary figures whose role has been depicted as crucial in the legislative process (especially in Italy) do not seem to influence the amount of transformations undergone by governmental bills. In particular, neither the *presence of a hostile chair in the committee* to which the bill is referred (H.22) nor the *preferences of the president of the Chamber* where the bill is introduced (H.11) have an impact on the level of changes. Therefore, committee chairs in Italy are not effective legislative-level monitoring mechanisms as in other countries (see Kim and Loewenberg 2005; Carroll and Cox 2005). Moreover, Italian presidents of the Chamber do not manage to – or, simply, do not want to – alter the amending rules employed, thus biasing the legislative outcome in favour of the alternative they most prefer. In line with Di Palma's (1978) argument, the presidents of the Italian Chamber do not seem to exploit their powers for the political purposes of their own party. Rather, they behave as neutral officers.

Turning now to the hypotheses dealing with non-ideological types of conflict, I found no systematic evidence that the government bills which have been submitted by *minority governments* (H.1) or have a *distributive nature* (H.2) receive more modifications in parliament than other types of bills[185]. As for the former result, in analyses I do not report here I also found that the external parties supporting Italian minority executives do not behave following Martin and Vanberg's (2005: 104-105) logic: they do not revise government bills in order to monitor ministers affiliated with one of the parties in office. Concerning the latter result, the Italian parliament is traditionally considered as an appropriate setting for the application of a distributive perspective (see Cantelli, Mortara and Movia 1974; Bonanni 1983; Motta 1985; Hine and Finocchi 1991; Cotta 1994), and the pork-barrel nature of Italian legislation is emphasized also in recent studies (see, for example, Golden and Picci 2008). However, my analyses suggest that the amount of changes made to government-sponsored bills does not depend on legislators' will to add clauses which secure benefits for particularistic constituencies[186].

My analyses show that neither the bills which address *issues that are disputed among different ministers* (H.8), nor those which are presented by *ministers inclined to be 'captured'* by department-specific interests (H.9) are altered more than other types of bills. As previously noted, the latter variable is strongly associated with the indicator of technical proposing ministers. Hence, although never statistically significant, it increases the standard errors of technical minister, which leads to wider confidence intervals for the coefficients and smaller *t* statistics (see Model A.4).

As for the second major factor explaining the parliamentary modifications made to government legislation, my findings provide strong support for both the hypotheses based upon the lack of information that I included. In particular, government bills dealing with *complex subjects* (H.25) or with *many policy dimensions* (H.26) are more extensively amended than other bills. That is, the limited level of information at ministers' disposal when they draft legislation systematically increases the transformations undegone by governmental bills during the legislative process. The increase in the expected number of changed words is approximately 51% for complex bills and 17% for each additional committee which is consulted.

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[185] Indeed, in Model 7 the coefficient of minority government is statistically significant (at the 90% level and with a positive sign) if we use fixed effects for the domains of the Policy Agendas and exclude the XII legislature (Table 6.3a). Remarkably, dropping the XII legislature means excluding one of the two minority cabinets in my sample: the Dini's government.

[186] In any case, testing the distributive hypothesis probably deserves a better operationalization than my dummy indicator. In addition, more importantly, we may also think that distributive bills are changed no more than other bills because of *logrolling* (Tullock 1981). Due to an exchange of mutual support, it might be the case that a number of particularistic pieces of legislation are passed without observable modifications. For a discussion of the problems plaguing vote trading in legislatures, see Weingast and Marshall (1988).

Dependent variable: *Number of changed words*	MODEL A.7		MODEL A.8		MODEL A.9	
Independent variables	Coeff. (robust s.e.)	Coeff. (robust s.e.) – Fixed eff. Policy Agenda	Coeff. (robust s.e.)	Coeff. (robust s.e.) – Fixed eff. Policy Agenda	Coeff. (robust s.e.)	Coeff. (robust s.e.) – Fixed eff. Policy Agenda
Minority	0.212	0.380*	0.254	0.314	0.138	0.314
	0.202	0.200	0.193	0.194	0.198	0.196
Distributive conflict	0.025	0.008	0.021	0.011	-0.014	-0.027
	0.124	0.118	0.124	0.118	0.124	0.118
Conflict within cabinet	-0.018	0.027	–	–	0.022	0.068***
	0.032	0.032			0.025	0.024
Conflict with JM	0.058**	0.053**	0.052***	0.063***	–	–
	0.023	0.024	0.018	0.019		
Conflict with opposition	-0.006	-0.013	-0.010	-0.010	0.003	-0.003
	0.018	0.020	0.018	0.020	0.018	0.020
Committee chair presence						
President of Chamber						
Alternation	0.399***	0.465***	0.405***	0.459***	0.479***	0.522***
	0.141	0.142	0.141	0.141	0.135	0.136
Prime ministerial bill	0.505***	0.477***	0.493***	0.505***	0.454***	0.418**
	0.176	0.170	0.175	0.162	0.172	0.164
Technical minister	-0.415**	-0.532***	-0.429**	-0.517***	-0.490***	-0.580***
	0.174	0.178	0.171	0.178	0.168	0.175
Conflict over ministerial responsibility	0.126	0.154	0.134	0.139	0.081	0.137
	0.245	0.225	0.246	0.223	0.248	0.228
Departmental capture	-0.083	-0.070	-0.092	-0.052	-0.049	-0.049
	0.144	0.152	0.144	0.151	0.141	0.151
Complexity	0.390**	0.408***	0.392**	0.405***	0.401**	0.420***
	0.155	0.148	0.156	0.148	0.158	0.152
Multidimensionality	0.147***	0.131***	0.147***	0.132***	0.141***	0.126***
	0.032	0.031	0.032	0.031	0.032	0.032
Impatience	-0.000	-0.000	-0.000	-0.000	-0.000	-0.000
	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Length of bill	0.000***	0.000***	0.000***	0.000***	0.000***	0.000***
	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Constant	4.665***	4.436***	4.600***	4.534***	4.532***	4.300***
	0.315	0.386	0.276	0.365	0.303	0.380
Alpha	2.484	2.383	2.485	2.385	2.500	2.393
AIC	8,521.242	8,529.624	8,519.524	8,528.084	8,524.107	8,530.806
BIC	8,592.526	8,690.011	8,586.352	8,684.016	8,590.935	8,686.738
N	636		636		636	

note: *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Table 6.3a
Negative binomial regressions on government bills changes. Italy 1987-2006 (all cabinets and ministers).
(XII legislature excluded)

