

CABINETS AND DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES: RE-ASSESSING THE LITERATURE¹

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One very promising way when it comes to illustrate how cabinets work and to classify them is to look at their internal decision-making processes. In this paper, I give a new and comprehensive picture of cabinets in parliamentary and semi-presidential systems on this basis. In particular, in the first part, I review what the literature has proposed in this respect. Secondly, after illustrating some shortcomings of the works at issue, I present, proceeding from a famous Andeweg's proposal, a new typology of cabinets based on two dimensions. For each of the eight ideal-types stemming from it, some empirical examples are illustrated.

Key words: Cabinet, Decision-Making, Typology, Prime Minister, Executive.

1 INTRODUCTION

Cabinet government is a very widespread system of government. Nowadays, not only almost all European countries are ruled through it, but also some of the most important extra-European democracies – such as Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, India, Israel – rely on it. Therefore, understanding how cabinets take decisions can be a very noteworthy operation in order to obtain a better knowledge of a central feature of these countries.

A cabinet is the apex of the executive in parliamentary systems.³ It is made up of a set of ministers coordinated by a prime minister in a context of

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³ See also Shirley A. Warshaw, *Powersharing. White House-Cabinet Relations in the Modern Presidency* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996).

(formal⁴) collegiality. In semi-presidential democracies, this institution shares the governmental functions with a chief of State elected by the people. One of its main characteristic is that, in order to survive, it needs the confidence of Parliament.⁵

To study the internal cabinet decision-making, two dimensions, more than others, seem to be useful: the internal distribution of power and the degree of centralisation of the decision-making process.⁶ These dimensions provide the general structural features of the decision-making.

The main aim of the article is to offer a new typology of cabinets according to their internal decision-making processes. Initially, I will review some attempts of classification and typologies of cabinets in the literature. Then, I will point out their main problems and their strong points. Subsequently, I will advance my new proposal by means, in particular, of a re-assessment of a work by Andeweg; it will be argued that cabinets can be grouped into a limited number of ideal-types, and examples drawn from the real world will be brought forward. Some brief and preliminary annotations about the possible uses of this framework for further researches will be finally suggested.

2 CLASSIFICATIONS AND TYPOLOGIES IN THE LITERATURE: THE STATE OF THE ART

Years ago, Philip Selznick wrote that “[d]ecision-making’ is one of those fashionable phrases that may well obscure more than it illuminates”.⁷ Nonetheless, a specification of models or types of cabinets on the basis of their decision-making processes seems to be a viable road to follow, and indeed many authors have chosen this path.

Almost all⁸ classifications and typologies⁹ of cabinets in the political literature are built having in mind two – or at least one of two – crucial aspects of the decision-making process, namely who takes decisions (or, in other words, who has the decisive power) and how s/he does so (that is, how s/he exercises his or her decisive power).¹⁰

⁴ I speak of ‘formal’ collegiality because, as we shall see, often ministers have not the same clout, and decisions are not actually taken by all of them together.

⁵ This confidence can be required explicit through an investiture vote at government inauguration, as in Italy, or presumed until there is a no confidence vote, as in the United Kingdom. See Torbjörn Bergman et al, “Democratic Delegation and Accountability: Cross-national Patterns,” in *Delegation and Accountability in Parliamentary Democracies*, eds. Kaare Strøm, Wolfgang C. Müller and Torbjörn Bergman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, [2003] 2006), 148–157.

⁶ Rudy Andeweg, “A Model of the Cabinet System: The Dimensions of Cabinet Decision-Making Processes,” in *Governing Together. The Extent and Limits of Joint Decision-Making in Western European Cabinets*, eds. Jean Blondel and Ferdinand Müller-Rommel (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1993), 25-32.

⁷ Philip Selznick, *Leadership in Administration. A Sociological Interpretation* (Evanston: Row, Peterson and Company, 1957), 29.

⁸ An exception is in Ferdinand Müller-Rommel, “The Centre of Government in West Germany: Changing Patterns under 14 Legislatures (1949–1987),” *European Journal of Political Research*, 16, 2 (1988), 187–189, where the author classifies six decision-making styles in the cabinet, not on the basis of how decisions are taken, but of the nature of the decisions. He argues that these styles are determined by structural and behavioural variables, and that a cabinet may decide and discuss *purely routine matters*; *almost routine matters*; *highly conflictual matters*; *general problems*; *strategy on long-term planning*; *tactical political questions*.

⁹ In the literature, too often there is a confusion about the notions of “classification” and “typology”. Unlike classifications, typologies explain: from certain premises, certain outcomes (in this case, the types of the typology) are deduced. Classifications, instead, give only descriptions of reality without explanations. See Giorgio Fedel, *Saggi sul linguaggio e l’oratoria politica* (Milano: Giuffrè, 1999), 24–25. However, in this article, I will deal with both classifications and typologies as instruments for singling out patterns of the reality.

¹⁰ The literature offers also some classifications and typologies of some specific figures of cabinets, in particular prime ministers and simple ministers. With regard to the former see Brian Farrell, *Chairman or*

First of all, it is worth taking into account the classic dichotomy *prime ministerial vs. cabinet government*, applied in particular – but not only – to the United Kingdom.¹¹ In the former, the prime minister is a real *primus*: the power is concentrated in his or her hands, s/he leads the life of the cabinet, sets the executive goals and determines the general governmental policy, and is able to give instructions to ministers within their jurisdiction. In the latter, on the contrary, the power is equally (or almost equally) distributed among ministers, and hence the head of government is only a first among equals.¹²

But this dichotomy is rather simplistic and does not give a complete picture of the complex reality. Several works have tried to give a solution to this problem, and, in this respect, a well-known classification is that of Rhodes. He underlines the weaknesses of the debate over ‘prime minister versus cabinet’ and suggests six models of core executive operations, being the