Dependent variable: *Number of changed words*	**MODEL A.10**		**MODEL A.11**		**MODEL A.12**	
Independent variables	**Coeff.** **(robust s.e.)**	**Coeff.** **(robust s.e.)** **–** **Fixed eff.** **Policy** **Agenda**	**Coeff.** **(robust s.e.)**	**Coeff.** **(robust s.e.)** **–** **Fixed eff.** **Policy** **Agenda**	**Coeff.** **(robust s.e.)**	**Coeff.** **(robust s.e.)** **–** **Fixed eff.** **Policy** **Agenda**
Minority	0.254	0.314	0.254	0.312	0.233	0.322
	0.194	0.194	0.194	0.195	0.196	0.198
Distributive conflict	0.024	0.011	0.011	0.007	0.014	0.005
	0.124	0.118	0.122	0.118	0.123	0.119
Conflict within cabinet	–	–	–	–	–	–
Conflict with JM	0.049***	0.062***	0.052***	0.063***	0.055***	0.062***
	0.018	0.018	0.018	0.019	0.019	0.019
Conflict with opposition	-0.011	-0.010	-0.010	-0.010	-0.008	-0.011
	0.019	0.020	0.018	0.020	0.018	0.020
Committee chair presence			-0.101	-0.066	-0.094	-0.069
			0.145	0.141	0.144	0.140
President of Chamber					-0.013	0.004
					0.021	0.023
Alternation	0.412***	0.460***	0.409***	0.460***	0.368**	0.473***
	0.139	0.141	0.142	0.142	0.165	0.167
Prime ministerial bill	0.521***	0.522***	0.481***	0.495***	0.497***	0.491***
	0.168	0.158	0.178	0.165	0.179	0.168
Technical minister	-0.475***	-0.548***	-0.398**	-0.495***	-0.365*	-0.507**
	0.153	0.153	0.178	0.184	0.193	0.198
Conflict over ministerial responsibility	0.126	0.134	0.106	0.126	0.108	0.126
	0.248	0.224	0.251	0.226	0.251	0.226
Departmental capture	–	–	-0.104	-0.058	-0.104	-0.057
			0.142	0.150	0.143	0.150
Complexity	0.386**	0.405***	0.400**	0.408***	0.406***	0.408***
	0.156	0.148	0.156	0.148	0.156	0.147
Multidimensionalità	0.145***	0.131***	0.145***	0.131***	0.145***	0.131***
	0.032	0.031	0.032	0.031	0.032	0.031
Impatience	-0.000	-0.000	-0.000	-0.000	-0.000	-0.000
	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Length of bill	0.000***	0.000***	0.000***	0.000***	0.000***	0.000***
	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Constant	4.596***	4.508***	4.681***	4.583***	4.723***	4.565***
	0.277	0.359	0.287	0.372	0.301	0.376
Alpha	2.486	2.385	2.484	2.384	2.483	2.384
AIC	8,517.856	8,526.169	8,521.110	8,529.928	8,522.853	8,531.903
BIC	8,580.229	8,677.646	8,592.393	8,690.315	8,598.592	8,696.745
N	636		636		636	

note: *** $p<0.01$, ** $p<0.05$, * $p<0.1$

Table 6.3b
Negative binomial regressions on government bills changes. Italy 1987-2006 (all cabinets and ministers).
(XII legislature excluded)

By contrast, I found no evidence that *legislators' impatience* matters (H.28). In other words, even when the end of their tenure approaches, representatives do not refrain from changing ministerial proposals.

Finally, it is worth noting that all the above mentioned results hold also when we exclude the XII legislature (Table 6.3a,b). Indeed, they become stronger. This confirms the peculiar nature of that legislature, whose exceptionality seems to disturb the 'true' effect of the explanatory factors.

Let us now turn to those explanatory hypotheses that cannot be tested using the entire sample of government bills on which I collected information. These are the *number of governing parties* (H.5), the *number of signatory parties* (H.19), and the *size of the minister's party* (H.15). While the former two require only partisan cabinets, the latter assumes that the proposing minister is affiliated to some party. In Table 6.4 I evaluate the impact of those variables by taking Model A.2 as a benchmark[187]. I initially exclude Dini's non-partisan government ($N = 672$) and incorporate either the number of governing parties (Model A.13), or the coalition ideological range (Model A.14). Then, I further restrict the sample to the bills introduced just by partisan ministers ($N = 586$) and I add the number of proposing parties (Model A.15) and the size of the minister's party (Model A.16)[188]. In Table 6.5 I reran the same analyses excluding the XII legislature.

Looking at the tables, first of all the results from the previous models appear to be very robust to the inclusion of these additional variables. The ideological conflict within the drafting ministry, the shift to an alternational party system and prime ministerial bills have still a strong and positive impact on the amount of modifications made to government-sponsored legislation during the parliamentary process. As before, the bills introduced by technicians are less amended than other types of bills, while legislation dealing with particularly complex or multidimensional issues is more subject to corrections in parliament. By contrast, neither the other variables included in previous models nor the variables added here are statistically significant – the only partial exception being the dummy for minority governments.

More precisely, as models A.13 and A.14 show, the *number of governing parties* do not significantly increase the level of changes in parliament, and the same holds for the *ideological range of the coalition* (H.5)[189].

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[187] In other words, I do not include committee chair's presence and president of Chamber in order to avoid some possible disturbance effect on the variables I am mostly interested in. As shown before, these two variables never affect the amount of modifications made to government bills. In addition, the variable president of Chamber is fairly correlated with my measure of alternation (the correlation coefficient is -0.4630 and p is 0.000). In any case, including these two variables do not change my results in any appreciable way.

[188] Let me precise that the information criteria reported in the tables can be compared only among models with the same number of observations.

[189] In model A.14 I dropped my measure of conflict within the drafting ministry because it is strongly correlated with the ideological range of the coalition. The correlation coefficient is 0.567, with p = 0.000.

In addition, neither the *number of signatory parties* (H.19) nor the *size of the proposing minister's party* (H.15) significantly reduce the amount of transformations undergone by governmental bills (Models A.15 and A.16).

Let me note that in model A.15 I excluded all technical proposing ministers, and not just the Dini's government. One reason is that the indicator for technical proposing ministers is strongly associated with the number of signatory parties. Indeed, when the proposing minister is technical, this number is most of the time equal to 0 (running a Chi-square test, the Chi-square with three degrees of freedom is 611.241, and p is 0.000). Another reason is that an increase from 1 to 2, 3, 4 signatory parties is expected to decrease the level of modifications, while an increase from 0 (i.e., technical proposer) to 1 signatory party is expected to increase the level of modifications. Therefore, the relationship between the number of proposing parties and technical proposers should be modeled in a more accurate way. For simplicity, here I exclude bills proposed by technical ministers.

Dependent variable: *Number of changed words*	MODEL A.13		MODEL A.14		MODEL A.15		MODEL A.16	
Indepedent variables	Coeff. (robust s.e.)	Coeff. (robust s.e.) – Fixed eff. Policy Agenda	Coeff. (robust s.e.)	Coeff. (robust s.e.) – Fixed eff. Policy Agenda	Coeff. (robust s.e.)	Coeff. (robust s.e.) – Fixed eff. Policy Agenda	Coeff. (robust s.e.)	Coeff. (robust s.e.) – Fixed eff. Policy Agenda
Minority	0.294	0.357*	-0.031	0.043	0.391	0.437*	0.361	0.416*
	0.205	0.197	0.207	0.210	0.239	0.230	0.242	0.235
Distributive conflict	0.027	0.011	-0.004	-0.034	-0.001	0.006	0.011	0.009
	0.125	0.121	0.122	0.120	0.136	0.128	0.134	0.129
Conflict with JM	0.048**	0.059***	–	–	0.059***	0.070***	0.059***	0.069***
	0.019	0.019			0.021	0.022	0.021	0.022
Conflict with opposition	-0.013	-0.015	0.012	0.007	-0.034	-0.036	-0.035	-0.038
	0.018	0.020	0.018	0.019	0.022	0.024	0.022	0.024
N. of governing parties	0.014	0.023	–	–	0.036	0.051	0.016	0.039
	0.052	0.052			0.056	0.055	0.058	0.057
Id. Range of coalition			-0.041	-0.010	–	–	–	–
			0.036	0.038				
N. of proposing parties					0.065	0.111	0.050	0.098
					0.130	0.127	0.131	0.127
Size on minister's party							-0.001	-0.001
							0.001	0.001
Alternation	0.311**	0.337**	0.393***	0.430***	0.357**	0.367**	0.331**	0.355**
	0.151	0.146	0.130	0.134	0.165	0.156	0.162	0.156
Prime ministerial bill	0.486***	0.475***	0.463***	0.447***	0.469***	0.454***	0.527***	0.487***
	0.176	0.160	0.167	0.159	0.182	0.170	0.179	0.174
Technical minister	-0.379**	-0.432**	-0.410**	-0.463**	–	–	–	–
	0.186	0.195	0.175	0.187				
Conflict over ministerial responsibility	-0.008	-0.014	-0.085	-0.068	0.038	-0.050	0.051	-0.042
	0.244	0.225	0.237	0.228	0.271	0.257	0.266	0.256
Departmental capture	-0.023	-0.015	0.037	0.041	0.068	0.054	0.096	0.072
	0.145	0.153	0.142	0.150	0.160	0.164	0.160	0.166
Complexity	0.455***	0.444***	0.460***	0.450***	0.423**	0.390**	0.438***	0.398**
	0.156	0.147	0.156	0.149	0.169	0.157	0.169	0.155
Multidimensionality	0.153***	0.148***	0.145***	0.144***	0.130***	0.120***	0.128***	0.120***
	0.032	0.031	0.031	0.031	0.033	0.032	0.033	0.032
Impatience	-0.000	-0.000	-0.000	-0.000	-0.000	-0.000	-0.000	-0.000
	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Length of bill	0.000***	0.000***	0.000***	0.000***	0.000***	0.000***	0.000***	0.000***
	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Constant	4.569***	4.580***	4.880***	4.766***	4.469***	4.458***	4.737***	4.629***
	0.402	0.448	0.355	0.418	0.491	0.530	0.547	0.566
Alpha	2.545	2.441	2.556	2.458	2.611	2.494	2.607	2.493
AIC	9,002.946	9,008.936	9,004.247	9,012.553	7,861.086	7,868.667	7,861.910	7,870.323
BIC	9,075.110	9,171.305	9,071.901	9,170.412	7,931.059	8,026.107	7,936.256	8,032.136
N	672		672		586		586	

note: *** $p<0.01$, ** $p<0.05$, * $p<0.1$

Table 6.4
Negative binomial regressions on government bills changes. Italy 1987-2006 (excluding Dini and then technical ministers).

Dependent variable: *Number of changed words*	MODEL A.17		MODEL A.18		MODEL A.19		MODEL A.20	
	Coeff. (robust s.e.)	**Coeff. (robust s.e.) - Fixed eff. Policy Agenda**	**Coeff. (robust s.e.)**	**Coeff. (robust s.e.) – Fixed eff. Policy Agenda**	**Coeff. (robust s.e.)**	**Coeff. (robust s.e.) - Fixed eff. Policy Agenda**	**Coeff. (robust s.e.)**	**Coeff. (robust s.e.) - Fixed eff. Policy Agenda**
Minority	0.244	0.315	-0.014	0.104	0.301	0.304	0.254	0.260
	0.205	0.201	0.205	0.203	0.237	0.230	0.240	0.236
Distributive conflict	0.022	0.011	-0.018	-0.037	0.052	0.080	0.068	0.086
	0.124	0.118	0.123	0.119	0.137	0.128	0.136	0.129
Conflict with JM	0.051***	0.063***			0.062***	0.072***	0.062***	0.070***
	0.019	0.019			0.021	0.022	0.021	0.022
Conflict with opposition	-0.010	-0.010	0.013	0.011	-0.022	-0.018	-0.023	-0.021
	0.018	0.020	0.017	0.019	0.022	0.024	0.021	0.024
N. of governing parties	-0.008	0.001			0.006	0.020	-0.023	-0.004
	0.051	0.052			0.055	0.056	0.058	0.057
Id. Range of coalition			-0.021	0.017				
			0.034	0.035				
N. of proposing parties					0.040	0.088	0.017	0.062
					0.127	0.125	0.127	0.123
Size on minister's party							-0.001	-0.001
							0.001	0.001
Alternation	0.412***	0.458***	0.489***	0.548***	0.461***	0.511***	0.432***	0.494***
	0.153	0.148	0.134	0.136	0.164	0.156	0.161	0.155
Prime ministerial bill	0.490***	0.505***	0.471***	0.468***	0.486***	0.489***	0.563***	0.553***
	0.175	0.163	0.168	0.163	0.181	0.172	0.177	0.173
Technical minister	-0.434**	-0.517***	-0.480***	-0.568***				
	0.177	0.183	0.168	0.175				
Conflict over ministerial responsibility	0.133	0.139	0.045	0.083	0.192	0.149	0.206	0.166
	0.246	0.224	0.243	0.228	0.276	0.258	0.269	0.257
Departmental capture	-0.093	-0.052	-0.020	0.015	-0.007	0.003	0.034	0.039
	0.143	0.150	0.142	0.150	0.156	0.161	0.155	0.164
Complexity	0.389**	0.405***	0.400**	0.415***	0.403**	0.380**	0.422***	0.395**
	0.153	0.147	0.157	0.152	0.162	0.155	0.162	0.154
Multidimensionality	0.146***	0.132***	0.138***	0.127***	0.126***	0.105***	0.124***	0.104***
	0.032	0.031	0.031	0.031	0.033	0.032	0.033	0.033
Impatience	-0.000	-0.000	-0.000	-0.000	-0.000	-0.000	-0.000	-0.000
	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Length of bill	0.000***	0.000***	0.000***	0.000***	0.000***	0.000***	0.000***	0.000***
	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Constant	4.645***	4.529***	4.735***	4.445***	4.515***	4.448***	4.891***	4.778***
	0.383	0.454	0.356	0.419	0.472	0.532	0.527	0.563
Alpha	2.485	2.385	2.501	2.405	2.521	2.411	2.514	2.407
AIC	8,521.508	8,530.084	8,524.360	8,534.493	7,529.422	7,539.251	7,529.382	7,540.089
BIC	8,592.791	8,690.471	8,591.188	8,690.425	7,598.641	7,694.993	7,602.926	7,700.157
N	636		636		559		559	

note: *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Table 6.5
Negative binomial regressions on government bills changes. Italy 1987-2006 (excluding Dini and then technical ministers). (XII legislature excluded)

6.2.2 Does the parliamentary median voter actually prevail?

In this paragraph I present models which include ideological distances involving the median voter in the legislature. In other words, while Martin and Vanberg's (2004, 2005) argument maintains that the relevant conflict is that in the cabinet, the hypotheses tested here allow the final equilibrium in parliament to be different from the equilibrium reached – or, that is supposed to be reached – in the cabinet. In particular, if we hold that the parliamentary median voter will prevail in the legislative arena, there can be conflict between governmental proposers and parliamentary majority under both types of decision making in the cabinet. If individual ministers enjoy discretion in their jurisdiction, they may want to introduce bills in order to signal their own ideal point to their constituency although they know in advance that those bills will be amended to the parliamentary median voter. If, instead, collective responsibility is the rule for cabinet decisions, coalition partners may agree to propose a certain bill which represents a symbolic message of internal unity – and corresponds, for instance, to the cabinet median voter – but is different from the equilibrium in parliament. Such a bill will then be changed until an equilibrium in the legislature is reached.