Chief? The Role of Taoiseach in Irish Government (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1971); Jean Blondel, “Decisioni di governo e vincoli partitici,” *Rivista italiana di scienza politica*, XIX, 2 (1989), 207–209; Richard Rose, “Prime Ministers in Parliamentary Democracies,” in *West European Prime Ministers*, ed. G.W. Jones (London: Frank Cass, 1991); Anthony King, “‘Chief Executives’ in Western Europe,” in *Developing Democracy. Comparative Research in Honour of J. F. P. Blondel*, eds. Ian Budge and David McKay (London: Sage, 1994); Jean Blondel, “Processi decisionali, conflitti e governo di cabinet,” *Quaderni di scienza politica*, VI, 2 (1999): 205–209; Cristina Barbieri, *Il capo del governo in Italia. Una ricerca empirica* (Milano: Giuffrè, 2001); Giovanni Sartori, *Ingegneria costituzionale comparata. Strutture, incentivi ed esiti* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2004), 116; Ludger Helms, *Presidents, Prime Ministers and Chancellors. Executive Leadership in Western Democracies* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2005), 12–13. These works are dedicated to the prime ministerial power. Norton, instead, proposes a typology of prime ministers based on their personal characteristics; he distinguishes four types: *innovators, reformers, egoists* and *balancers*. See Philip Norton, “Political Leadership,” in *Half a Century of British Politics*, ed. Lynton Robins and Bill Jones (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), 76–77. As for works on ministers, classifications and typologies are based on performed roles or ministerial career paths. See for example Richard Rose, “The Making of Cabinet Ministers,” *British Journal of Political Science*, 1, 4 (1971), 405; Bruce Headey, *British Cabinet Ministers: The Roles of Politicians in Executive Office* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1974), chapter 3; Wilma E. Bakema and Ineke P. Secker, “Ministerial Expertise and the Dutch Case,” *European Journal of Political Research*, 16, 2 (1988), 156–158; Ferdinand Müller-Rommel “The Centre of Government in West Germany: Changing Patterns under 14 Legislatures (1949–1987),” *European Journal of Political Research*, 16, 2 (1988), 185; Jean Blondel, “Individual Ministers and their Role in Cabinet Decision-Making,” in *Governing Together. The Extent and Limits of Joint Decision-Making in Western European Cabinets*, ed. Jean Blondel and Ferdinand Müller-Rommel (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1993), 184–186; David Marsh, David Richards and Martin J. Smith “Re-Assessing the Role of Departmental Cabinet Ministers,” *Public Administration*, 78, 2 (2000), 306; Philip Norton, “Barons in a Shrinking Kingdom: Senior Ministers in British Government,” in *Transforming British Government. Volume 2: Changing Roles and Relationships*, ed. R.A.W. Rhodes (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000), 109–110.

¹¹ For instance Thomas A. Baylis, *Governing by Committee. Collegial Leadership in Advanced Societies* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), 45–49; R.H.S. Crossman, “Introduction” to *Walter Bagehot, The English Constitution* (London: Fontana, 1963).

¹² Some authors have argued that there has been a long-term trend towards a strengthening of the role of prime ministers, which may be called “presidentialisation”. Indicators of such a process – it is argued – are the prime ministerial power to control the ministerial careers and to decide about policy; a centralised support staff; the party leadership; the personalisation of electoral campaigns and the growing attention of the media on leaders (e.g., R.H.S. Crossman, “Introduction” to *Walter Bagehot, The English Constitution* (London: Fontana, 1963); R.H.S. Crossman, *The Myths of Cabinet Government* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972); John P. Mackintosh, *The British Cabinet* (London: Stevens & Sons, 1977); R.H.S. Crossman, “Prime Ministerial Government,” in *The British Prime Minister*, ed. Anthony King (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1985, reprinted from Crossman’s “Introduction” to *Walter Bagehot, The English Constitution*, 37–57); Michael Foley, *The Rise of the British Presidency* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993); Michael Foley, *The British Presidency. Tony Blair and the Politics of Public Leadership* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000); Ellis S. Krauss and Benjamin Nyblade “‘Presidentialization’ in Japan? The Prime Minister, Media and Elections in Japan,” *British Journal of Political Science*, 35, 2 (2005), 361–367; Thomas Poguntke and Paul Webb (eds.), *The Presidentialization of Politics. A Comparative Study of Modern Democracies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, [2005] 2007)). Others have criticized this thesis, stressing the importance of the constraints on the prime ministerial action (e.g., Patrick Gordon Walker, *The Cabinet* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1970); G.W. Jones, “The Prime Minister’s Power” in *The British Prime Minister*, ed. Anthony King (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1985), 203–216; Richard Hefferman, “Prime Ministerial Predominance? Core Executive Politics in the UK,” *British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, 5, 3 (2003), 368–370; Patrick Weller, “Cabinet Government: An Elusive Ideal?,” *Public Administration*, 81, 4 (2003), 719–720; Ludger Helms, *Presidents, Prime Ministers and Chancellors. Executive Leadership in Western Democracies* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2005); R.A.W. Rhodes, “Executives in Parliamentary Government,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Political Institutions*, eds. R.A.W. Rhodes, Sarah A. Binder and Bert A. Rockman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006)).

core executive “all those organisations and procedures which coordinate central government policies, and act as final arbiters of conflict between different parts of the government machine”.¹³ The models are: a) *prime ministerial government* (prime minister’s predominance in cabinet decision-making); b) *prime ministerial cliques* (premier’s influence is tightly connected to his or her inner group of advisers or to an *éminence grise*); c) *cabinet government* (classic model of collective decision-making); d) *ministerial government* (departmentalism and ministerial autonomy¹⁴); e) *the segmented decision model* (the power is shared and the prime minister and the cabinet operate in different policy areas, whereas ministers operate below the interdepartmental level); f) *the bureaucratic coordination model* (the civil service is dominant).¹⁵