In the following pages I examine first model B, which assumes ministerial discretion, and then model C, which presupposes collective responsibility within the cabinet. As in the previous section, I initially present models which isolate the effect of certain theoretically crucial factors, and then sequentially incorporate the remainig variables.

Models B.1-3 show the impact of the proposing minister's conflict with the parliamentary median voter (H.3b) and the farthest opposition party (H.7b). Since these two variables are correlated (Pearson correlation coefficient is 0.564 with p = 0.000), I show both their joint and separate effect. Taking Model B.3 as a benchmark[190], Model B.4 incorporates the distance between the drafting minister and the president of Chamber (H.11b), while the following three specifications add hypotheses which are testable only restricting the sample of bills. In particular, the number of coalition parties and the government range (H.5) are alternatively included in Models B.5 and B.6, where Dini's technical cabinet is excluded, whereas the number of proposing parties (H.19) and the size of minister' party (H.15) are added in Model B, in which I exclude all technical proposing ministers (see above).

As Tables 6.6 and 6.7 show, I find no support for the hypothesis that the dissimilarity between the preferences of the proposing minister – reflected in the drafted bill – and those of the parliamentary majority results in observable changes to the initial proposal during the legislative process. In none of the specifications reported the conflict between the minister and the median

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[190] In other words, for reasons of correlation in subsequent model I drop conflict with opposition. However, the results would be the same if I took Model B.1 as a benchmark.

voter in parliament has a statistically significant coefficient, and this holds true also if we exclude the XII legislature (results available upon request).

With regard to all the other variables included in these models, my results are the same as in the previous section. For a certain bill, being passed into law under an alternational party system increases the amount of changes it will receive in parliament[191]. The level of modifications is higher for bills introduced by prime ministers, and lower for bills drafted by technical ministers. Complex and multidimensional legislation is more extensively altered in the course of the parliamentary process. Just as in Models A, the remaining variables – including the minister's distance from the opposition and from the president of Chamber – do not have significant effects.

The same can be said for hypotheses added in Models B.5-7. Neither a higher number of parties in the coalition, nor a wider government range result in more changes in parliament. Similarly, the level of modifications is not reduced when the signatory parties are many or the size of the drafting minister's party is large (Tables 6.7; analyses excluding the XII legislature are available upon request).

On the whole, these results do not contrast with those from Model A. Focusing on ideological variables, as for now my findings seem to suggest that the legislation drafted and submitted by ministers is not altered in parliament because the proposers' preferences are distant from those of the parliamentary majority. Not even – or not precisely – because the ministers's preferences are far from those of their coalition partners. Ministerial bills seem instead to be modified because they are not acceptable to those coalition members which have junior ministers in the drafting ministry.

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[191] Let me note that, once we include conflict with president of Chamber (Model B.4), the coefficient of alternation is slightly less significant. The reason is that the two variables are correlated (correlation coefficient is -0.463 with p = 0.000).

Dependent variable: *Number of changed words*	MODEL B.1		MODEL B.2		MODEL B.3		MODEL B.4	
Independent variables	Coeff. (robust s.e.)	Coeff. (robust s.e.) – Fixed eff. Policy Agenda	Coeff. (robust s.e.)	Coeff. (robust s.e.) – Fixed eff. Policy Agenda	Coeff. (robust s.e.)	Coeff. (robust s.e.) – Fixed eff. Policy Agenda	Coeff. (robust s.e.)	Coeff. (robust s.e.) – Fixed eff. Policy Agenda
Minority	0.093	0.113	0.067	0.037	0.090	0.097	0.091	0.088
	0.195	0.194	0.162	0.156	0.178	0.173	0.178	0.171
Distributive	-0.012	-0.069	-0.012	-0.070	-0.011	-0.069	-0.011	-0.069
	0.123	0.120	0.123	0.120	0.122	0.120	0.122	0.119
Conflict minister - parliamentary majority	0.007	0.018			0.006	0.014	0.007	0.007
	0.025	0.026			0.020	0.019	0.026	0.024
Conflict with opposition	-0.001	-0.005	0.002	0.005				
	0.022	0.025	0.017	0.019				
President of Chamber							-0.002	0.012
							0.026	0.027
Alternation	0.395***	0.389***	0.407***	0.423***	0.396***	0.395***	0.390**	0.440**
	0.141	0.139	0.132	0.134	0.137	0.138	0.180	0.179
Prime ministerial bill	0.402**	0.403**	0.404**	0.408***	0.401**	0.403**	0.402**	0.392**
	0.167	0.157	0.167	0.157	0.168	0.157	0.168	0.159
Technical minister	-0.437**	-0.513***	-0.429**	-0.494***	-0.437**	-0.514***	-0.434**	-0.533***
	0.177	0.186	0.173	0.181	0.176	0.186	0.187	0.199
Conflict over ministerial responsibility	-0.036	-0.011	-0.037	-0.012	-0.035	-0.005	-0.034	-0.007
	0.234	0.225	0.234	0.224	0.236	0.227	0.236	0.226
Departmental capture	0.016	0.051	0.015	0.048	0.015	0.049	0.015	0.048
	0.140	0.146	0.140	0.145	0.140	0.146	0.140	0.145
Complexity	0.396**	0.413***	0.398**	0.421***	0.396**	0.416***	0.396**	0.416***
	0.154	0.144	0.155	0.146	0.154	0.144	0.154	0.144
Multidimensionality	0.159***	0.154***	0.161***	0.157***	0.159***	0.155***	0.159***	0.156***
	0.031	0.030	0.031	0.030	0.031	0.030	0.031	0.030
Impatience	-0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	-0.000	0.000
	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Length of bill	0.000***	0.000***	0.000***	0.000***	0.000***	0.000***	0.000***	0.000***
	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Constant	4.670***	4.725***	4.641***	4.642***	4.660***	4.672***	4.669***	4.613***
	0.292	0.385	0.274	0.357	0.212	0.309	0.244	0.337
Alpha	2.651	2.546	2.651	2.547	2.651	2.546	2.651	2.546
AIC	9,554.576	9,559.772	9,552.633	9,558.105	9,552.578	9,557.810	9,554.574	9,559.651
BIC	9,623.181	9,719.850	9,616.665	9,713.610	9,616.609	9,713.315	9,623.180	9,719.730
N	716		716		716		716	

note: *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Table 6.6
Negative binomial regressions on government bills changes. Italy 1987-2006 (all cabinets and ministers).