O’Leary applies this framework to the Irish case; the only difference is the unification of the first two models in a single prime ministerial government.¹⁶

Laver and Shepsle do the same with the first two models, remove the segmented one and consider two further models: *legislative government* (hypothetical as no specialist has promoted it) and *party government*. The former implies an executive constrained by the legislature; the latter that the members of the government “are subject to the discipline of well-organized political parties”.¹⁷

¹³ R.A.W. Rhodes, “From Prime Ministerial Power to Core Executive,” in *Prime Minister, Cabinet and Core Executive* eds. R.A.W. Rhodes and Patrick Dunleavy (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1995), 12. For a very similar definition see also Patrick Dunleavy and R.A.W. Rhodes, “Core Executive Studies in Britain,” *Public Administration*, 68, 1 (1990), 4.

¹⁴ Looking at the degree and the type of ministerial autonomy, Mark Hallerberg, “Electoral Laws, Government, and Parliament,” in *Patterns of Parliamentary Behavior. Passage of Legislation Across Western Europe*, eds. Herbert Döring and Mark Hallerberg (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 14–16 singles out three different types of government. The *fiefdom* government, for example, implies a high degree of autonomy. On the contrary, when ministers are more constrained in their actions, it would be possible to find the *delegation* or, alternatively, the *commitment* type. According to the first type, a strong prime minister formulates guidelines of policy and delegates strategic powers to the ministers, whereas, in the second situation, these ministers are bound by a coalition agreement. See also Mark Hallerberg and Jürgen von Hagen, “Electoral Institutions, Cabinet Negotiations, and Budget Deficits in the European Union,” in *Fiscal Institutions and Fiscal Performance*, eds. James N. Poterba and Jürgen von Hagen (London: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 214–219.

¹⁵ R.A.W. Rhodes, “From Prime Ministerial Power to Core Executive,” in *Prime Minister, Cabinet and Core Executive*, eds. R.A.W. Rhodes and Patrick Dunleavy (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1995), 15–26. As we shall see, the bureaucratic government model is included in those classifications of executives which analyse them from a more extensive point of view, whereas those authors dealing with cabinet *stricto sensu* do not directly tackle this issue; and this is the way I have chosen. However, this does not mean that I am not aware that sometimes bureaucracy plays a central role in governmental policy coordination. This has been the case, for example, with the Japanese government (e.g., Thomas A. Baylis, *Governing by Committee. Collegial Leadership in Advanced Societies* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), 84–88; Robert Elgie, *Political Leadership in Liberal Democracies* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1995), 155–159). On the involvement of civil servants in committee meetings see Jean-Louis Thiébault, “The Organisational Structure of Western European Cabinets and its Impact on Decision-Making,” in *Governing Together. The Extent and Limits of Joint Decision-Making in Western European Cabinets*, eds. Jean Blondel and Ferdinand Müller-Rommel (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1993), 86–87.

¹⁶ Brendan O’Leary, “An Taoiseach: The Irish Prime Minister,” in *West European Prime Ministers*, ed. G.W. Jones (London: Frank Cass, 1991), 154–156.

¹⁷ Michael Laver and Kenneth A. Shepsle, “Cabinet Ministers and Government Formation in Parliamentary Democracies,” in *Cabinet Ministers and Parliamentary Government*, eds. Michael Laver and Kenneth A. Shepsle (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 6–7. Criticisms of these two models are in Robert Elgie, “Models of Executive Politics: a Framework for the Study of Executive Power Relations in Parliamentary and Semi-presidential Regimes,” *Political Studies*, XLV, 2 (1997), 221.

TABLE 1: MODELS OF EXECUTIVE

	Prime ministerial government	Cabinet government	Ministerial government	Segmented	Bureaucratic government	Party government	Legislative government
Rhodes	X X	X	X	X	X		
O'Leary	X	X	X	X	X		
Laver and Shepsle	X	X	X		X	X	X

Source: Robert Elgie, "Models of Executive Politics: a Framework for the Study of Executive Power Relations in Parliamentary and Semi-presidential Regimes," *Political Studies*, XLV, 2 (1997), 220, modified.

By adopting a revised version of (Dunleavy and) Rhodes' proposal, Elgie, too, has sought to construct a framework for the study of executive politics (within both parliamentary and semi-presidential systems). He singles out six models: *monocratic government*; *collective government*; *ministerial government*; *bureaucratic government*; *shared government* (a highly restricted number of people are jointly responsible for taking decisions in all policy areas); *segmented government* (which is different from the shared government because there is a functional or sectorial distribution of power).¹⁸

A particular simplification of this picture is made by Keman, who limits the cases to the *prime ministerial*, the *collegial* and the *ministerial* ones.¹⁹

Mackie and Hogwood, for their part, suggest a classification of seven arenas "within which members of cabinet may arrive at what are effectively final government decisions, though these may subsequently have to be formally endorsed by full cabinet". These arenas are 1) *unilateral decisions*, "taken by a minister as head of a department or by other ministers or officials within his or her department"; 2) *'internalised' coordination* by a minister heading more than one department; 3) *bilateral decisions* resulting from discussions between two ministers; 4) *multilateral decisions* involving more than two ministers outside a formal framework; 5) *cabinet committee decisions*; 6) *cabinet decisions*, taken in the full cabinet; 7) *party decision* resulting from inter (or intra) party negotiations.²⁰

Not only Mackie and Hogwood (and Laver and Shepsle) take into account the party variable, but also Blondel does so. Unlike these authors, he does not create a taxonomy of models, but develops a typology of cabinet decision-making built upon three general dimensions: *the degree of party control*, *the extent of involvement of ministers* and *the role of the head of government*. Five types ensue from them. The first dimension distinguishes between autonomous and subordinate cabinets. A totally subordinate cabinet will be a *formal* cabinet if the prime minister is only an arbitrator and ministers devote themselves exclusively to their departments; usually, this

¹⁸ There are ten variants of the segmented government model. Ibid., 222–225. See also Robert Elgie, *The Role of the Prime Minister in France, 1981–91* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1993), 21–37.

¹⁹ Hans Keman, "Parties and Government: Features of Governing in Representative Democracies," in *Handbook of Party Politics*, eds. Richard S. Katz and William Crotty (London: Sage, [2006] 2009), 166–169.

²⁰ Thomas T. Mackie and Brian W. Hogwood, "Decision-making in Cabinet Government," in *Unlocking the Cabinet. Cabinet Structures in Comparative Perspective*, eds. Thomas T. Mackie and Brian W. Hogwood (London: Sage, 1985), 2–3. The same classification is in Thomas T. Mackie and Brian W. Hogwood, "Decision Arenas in Executive Decision Making: Cabinet Committees in Comparative Perspective," *British Journal of Political Science* 14, 3 (1984): 285–312. See also the five patterns of decision-making of Thomas A. Baylis, *Governing by Committee. Collegial Leadership in Advanced Societies* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), 145: he distinguishes between decisions made *in the department*; *in a sub-cabinet committee*; *in an extra-cabinet body*; *in the full cabinet*; and *by the chief executive him- or herself*.

type is associated with a coalition of strong parties. A more autonomous cabinet, especially with respect to minor issues, is an *administrative* cabinet, which may show two variants: when the prime minister is a 'good' arbitrator it may be called *consensual*; if, on the contrary, there were a weak prime minister not able to find solutions to inter-ministerial conflicts, the cabinet would be *arbitral*. An even more autonomous cabinet, with a fairly weak prime minister and with ministers eager to be involved in the decision-making may be labelled *collegial* cabinet. Finally, there is a *prime ministerial* cabinet when the head of government is a predominant activist and parties do not want to intervene (or are enable to do it); it is more likely in case of single-party government.²¹

All mentioned proposals – in part with the exception of Blondel's – do not succeed in clearly and analytically distinguishing between the two aforementioned different important aspects of the cabinet decision-making: 'who' decides (who has the power) and 'how' s/he decides (the used arenas and his or her relationships with other actors). Mackie and Hogwood, in addition, focus only on the second question, omitting to take the internal distribution of power in consideration, or, however, taking it into account only implicitly.

This is not true, instead, with respect, for example, to the Andeweg's work, in which these two ideas are kept strongly separated. Andeweg starts from the simple observation that too often the terms 'collegial' and 'collective' are used as synonyms, though they denote distinct dimensions of cabinets. Indeed,

"[t]he *collective* character of the government does not entail any specific distribution of power within the cabinet: it merely states that not one person (an individual minister or the prime minister) takes the decisions, but that all ministers are part of the process. Collective government is indeed the assumption that underlies the constitutional or customary rule of collective *responsibility*: it is largely concerned with the consequences of the involvement of ministers, whether such an involvement has been large or small, substantial or perfunctory.

The *collegial* character of the government is based on the principle that all ministers should have an *equal* say in the decision-making process. This corresponds to a different concept, that of collegial government, which is assumed by the principle of "one man, one vote" within the cabinet. The idea is present, whether or not matters are decided by votes and notwithstanding the fact that in most countries where cabinet government exists the prime minister has the casting vote in the event of a tie".²²

The ideal-type of cabinet is both collective and collegial. The two dimensions are analytically different, and they are to be considered as continua.²³

As for collegiality, at one extreme, a cabinet may be guided by a powerful prime minister and thus be 'monocratic' and, at the other, be truly collegial.

²¹ Jean Blondel, "Decisioni di governo e vincoli partitici," *Rivista italiana di scienza politica*, XIX, 2 (1989), 218–219.

²² Rudy Andeweg, "A Model of the Cabinet System: The Dimensions of Cabinet Decision-Making Processes," in *Governing Together. The Extent and Limits of Joint Decision-Making in Western European Cabinets*, eds. Jean Blondel and Ferdinand Müller-Rommel (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993), 25–26, emphases original.

²³ Rudy Andeweg, "Collegiality and Collectivity: Cabinets, Cabinet Committees, and Cabinet Ministers," in *The Hollow Crown. Countervailing Trends in Core Executive*, eds. Patrick Weller, Herman Bakvis and R.A.W. Rhodes (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1997), 61.

One indicator of the *monocratic* character can be the prime ministerial power to give instructions to individual ministers within their field of action in their departments.²⁴ On the contrary, the cabinet will be *collegial* if the power is equally distributed among ministers.²⁵ Between such extremes, there are some situations in which a small group of ministers dominates the life of the cabinet. In this case, the cabinet can be named *oligarchical*. The indicator “*par excellence*” suggested by Andeweg is the existence of an inner cabinet²⁶ (formal or informal). In some cases, inner cabinets may reinforce the position of the prime minister (i.e., in Britain); in others, they seem to reduce the “potentially ‘monocratic’ ambitions of the prime minister”. They are indicators of oligarchical cabinets only in the latter situation.²⁷

Andeweg trichotomises also the second dimension. Like Mackie and Hogwood, he thinks in terms of arenas. *Collective* cabinets, where decisions are mainly taken in the meetings of the full cabinet, are opposed to *fragmented* governments, where “there are few interactions or common meetings of cabinet ministers and in which each minister, together with his or her department officials, in effect forms a self-contained decision-making system”.²⁸ Between these two extremes it is possible to find a situation of *segmented* decision-making. Segmentation can be based on divisions on policy areas or be a result of divisions based on party political cleavages; meetings of ministers of the same party are frequent in coalitions.²⁹

The combination of the two dimensions forms a typology of governments on the basis of their internal decision-making processes.³⁰ The result is shown in table 2.