Dependent variable: Number of changed words	MODEL B.5		MODEL B.6		MODEL B.7	
Independent variables	Coeff. (robust s.e.)	Coeff. (robust s.e.) – Fixed eff. Policy Agenda	Coeff. (robust s.e.)	Coeff. (robust s.e.) – Fixed eff. Policy Agenda	Coeff. (robust s.e.)	Coeff. (robust s.e.) – Fixed eff. Policy Agenda
Minority	0.133	0.174	0.039	0.108	0.082	0.087
	0.204	0.196	0.203	0.205	0.222	0.214
Distributive	-0.001	-0.033	-0.008	-0.034	-0.006	-0.030
	0.122	0.120	0.121	0.120	0.131	0.129
Conflict minister - parliamentary majority	0.010	0.022	0.018	0.023	0.002	0.009
	0.022	0.020	0.021	0.020	0.023	0.023
N. of governing parties	-0.002	0.010			-0.012	0.012
	0.054	0.056			0.058	0.059
Ideological range of coalition			-0.041	-0.018		
			0.037	0.040		
N. of proposing parties					0.067	0.118
					0.131	0.128
Size on minister's party					-0.001	-0.001
					0.001	0.001
Alternation	0.378**	0.382***	0.361***	0.385***	0.389**	0.394**
	0.152	0.147	0.135	0.137	0.169	0.162
Prime ministerial bill	0.450***	0.434***	0.459***	0.439***	0.489***	0.462***
	0.171	0.157	0.166	0.158	0.175	0.171
Technical minister	-0.434**	-0.493**	-0.426**	-0.489***		
	0.182	0.192	0.177	0.188		
Conflict over ministerial responsibility	-0.067	-0.061	-0.090	-0.063	-0.022	-0.081
	0.246	0.231	0.237	0.230	0.268	0.260
Departmental capture	0.026	0.039	0.044	0.042	0.113	0.107
	0.142	0.148	0.143	0.150	0.156	0.163
Complexity	0.455***	0.445***	0.457***	0.441***	0.456***	0.419***
	0.155	0.146	0.155	0.146	0.171	0.160
Multidimensionality	0.146***	0.141***	0.141***	0.141***	0.126***	0.118***
	0.031	0.031	0.031	0.031	0.033	0.032
Impatience	-0.000	-0.000	-0.000	-0.000	-0.000	-0.000
	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Length of bill	0.000***	0.000***	0.000***	0.000***	0.000***	0.000***
	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Constant	4.701***	4.693***	4.984***	4.867***	4.802***	4.692***
	0.374	0.413	0.346	0.405	0.489	0.507
Alpha	2.559	2.456	2.555	2.456	2.626	2.513
AIC	9,005.170	9,011.932	9,004.062	9,011.798	7,865.022	7,874.098
BIC	9,072.824	9,169.791	9,071.716	9,169.657	7,934.996	8,031.538
N	672		672		586	

note: *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Table 6.7
Negative binomial regressions on government bills changes. Italy 1987-2006.
(excluding Dini and then technical ministers)

Let us now turn to Model C. This tests the hypothesis that, if government decisions are taken collectively and the parliamentary majority will eventually prevail, the changes that are made to the initial bill reflect the distance between the compromise reached in the cabinet and the preferences of the median voter in the legislature. Model C.1 includes the conflict between the government mid-range and both the parliamentary median voter (H.3a) and the farthest opposition party (H.7a). The conflict with the president of Chamber (H.11a) is incorporated in Model C.2 and then dropped in subsequent models for reasons of correlation with my indicator of alternation. I add the number of governing parties (H.5) in Model C.3, and the number of signatory parties (H.19) in Model C.4.

As Tables 6.8 and 6.9 show, my results provide some support for the hypothesis that the changes made to government bills during the legislative process depend on the distance between a compromise position in the cabinet (the goverment mid-range) and the preferences of the parliamentary majority. The coefficients of conflict with parliamentary majority are positive and statistically significant in all the models with fixed effects, and both their magnitude and significance increase if we exclude the XII legislature. As Table 6.10 indicates, a standard deviation increase in the distance between the government mid-range and parliamentary median voter – about 1.2 points on the policy scale – is expected to increases the average number of word changes in governmental bills by 14%[192].

Moreover, although with a lower significance, sporadically I find evidence that also minority governments and the conflict between government mid-range and opposition have an impact. Unexpectedly, and quite unexplainably, in the latter case the effect is negative.

As for all the other variables, their impact is the same as in the previous models A and B. The amount of changes is reduced in case of technical proposers, and increased when the bill is sponsored by the prime minister, when it deals with complex or multidimensional issues, and when it is examined under an alternational party system. Concerning the latter variable, let me stress that its coefficient loses its significance once we add the conflict with president of Chamber. However, these two measures are highly collinear (a correlation of -0.845 with $p = 0.000$), and hence cannot be included in the same model in any meaningful way. The remaining regressors have no significant effects.

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[192] The values reported in Table 6.10 are percentage changes in the expected number of word changes, computed on the basis of the coefficients from Model C.1. Let me underline that the substantive effects of the independent variables displayed in Table 6.10 are very similar to those in Table 6.2.

	MODEL C.1		MODEL C.2		MODEL C.3		MODEL C.4	
Dependent variable: *Number of changed words*	Coeff. (robust s.e.)	Coeff. (robust s.e.) - Fixed eff. Policy Agenda	Coeff. (robust s.e.)	Coeff. (robust s.e.) - Fixed eff. Policy Agenda	Coeff. (robust s.e.)	Coeff. (robust s.e.) - Fixed eff. Policy Agenda	Coeff. (robust s.e.)	Coeff. (robust s.e.) - Fixed eff. Policy Agenda
Independent variables								
Minority	0.171	0.345*	0.211	0.363*	0.235	0.463*	0.297	0.515**
	0.212	0.206	0.211	0.203	0.240	0.238	0.266	0.258
Distributive conflict	-0.006	-0.023	-0.015	-0.026	0.009	0.022	-0.009	0.022
	0.124	0.120	0.125	0.120	0.125	0.120	0.135	0.127
Conflict gov.midrange – parliamentary majority	0.022	0.107*	0.034	0.103*	0.033	0.125*	0.036	0.144**
	0.059	0.062	0.059	0.061	0.062	0.066	0.068	0.069
Conflict gov.midrange – opposition	-0.027	-0.051	-0.042	-0.066*	-0.029	-0.064*	-0.039	-0.069*
	0.029	0.033	0.030	0.036	0.030	0.035	0.032	0.039
President of Chamber			-0.068	-0.048				
			0.045	0.046				
N. of governing parties					-0.009	-0.009	0.011	0.020
					0.051	0.052	0.055	0.055
N. of proposing parties							0.068	0.112
							0.129	0.125
Alternation	0.383***	0.376***	-0.015	0.089	0.376**	0.385***	0.395**	0.395**
	0.140	0.136	0.307	0.317	0.149	0.143	0.166	0.156
Prime ministerial bill	0.418**	0.383**	0.430**	0.394**	0.465***	0.406**	0.457**	0.405**
	0.169	0.159	0.168	0.159	0.172	0.160	0.178	0.169
Technical minister	-0.437**	-0.495***	-0.363**	-0.447**	-0.415**	-0.452**		
	0.177	0.186	0.182	0.192	0.187	0.196		
Conflict over ministerial responsibility	-0.061	-0.036	0.013	0.017	-0.080	-0.088	-0.057	-0.155
	0.227	0.221	0.231	0.224	0.242	0.229	0.270	0.262
Departmental capture	0.025	0.027	0.031	0.031	0.032	-0.010	0.107	0.062
	0.141	0.149	0.143	0.150	0.141	0.153	0.155	0.163
Complexity	0.395**	0.403***	0.419***	0.409***	0.448***	0.423***	0.419**	0.367**
	0.156	0.144	0.161	0.145	0.156	0.144	0.169	0.154
Multidimensionality	0.159***	0.153***	0.151***	0.147***	0.145***	0.139***	0.121***	0.108***
	0.031	0.030	0.032	0.030	0.032	0.031	0.033	0.033
Impatience	-0.000	-0.000	-0.000	-0.000	-0.000	-0.000	-0.000	-0.000
	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Length of bill	0.000***	0.000***	0.000***	0.000***	0.000***	0.000***	0.000***	0.000***
	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Constant	4.876***	4.940***	5.549***	5.504***	4.946***	5.167***	4.838***	4.876***
	0.395	0.504	0.573	0.723	0.461	0.553	0.550	0.656
Alpha	2.649	2.535	2.641	2.532	2.556	2.441	2.626	2.495
AIC	9,553.885	9,556.138	9,553.313	9,557.094	9,006.410	9,009.084	7,864.986	7,868.861
BIC	9,622.490	9,716.217	9,626.492	9,721.746	9,078.574	9,171.454	7,934.959	8,026.301
N	716		716		672		586	