²⁴ Rudy Andeweg, “A Model of the Cabinet System: The Dimensions of Cabinet Decision-Making Processes,” in *Governing Together. The Extent and Limits of Joint Decision-Making in Western European Cabinets*, eds. Jean Blondel and Ferdinand Müller-Rommel (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1993), 27.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 28; underlines that “such cabinets are collegial only in a relative sense and by comparison with other types of cabinets”.

²⁶ An inner cabinet can be defined as “a group of senior ministers meeting collectively and regularly to discuss the main lines of government policy and giving shape and coherence to overall policy”. See Simon James, “Relations between Prime Minister and Cabinet: From Wilson to Thatcher,” in *Prime Minister, Cabinet and Core Executive*, eds. R.A.W. Rhodes and Patrick Dunleavy (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1995), 81.

²⁷ Rudy Andeweg, “A Model of the Cabinet System: The Dimensions of Cabinet Decision-Making Processes,” in *Governing Together. The Extent and Limits of Joint Decision-Making in Western European Cabinets*, eds. Jean Blondel and Ferdinand Müller-Rommel (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1993), 28.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 31.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 29–30.

³⁰ *Ibid.*; Rudy Andeweg, “Collegiality and Collectivity: Cabinets, Cabinet Committees, and Cabinet Ministers,” in *The Hollow Crown. Countervailing Trends in Core Executive*, eds. Patrick Weller, Herman Bakvis and R.A.W. Rhodes (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1997), 62; Rudy Andeweg, “On Studying Governments,” in *Governing Europe*, eds. Jack Hayward and Anand Menon (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 47. This typology can be also applied to those systems which are not parliamentary. For example, Ludger Helms, *Presidents, Prime Ministers and Chancellors. Executive Leadership in Western Democracies* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2005); 233 ff. uses this framework for the study of the US government. The Swiss Federal Council can be treated as a fragmented and collegial government Rudy Andeweg, “On Studying Governments,” in *Governing Europe*, eds. Jack Hayward and Anand Menon (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 47.

TABLE 2: TYPES OF CABINETS ACCORDING TO ANDEWEG

		Fragmented individual	Segmented		Centralized collective
			Sectoral	Partisan	
Centralised	Prime ministerial	1	4	7	10
		Globally dominated cabinets	Dominated cabinet committee arrangements	Dominated consociational cabinets	Cabinets with a dominating chairman
	Oligarchical	2	5	8	11
		Clientelist cabinets	'Overlord'-based cabinets	Coalition committee-based cabinets	Cabinets with an 'inner circle'
Dispersed	Collegial	3	6	9	12
		Ressortprinzip cabinets	Autonomous cabinet committees	Consociational cabinets	Truly collective and collegial cabinets

Source: Rudy Andeweg, "A Model of the Cabinet System: The Dimensions of Cabinet Decision-Making Processes," in *Governing Together. The Extent and Limits of Joint Decision-Making in Western European Cabinets*, eds. Jean Blondel and Ferdinand Müller-Rommel (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993), 33.

It is worth noting that types 7, 8 and 9 apply only to cases of coalitions or single-party governments when the party in power is characterized by an high factionalism.³¹

This typology is a very good starting point to study cabinets. However, as we shall see, it shows some problems. For now, let us take into account the criticism put forward by Barbieri. The author suggests to remove the distinction between sectoral and partisan segmentation and proposes a single general concept of segmentation because the partisan character of the decision-making process may affect all arenas and not only the inter-ministerial meetings; furthermore, Barbieri considers the party variable as something external to the typology. This modification reduces the number of types of cabinets from twelve to nine, but, as for the rest, the result is substantially similar.³²

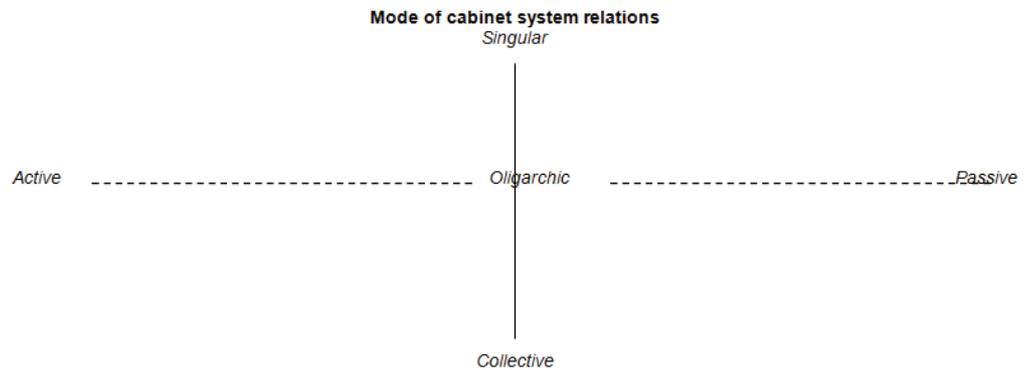
Burch and Holliday choose a similar approach. They call the two dimensions *prime ministerial style* and *mode of cabinet system relations among top personnel*. According to them, a prime minister can be *active* or, on the contrary, *passive*. With regard to the mode of cabinet relations, the authors isolate three modes: *singular*, *oligarchic* and *collective*³³ (figure 1).

³¹ Rudy Andeweg, "A Model of the Cabinet System: The Dimensions of Cabinet Decision-Making Processes," in *Governing Together. The Extent and Limits of Joint Decision-Making in Western European Cabinets*, eds. Jean Blondel and Ferdinand Müller-Rommel (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993), 36.