note: *** $p<0.01$, ** $p<0.05$, * $p<0.1$

Table 6.8
Negative binomial regressions on government bills changes. Italy 1987-2006.

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	MODEL C.5		MODEL C.6		MODEL C.7		MODEL C.8	
Dependent variable: *Number of changed words* Independent variables	**Coeff.** (robust s.e.)	**Coeff.** (robust s.e.) - Fixed eff. Policy Agenda	**Coeff.** (robust s.e.)	**Coeff.** (robust s.e.) - Fixed eff. Policy Agenda	**Coeff.** (robust s.e.)	**Coeff.** (robust s.e.) - Fixed eff. Policy Agenda	**Coeff.** (robust s.e.)	**Coeff.** (robust s.e.) - Fixed eff. Policy Agenda
Minority	0.217	0.440*	0.104	0.399*	0.173	0.395*	0.167	0.334
	0.223	0.225	0.225	0.226	0.237	0.236	0.257	0.256
Distributive conflict	-0.013	0.003	-0.029	-0.000	-0.009	0.008	0.025	0.082
	0.125	0.118	0.124	0.119	0.125	0.118	0.137	0.128
Conflict gov.midrange - parliamentary majority	0.035	0.130**	0.063	0.133**	0.036	0.133**	0.046	0.179***
	0.060	0.062	0.060	0.062	0.061	0.063	0.068	0.069
Conflict gov.midrange – opposition	-0.029	-0.057*	-0.029	-0.061*	-0.026	-0.054	-0.026	-0.041
	0.028	0.034	0.029	0.035	0.029	0.035	0.031	0.039
President of Chamber			-0.089*	-0.035				
			0.053	0.054				
N. of governing parties					-0.032	-0.034	-0.026	-0.018
					0.051	0.053	0.054	0.056
N. of proposing parties							0.037	0.083
							0.127	0.124
Alternation	0.454***	0.480***	-0.060	0.271	0.480***	0.510***	0.521***	0.575***
	0.142	0.138	0.355	0.368	0.154	0.146	0.166	0.156
Prime ministerial bill	0.484***	0.443***	0.493***	0.444***	0.470***	0.431***	0.471***	0.418**
	0.172	0.163	0.171	0.164	0.171	0.163	0.177	0.171
Technical minister	-0.475***	-0.523***	-0.445***	-0.512***	-0.491***	-0.542***		
	0.169	0.177	0.171	0.178	0.174	0.181		
Conflict over ministerial responsibility	0.038	0.052	0.082	0.069	0.042	0.065	0.081	0.057
	0.243	0.227	0.240	0.227	0.245	0.229	0.276	0.261
Departmental capture	-0.022	-0.031	-0.030	-0.035	-0.032	-0.041	0.042	0.003
	0.141	0.151	0.142	0.151	0.140	0.150	0.151	0.159
Complexity	0.392**	0.396***	0.445***	0.406***	0.377**	0.384***	0.405**	0.362**
	0.159	0.148	0.162	0.148	0.153	0.145	0.164	0.154
Multidimensionality	0.137***	0.124***	0.130***	0.122***	0.137***	0.124***	0.117***	0.093***
	0.032	0.032	0.032	0.031	0.032	0.032	0.033	0.033
Impatience	-0.000	-0.000	-0.000	-0.000	-0.000	-0.000	-0.000	-0.000
	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Length of bill	0.000***	0.000***	0.000***	0.000***	0.000***	0.000***	0.000***	0.000***
	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Constant	4.899***	4.894***	5.518***	5.224***	5.036***	5.022***	4.882***	4.680***
	0.421	0.523	0.600	0.705	0.453	0.546	0.548	0.660
Alpha	2.500	2.391	2.492	2.390	2.499	2.390	2.539	2.414
AIC	8,524.010	8,529.979	8,523.585	8,531.664	8,525.759	8,531.694	7,534.173	7,540.120
BIC	8,590.838	8,685.911	8,594.868	8,692.052	8,597.042	8,692.081	7,603.391	7,695.862
N	636		636		636		559	

note: *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Table 6.9
Negative binomial regressions on government bills changes. Italy 1987-2006.
(XII legislature excluded)

Independent variables	Percentage change in the expected number of word changes
Minority	41.2*
Distributive conflict	-2.3
Conflict gov.midrange – parliamentary majority	14.2*
Conflict gov.midrange – opposition	-11.1
Alternation	45.6***
Prime ministerial bill	46.7**
Technical minister	-39.1***
Conflict over ministerial responsibility	-1
Departmental capture	2.7
Complexity	49.7***
Multidimensionality	16.5***
Impatience	-4.2
Length of bill	91.2***

Table 6.10
Percentage change in the expected number of word changes.
(coefficients from Model C.1 – fixed effects)

Reasonably, the result concerning the conflict between government mid-range and parliamentary median voter seems somehow in contrast with what I found about the conflict with junior ministers inside the drafting ministry. In the previous paragraph, the different specifications of Model A provided strong support for the hypothesis that greater divisions between the proposing minister and the JMs in her ministry result in greater modifications to government legislation during the parliamentary process. However, as several specifications of Model C suggest, we cannot reject the hypothesis that changes in paliament depend on how much the coalition agreed-on proposal is distant from the ideal point of the median voter in the legislature. Although considerably weaker than that of JM's distance, the effect of conflict between government mid-range and parliamentary median voter in some cases present.

The two hypotheses follow rather different logics. In one case, the drafting minister proposes something that she knows will be changed in the legislature by the coalition parties which have JMs in her ministry. Parliament thus appears as a second arena where the same actors that are in the cabinet – or, better, in the relevant ministry – have the opportunity to correct the initial proposal. Conversely, in the other case it is the entire cabinet that jointly introduce bills, and these bills are amended until they are acceptable to the parliamentary majority. Hence, the assembly and the committees seem more independent of the cabinet, and actors not involved at the executive level may play some role.

Trying to make sense of these two contrasting results, I incorporate both hypotheses in a single model (Tables 6.11 and 6.12). This allows to assess which factor is robust to the inclusion of the other. Model D.1 incorporates, as the only ideological variables, JM's distance and conflict between government mid-range and parliamentary median voter. Models D.2 and D.3 alternatively add two variables taking into account the preferences of the opposition: the distance between the government mid-range and the farthest opposition party, and that between the proposing minister and the farthest opposition party, respectively. These last two specifications control for possible effects of omitting one – or both – of the ideological variables concerning opposition. Models D.4-6 display the same analyses reran excluding the XII legislature.

As Tables 6.11 and 6.12 show, the effect of conflict within the drafting ministry seems to prevail. Once we include it, the conflict between government mid-range and parliamentary majority loses all its significance, and in all the specification without fixed effects its sign even switches from positive to negative. On the contrary, the impact of JM's distance proves to be robust to the inclusion of conflict with parliamentary majority: its coefficient is significant and positive in almost all specifications. The only exception is the analysis with fixed effects in Model D.2, although if we exclude the XII legislature all the coefficients for JM's distance are significant at least at the 95% level[193].

Of course, the comparison between the results concerning conflict within the drafting ministry and those regarding conflict with parliamentary majority deserves further investigation. In any case, my analyses suggest that the conflict between the proposing ministers and her JMs is a much more robust explanatory factor of the changes made to Italian government bills during the legislative process. The data support the hypothesis that parliament is a place where coalition partners can correct the legislation that is autonomously drafted by the responsible ministers. However, not all the members of the governmental coalition are able to do it. Undoubtedly, in order to prepare

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[193] Let me note that, once we incorporate JM's distance, we do not have any more the unexpected result found in Model C: the coefficient of conflict between goverment mid-range and the farthest opposition party is not significant (Models D.2 and D.5).

amendments a sufficient knowledge of the policy implications of ministerial proposals is needed, and only those coalition partners which have junior ministers in the drafting ministry may have such information. By contrast, provided also that committee chairs do not prove to be effective monitoring instruments in Italy, the governing parties that cannot rely on these executive-level 'informers' may not be completely aware of the consequences of the minister's draft. The ideological conflict which may result in observable modifications to the initial bills is therefore that between the proposing minister and the JMs in her ministry.

Dependent variable: *Number of changed words* Independent variables	MODEL D.1		MODEL D.2		MODEL D.3	
	Coeff. (robust s.e.)	**Coeff. (robust s.e.) - Fixed eff. Policy Agenda**	**Coeff. (robust s.e.)**	**Coeff. (robust s.e.) - Fixed eff. Policy Agenda**	**Coeff. (robust s.e.)**	**Coeff. (robust s.e.) - Fixed eff. Policy Agenda**
Minority	0.175	0.266	0.230	0.395*	0.197	0.298
	0.179	0.176	0.211	0.205	0.187	0.182
Distributive conflict	0.009	-0.033	0.013	-0.012	0.007	-0.029
	0.123	0.119	0.123	0.119	0.124	0.120
Conflict gov.midrange - parliamentary majority	-0.054	0.055	-0.044	0.066	-0.046	0.061
	0.069	0.069	0.069	0.070	0.069	0.069
Conflict gov.midrange – opposition			-0.017	-0.044		
			0.028	0.034		
JM's distance	0.047**	0.034*	0.045**	0.030	0.050**	0.040*
	0.020	0.020	0.020	0.021	0.020	0.021
Conflict with opposition					-0.010	-0.016
					0.018	0.020
Alternation	0.335**	0.370***	0.322**	0.339**	0.333**	0.369***
	0.138	0.140	0.142	0.140	0.138	0.139
Prime ministerial bill	0.429**	0.410**	0.438***	0.403**	0.438***	0.417***
	0.169	0.160	0.169	0.160	0.170	0.160
Technical minister	-0.427**	-0.485***	-0.436**	-0.503***	-0.415**	-0.461**
	0.172	0.180	0.173	0.184	0.173	0.182
Conflict over ministerial responsibility	0.035	0.052	0.017	0.014	0.022	0.034
	0.229	0.221	0.226	0.219	0.231	0.222
Departmental capture	-0.035	0.007	-0.025	0.006	-0.030	0.005
	0.143	0.149	0.143	0.152	0.143	0.150
Complexity	0.387**	0.418***	0.385**	0.399***	0.391**	0.414***
	0.153	0.144	0.153	0.143	0.153	0.144
Multidimensionality	0.165***	0.156***	0.164***	0.155***	0.165***	0.157***
	0.031	0.030	0.031	0.030	0.031	0.030
Impatience	-0.000	-0.000	-0.000	-0.000	-0.000	-0.000
	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Length of bill	0.000***	0.000***	0.000***	0.000***	0.000***	0.000***
	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Constant	4.654***	4.372***	4.804***	4.859***	4.714***	4.499***
	0.278	0.346	0.386	0.506	0.311	0.385
Alpha	2.639	2.535	2.638	2.531	2.638	2.534
AIC	9,550.619	9,556.125	9,552.324	9,556.698	9,552.425	9,557.690
BIC	9,619.224	9,716.204	9,625.503	9,721.351	9,625.604	9,722.342
N	716		716		716	

note: *** $p<0.01$, ** $p<0.05$, * $p<0.1$

Table 6.11
Negative binomial regressions on government bills changes. Italy 1987-2006.

Dependent variable: *Number of changed words*	MODEL D.4		MODEL D.5		MODEL D.6	
Independent variables	Coeff. (robust s.e.)	Coeff. (robust s.e.) - Fixed eff. Policy Agenda	Coeff. (robust s.e.)	Coeff. (robust s.e.) - Fixed eff. Policy Agenda	Coeff. (robust s.e.)	Coeff. (robust s.e.) - Fixed eff. Policy Agenda
Minority	0.215	0.326*	0.269	0.490**	0.228	0.356*
	0.186	0.186	0.222	0.225	0.194	0.195
Distributive conflict	0.021	0.018	0.022	0.027	0.019	0.018
	0.124	0.117	0.123	0.117	0.124	0.117
Conflict gov.midrange - parliamentary majority	-0.056	0.056	-0.050	0.061	-0.052	0.060
	0.072	0.072	0.072	0.072	0.073	0.072
Conflict gov.midrange - opposition			-0.013	-0.043		
			0.028	0.035		
JM's distance	0.058***	0.051**	0.056***	0.047**	0.059***	0.055***
	0.020	0.020	0.021	0.021	0.021	0.021
Conflict with opposition					-0.005	-0.012
					0.018	0.020
Alternation	0.400***	0.468***	0.388***	0.430***	0.399***	0.466***
	0.140	0.141	0.144	0.142	0.141	0.141
Prime ministerial bill	0.501***	0.474***	0.508***	0.476***	0.506***	0.482***
	0.173	0.166	0.173	0.166	0.173	0.166
Technical minister	-0.454***	-0.516***	-0.457***	-0.522***	-0.449***	-0.499***
	0.169	0.175	0.169	0.175	0.171	0.180
Conflict over ministerial responsibility	0.155	0.142	0.148	0.125	0.149	0.128
	0.242	0.224	0.241	0.224	0.244	0.225
Departmental capture	-0.083	-0.064	-0.078	-0.068	-0.081	-0.065
	0.144	0.151	0.144	0.152	0.144	0.151
Complexity	0.389**	0.410***	0.385**	0.395***	0.389**	0.407***
	0.155	0.147	0.155	0.147	0.155	0.148
Multidimensionality	0.146***	0.131***	0.145***	0.129***	0.146***	0.131***
	0.032	0.031	0.032	0.031	0.032	0.031
Impatience	-0.000	-0.000	-0.000	-0.000*	-0.000	-0.000
	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Length of bill	0.000***	0.000***	0.000***	0.000***	0.000***	0.000***
	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Constant	4.652***	4.314***	4.772***	4.771***	4.684***	4.407***
	0.285	0.352	0.410	0.524	0.318	0.389
Alpha	2.483	2.384	2.483	2.381	2.483	2.383
AIC	8,519.013	8,527.812	8,520.880	8,528.781	8,520.967	8,529.580
BIC	8,585.841	8,683.744	8,592.163	8,689.168	8,592.250	8,689.967
N	636		636		636	