³² Cristina Barbieri, *Il capo del governo in Italia. Una ricerca empirica* (Milano: Giuffrè, 2001), 36; Cristina Barbieri, "Dentro il cabinet. Novità istituzionali nei rapporti tra ministri," in *Il governo e i suoi apparati. L'evoluzione del caso italiano in prospettiva comparata*, eds. Cristina Barbieri and Luca Verzichelli (Genova: Name, 2003), 121.

³³ Martin Burch and Ian Holliday, *The British Cabinet System* (Hemel Hempstead: Prentice Hall/Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1996), 143–146. For a similar analysis see Simon James, "The Cabinet System Since 1945: Fragmentation and Integration," *Parliamentary Affairs*, 47, 4 (1994), 621–626. The author distinguishes, on the one hand, between *strong leadership*, *medium leadership* and *weak leadership*, and, on the other, between *weak collegiality*, *medium collegiality* and *strong collegiality*.

FIGURE 1: TONES OF ADMINISTRATIONS ACCORDING TO BURCH AND HOLLIDAY



Source: Martin Burch and Ian Holliday, *The British Cabinet System* (Hemel Hempstead: Prentice Hall/Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1996), 146.

The two dimensions of collectivity and collegiality – even if the terms are not yet again the same – are used by Aucoin to analyse the Canadian cabinet.³⁴ He identifies four “basic modes of cabinet government”. One mode is *collegial*: it entails that ministers bring their proposals to their colleagues, and decisions are then collectively taken; it is consistent both with the full cabinet and cabinet committees. In the *conglomerate* mode ministers are not required or encouraged to bring all matters before cabinet for collective decisions, there is a great ministerial autonomy, and the policy is managed by departments. Thirdly, in the *corporate* mode, co-ordination of matters encompassing the responsibilities of the cabinet as a whole is highly centralised. Finally, *command* mode takes two forms: in the first form, prime minister uses a “small circle of the most senior ministers to set the government’s strategic policy priorities and plans and to settle major disputes among ministers”. The second form is an essentially unilateral exercise of personal power by the prime minister.³⁵

As highlighted by Weller and Bakvis, these modes stem from the combination of two dimensions, named *centralisation* (collegiality in Andeweg) and *integration-differentiation* (collectivity in Andeweg) by Aucoin.³⁶

TABLE 3: MODELS OF CABINET DECISION-MAKING ACCORDING TO AUCOIN

	Integrated	Differentiated
Centralised	Command	Corporate
Decentralised	Collegial	Conglomerate

Source: Patrick Weller and Herman Bakvis, “The Hollow Crown: Coherence and Capacity in Central Government,” in *The Hollow Crown. Countervailing Trends in Core Executive*, eds. Patrick Weller, Herman Bakvis and R.A.W. Rhodes (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1997), 5.

³⁴ With regard to the Canadian executive see also Colin Campbell, “Political Leadership in Canada: Pierre Elliot Trudeau and the Ottawa Model,” in *Presidents and Prime Ministers*, eds. Richard Rose and Ezra N. Suleiman (Washington: AEI, [1980] 1982), 85–86. Here the author posits four styles of executive leadership: *broker politics*; *administrative politics*; *the planning and priorities style*; *the politics of survival*.

³⁵ Peter Aucoin, “Prime Minister and Cabinet. Power at the Apex,” in *Canadian Politics*, eds. James Bickerton and Alain-G. Gagnon (Peterborough: Broadview Press, [1999] 2000), 119–126.

³⁶ Patrick Weller and Herman Bakvis, “The Hollow Crown: Coherence and Capacity in Central Government,” in *The Hollow Crown. Countervailing Trends in Core Executive*, eds. Patrick Weller, Herman Bakvis and R.A.W. Rhodes (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1997), 4–5. See also the quotation in Rudy Andeweg, “Collegiality and Collectivity: Cabinets, Cabinet Committees, and Cabinet Ministers” in the same book, 61.

Up to this point, we have reviewed the literature relevant to classifications and typologies of cabinets. This step will come in useful in the next section to build a new typology, which, as pointed out, is a re-assessment of the Andeweg's work on cabinet decision-making.

3 TYPES OF CABINETS: A NEW PROPOSAL

3.1 A Preliminary Assessment of the Literature

In the first place, I have to show what does not work in the mentioned proposals in order to understand why a new typology can be useful.

I have stated that a study on cabinets must be based, first and foremost, on two specific aspects of governments, namely the internal distribution of power among the members and the degree of centralization of the decision-making process. These are the two dimensions that Andeweg (and Barbieri), Burch and Holliday, and Aucoin take into account. On the contrary – it is worth underlining it once more – the other authors do not make any analytical distinction of this kind; indeed, they suggest models of cabinet government by blurring the two dimensions, or, as in the case of Mackie and Hogwood, taking into consideration only one of them (the arenas for the decision-making).

I argue that the two dimensions at issue are key aspects for the analysis of cabinets because, in order to single out different types of cabinets according to their ways of taking decisions (that is, our aim), we need to know not only where decisions are taken or how many people are involved, but also who has the real power to decide, to set the agenda and how s/he exerts his or her influence. And these two factors must be clearly distinguished; as Andeweg has shown, a certain structure of power may be compatible with more than one type of decision-making arena. A strong prime minister may exercise his or her power mainly through bilateral meetings or, for example, in the full cabinet. On the other hand, equal ministers may be very autonomous in taking policy decisions or be required to bring all matters before their colleagues. Obviously, the two dimensions are related³⁷, but possibilities of different 'combinations' remain.³⁸

As I have pointed out, Blondel seems to have somehow in mind these aspects. Indeed, he talks about the role of the head of government and the extent of involvement of ministers. The former dimension implies, in a rough manner, the distribution of power within government, but it takes into account only the strength of the prime minister, without giving attention, for example, to the presence of oligarchies. As for the latter, it tells us only whether ministers tend to be involved in the cabinet decision-making or operate mainly in their departments, but it is not clear how this occurs.

Then, with regard to the third Blondel's dimension – the degree of party control –, it is external to cabinets, not internal, and therefore we cannot use it in order to build an *internal* typology of cabinets based on types of *internal*

³⁷ Cristina Barbieri, *Il capo del governo in Italia. Una ricerca empirica* (Milano: Giuffrè, 2001), 36–37.

³⁸ Rudy Andeweg, "Collegiality and Collectivity: Cabinets, Cabinet Committees, and Cabinet Ministers," in *The Hollow Crown. Countervailing Trends in Core Executive*, eds. Patrick Weller, Herman Bakvis and R.A.W. Rhodes (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1997), 62–63.

decision-making, whose dynamics are to be studied regardless of the degree of cabinet autonomy from other political institutions and organisations. To be sure, the party influence on governments is a key factor for the forms of cabinet decision-making, but it affects these from 'outside'. Elgie is right when he says that "although it is undoubtedly the case that party concerns will alter the balance of power amongst ... actors [within the executive], parties (including parliamentary parties) are external to the executive".³⁹ Andeweg is well-aware of this: according to him, cabinets may be more or less dependent and therefore more or less central to the national decision-making process, and "what is specifically at stake is the role of the political parties forming the government", but this kind of restriction is external to the cabinet.⁴⁰

For all these reasons, Andeweg's and Aucoin's (and Barbieri's and Burch and Holliday's) proposals seem to be stronger than the other mentioned works.⁴¹ As said, my proposal arises from a re-assessment of the Andeweg's typology. I have chosen it because it is the most precise and comprehensive; nonetheless, as pointed out, it suffers from some problems: first of all, there is an oversimplification of an important aspect of cabinet decision-making, namely the influence of the party variable. I agree with Barbieri when she says that it affects all types of decision-making arenas and not only the inter-ministerial ones and that it would be worth treating this variable only as an external factor with respect to the typology. Consequently, henceforth, when I will use the term 'segmentation', I will refer to a single category, without further distinctions. Let us see the other problematic points.

3.2 The Dimensions of the Typology

My typology is built upon the two aforementioned dimensions: I will call them *distribution of power* (collegiality in Andeweg) and *centralisation of the decision-making process* (collectivity in Andeweg). But I will deal with them in a different way.

Firstly, let us look at the second dimension. What we are interested in here is the type of horizontal co-ordination of the whole cabinet decision-making process. With regard to this, it is possible to say that the more the arenas in which decisions are taken are inclusive in terms of participants, and the higher the degree of centralisation of decision-making will be.

As we have seen, Andeweg trichotomises this dimension between fragmentation, segmentation and collectivity. He considers the segmentation as a specific way of taking decisions that characterizes some cabinets and not others. Under his reasoning, some cabinets might be fragmented, others segmented, and others collective. But this is not true, if we look at the reality. All cabinets show some degree of segmentation, whereas completely fragmented or totally collective cabinets do not exist. There are always some "cohabiting" forces which drive to centralisation or, on the contrary, to decentralisation, but none of them succeed in taking the upper hand. As a

³⁹ Robert Elgie, "Models of Executive Politics: a Framework for the Study of Executive Power Relations in Parliamentary and Semi-presidential Regimes," *Political Studies*, XLV, 2 (1997), 221.

⁴⁰ Rudy Andeweg, "A Model of the Cabinet System: The Dimensions of Cabinet Decision-Making Processes," in *Governing Together. The Extent and Limits of Joint Decision-Making in Western European Cabinets*, eds. Jean Blondel and Ferdinand Müller-Rommel (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993), 24. Another variation based on the type of relationship with the external environment is that between "representative" cabinets and "administrative" cabinets. Jean Blondel, "Introduction: Western European Cabinets in Comparative Perspective," in *Cabinets in Western Europe*, eds. Jean Blondel and Ferdinand Müller-Rommel (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1997), 12–13.

⁴¹ It is not a case that they are typologies and not mere classifications. See above, footnote 9.

consequence of workload, of the technical nature of business, and of cabinet sizes, the full cabinet has lost its decision-making function and in many cases it has become an arena with the function of rubber stamp for decisions taken elsewhere, or, at most, a court of appeal.⁴² Andeweg himself asserts that the cell of his typology representing the case of the ideal-type cabinet (collective and collegial) “is probably empty”⁴³, and Blondel and Manning point out that “[t]he stipulation that all governmental decisions should be taken by all the members is obviously unrealistic”.⁴⁴

To the opposite extreme, the same can be said with regard to the idea of fragmented decision-making. Ministers are not simply “policy dictators”⁴⁵ within their portfolio, operating without interference by other ministers and by cabinet as collective entity. A minimum of co-ordination is always necessary. Usually, ministers are both heads of departments and agents of the cabinet.⁴⁶

Therefore, we are confronted with a typology with some empty types. But why should we keep them? In order to tackle and solve this problem, the dimension of the centralisation of the decision-making can be reduced to only two categories: *decentralised* (fragmented) decision-making and *centralised* (integrated) decision-making. There is centralisation when the decision-making process develops *for the most and important part* within inter-ministerial arenas (the Council of Ministers being the most inclusive) and not in periphery, that is, in single departments, as is the case with decentralisation and extensively autonomous ministers. It is worth reminding that the dimensions are continua, and that a full centralization would entail a totally collective decision-making. This dichotomisation is similar in Aucoin. He sees the cabinet committee system⁴⁷ as the natural development of collective government. Cabinet committees – he argues – “check the tendency for individual ministers to ... become primarily departmental spokespersons rather than cabinet ministers responsible for ensuring that their departments function as part of an integrated whole”. Both the full

⁴² Jean-Louis Thiébaud, “The Organisational Structure of Western European Cabinets and its Impact on Decision-Making,” in *Governing Together. The Extent and Limits of Joint Decision-Making in Western European Cabinets*, eds. Jean Blondel and Ferdinand Müller-Rommel (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1993), 78–79.