Note: *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Table 6.12
Negative binomial regressions on government bills changes. Italy 1987-2006.
(XII legislature excluded)

CONCLUSION

Although hardly explainable within standard rational choice models, we actually observe modifications to government legislation in the course of parliamentary processes. As this work shows, three crucial considerations can help in accounting for these observable changes, thus increasing the explanatory power of the basic models. Firstly, the presence of *position taking utility* may induce political actors to propose policies that appeal to their own voters even when they know in advance that such bills will be amended during the legislative process. Secondly, due to the *limited information* at their disposal at the cabinet level, governmental actors may introduce bills which are altered in parliament because actors learn aspects which were previously unknown. Thirdly, under at least one of the two above mentioned circumstances, the amount of modifications made to bills in parliament may be affected by the particular *institutions* that regulate the legislative process.

These considerations are at the basis of the three major sets of theoretical explanations of the changes made to governmental legislation that I introduced and discussed in chapters 1-4. In particular, in the first two chapters I examined hypotheses based upon position taking and conflict. Since when governmental actors draft legislation they propose the ideal point of their respective constituencies, the amount of modifications made to the initial bill indicates true conflict among the actors participating in the lawmaking process. According to Martin and Vanberg (2004, 2005), whose influential hypothesis is discussed in detail in the second chapter, the conflict which explains the modifications made to governmental proposals stems from the ideological divisions among the parties forming coalition cabinets. More precisely, their argument is that legislative review serves as a means of monitoring the behaviour of ministers belonging to different coalition partners. Other monitoring mechanisms – both at the legislative and at the executive level – may be combined with parliamentary scrutiny, thus increasing or decreasing the number of observable changes. In the third chapter I discussed hypotheses based upon the lack of knowledge, whereby parliamentary modifications to government bills are driven by an improvement of the decision makers' knowledge. Whereas, in the cabinet, ministers rarely have complete information about other actors' preferences and perfect information about the actual implications of the laws, the variety of origins and competences of the legislators and the specialization of the parliamentary committees may provide the information needed to scrutinize governmental legislation (see Krehbiel 1991). Then, in the fourth chapter, I reviewed hypotheses based upon institutional rules. Parlamentarians' ability to modify ministerial drafts is influenced by the type of amending rule employed as well as by a number of other institutional arrangements. Generally speaking, more restrictive rules reduce the

possibility of changing bills in the legislature. Remarkably, these three types of explanations are not mutually exclusive at all. Rather, in real-world politics they are intertwined in complex ways. Importantly, information problems seem crucial in several of the explanations that I classified as based upon conflict and position taking.

I empirically evaluated these three sets of explanatory hypotheses against evidence from *Italy*. In particular, as I spelled out in the fifth chapter, I built and used a dataset tracking the legislative history of all the laws introduced by governments in the Chamber of Deputies during the 1987-2006 period. As far as I know, no research has ever studied successful amendatory activity in Italy as a dependent variable, testing a set of alternative explanations. In any case, although being a single country, Italy provides substantial variation in terms of several theoretically crucial explanations: most of all ideological divergence within the coalition varies a lot across and inside cabinets, the party systems has shifted from a pivotal to an alternation type, and technical ministers are not really exceptional in Italian cabinets. Concerning my dependent variable, I proposed an operationalization in terms of *word changes* (the number of words that are added, deleted or modified during the legislative process), arguing that such a measure seems more refined and suitable for the Italian case than Martin and Vanberg's one.

As shown in the sixth chapter, I tested the impact of the hypotheses discussed in the theoretical chapters (and operationalized as illustrated in chapter 5) using an *event count model*. This seems to be the appropriate technique for studying the number of events that occur over a particular period of time. More precisely, I employed the Negative binomial regression model, whose distributional form allows to take into account the degree of overdispersion in the number of words modified in the course of the parliamentary process.

My analyses show that what happens to ministerial drafts during the legislative process depends on a mix of factors related to position taking, conflict and lack of information. In particular, the results have a number of possible implications for how we understand policymaking in Italian multiparty governments.

First of all, importantly, Martin and Vanberg's (2004, 2005) argument is not fully rejected. Rather, it is somehow refined. My result show that the conflict which actually affects the number of modifications made to government bills in the Italian parliament is not that among all parties in the coalition, but just that among those partners which are represented in the drafting ministry, and hence have the relevant information needed to revise ministerial proposals in the legislature. By contrast, coalition members without junior ministers in the relevant executive department suffer from an informational disadvantage about the policy consequences of the ministerial proposal. Let me stress that Martin and Vanberg consider indeed just coalitions made of two parties. In two-party

coalitions, provided that a sufficient number of ministers are shadowed, when ministers initiate legislation the entire coalition is likely to be informed about the policy consequences of their proposals. Hence, all (the two) coalition partners are able to amend legislation. In this case, the ideological divergence inside the whole government coalition is an appropriate measure. In Italy, instead, even if the proposing minister is shadowed, not all coalition partners are informed: only those with a JM in the relevant ministry are informed and thus able to modify governmental bills. In this case, the ideological divergence inside the drafting ministry seems more appropriate.

Second, Italian JMs do not seem to behave following the logic suggested by Martin and Vanberg. They do not solve intracoalitional problems at the cabinet level, but they seem to inform their party about the implications of ministerial poposals.

Third, information plays a crucial role in the course of the legislative process. On the one hand, the limited level of knowledge at ministers' disposal when they prepare bills systematically increases the amount of changes to governmental legislation during the parliamentary process. On the other hand, as previously noted, information problems within the coalition are at the basis of the use of junior ministers.

Fourth, as far as this work is concerned, Italian parliament appears to be a 'government arena', where a second round of the decision making process that involves government members is played. Indeed, I found no support for a significant role of opposition parties in the amendatory process, and the explanatory hypothesis dealing with the parliamentary median voter does not prove to be robust once we control for the degree of ideological conflict within the drafting ministry.

My results also tell us something about the members of Italian cabinets. Facing rather strong position taking incentives, Italian prime ministers are not reliable for the implementation of the coalition agreed-upon compromise. However, the parties forming Italian coalition governments can safely resort to technical ministers. The behaviour of technicians is strategic as they are able to anticipate the possible behaviours of other legislative actors, but not 'political' as they ignore the utility to take positions in front of some constituencies.

In addition, the 1994 shift from a pivotal to an alternational party system seems to represent an actual structural break: when government alternation is a real possibility, government bills are largely changed in parliament. If a political system combines more than one government party and a status quo that is not really controversial (as it is very bad for all government parties), then the distance between the initial minister's proposal and the final legislative outcome can be very large.

Finally, let me precise that the present research strategy has not allowed me to test most of the explanations relying on changes in institutional rules. Of course, future research might engage in more comprehensive analyses by taking longer time periods or investigating more than one country.

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