⁴³ Rudy Andeweg, “Collegiality and Collectivity: Cabinets, Cabinet Committees, and Cabinet Ministers,” in *The Hollow Crown. Countervailing Trends in Core Executive*, eds. Patrick Weller, Herman Bakvis and R.A.W. Rhodes (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1997), 62.

⁴⁴ Jean Blondel and Nick Manning “Do Ministers Do What They Say? Ministerial Unreliability, Collegial and Hierarchical Governments,” *Political Studies*, 50, 3 (2002), 462. In fact, the two authors define collegial (collective for Andeweg) government only on the basis of these three conditions (p. 468): a) “it is composed of senior policy makers ... forming a compact group as a result of most of them having known and worked with each other in a political party and in the legislature for a substantial period before joining the government”; b) “all major government policy matters go to this group for final ratification”; c) “the members of the group are responsible for and publicly support the overall mass of decisions that have been ratified”. It is clear that the notion of collective decision-making is not required. For a more classic position see Thomas A. Baylis, *Governing by Committee. Collegial Leadership in Advanced Societies* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), 7.

⁴⁵ Michael Laver and Kenneth A. Shepsle, “Coalitions and Cabinet Government,” *The American Political Science Review*, 84, 3 (1990), 888; Michael Laver and Kenneth A. Shepsle, “Cabinet Ministers and Parliamentary Government: a Research Agenda,” in *Developing Democracy. Comparative Research in Honour of J. F. P. Blondel*, eds. Ian Budge and David McKay (London: Sage, 1994); Michael Laver and Kenneth A. Shepsle, *Making and Breaking Governments. Cabinets and Legislatures in Parliamentary Democracies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

⁴⁶ Rudy Andeweg, “Ministers As Double Agents? The Delegation Process Between Cabinet and Ministers,” *European Journal of Political Research*, 37, 3 (2000), 377-379; Jean Blondel and Nick Manning “Do Ministers Do What They Say? Ministerial Unreliability, Collegial and Hierarchical Governments,” *Political Studies*, 50, 3 (2002), 455-460; Kaare Strøm, Wolfgang C. Müller and Torbjörn Bergman (eds.), *Delegation and Accountability in Parliamentary Democracies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, [2003] 2006).

⁴⁷ Thomas T. Mackie and Brian W. Hogwood (eds.), *Unlocking the Cabinet. Cabinet Structures in Comparative Perspective* (London: Sage, 1985); Giovanni Sartori, *Elementi di teoria politica*, (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1995), 401–410.

cabinet and committees may be employed; however, “[i]n either case, ... ministerial and departmental autonomy is sacrificed to a more integrated authority structure”.⁴⁸

As for the other dimension – the internal distribution of power –, it ought to be better delineated. The main problem concerns the category of the oligarchical distribution. As King has pointed out, there are strong prime ministers, weak prime ministers and chief executives with a medium degree of influence within government.⁴⁹ In the first case, the distribution of power is clearly monocratic, and we are confronted with *prime ministerial* (monocratic) governments.⁵⁰ Even if there were an oligarchy, it would be a mere instrument to reinforce the role of the prime minister.⁵¹ The situation changes when there is a weaker head of government.⁵² In particular, when an oligarchical distribution of power is associated with the presence of a prime minister with a medium degree of influence, the premier will be likely a member of the oligarchy with a significant role. In other words, the prime minister is not so strong to be in a position of predominance, but s/he is not so weak to be excluded from the group which guides the cabinet or, however, to have no substantial voice in the decision-making process. To sum up, s/he is a “*primus of the primi*”.⁵³ If, instead, the head of government is a truly weak chief executive, an arbitrator who only mediates among ministers, s/he will not probably be an important part of the leading group, which will be characterized by an acephalous structure. Therefore, the category of the oligarchical distribution of power needs a further distinction: the oligarchy may be *with prime minister* or, on the contrary, *acephalous*.⁵⁴

With regard to the notion of collegial cabinet, I suggest to change the label, and to simply call this type of distribution *dispersed power*. This is due to the fact that, as pointed out, truly collegial cabinets no longer exist (and perhaps they never existed), even when the prime minister is not predominant and there is not a defined oligarchy. Indeed, there are always some senior ministers. At worst, a special role is occupied by the minister of finance⁵⁵,

⁴⁸ Peter Aucoin, “Prime Minister and Cabinet. Power at the Apex,” in *Canadian Politics*, eds. James Bickerton and Alain-G. Gagnon (Peterborough: Broadview Press, [1999] 2000), 120.

⁴⁹ Anthony King, “‘Chief Executives’ in Western Europe,” in *Developing Democracy. Comparative Research in Honour of J. F. P. Blondel*, eds. Ian Budge and David McKay (London: Sage, 1994), 152-153. See also Eoin O’Malley, “The Power of Prime Ministers: Results of an Expert Survey,” *International Political Science Review*, 28, 1 (2007), 16-18.

⁵⁰ However, it is worth noting that the prime ministerial power, even in these cases, is never absolute and unconditional, and that it depends on the degree of control of several types of resources (Richard Heffernan, “Prime Ministerial Predominance? Core Executive Politics in the UK,” *British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, 5, 3 (2003), 351-356), among which there are, for example, the important support structures (Ferdinand Müller-Rommel, “Ministers and the Role of the Prime Ministerial Staff,” in *Governing Together. The Extent and Limits of Joint Decision-Making in Western European Cabinets*, eds. Jean Blondel and Ferdinand Müller-Rommel (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1993), 135-141; Guy B. Peters, R.A.W. Rhodes and Vincent Wright (eds.), *Administering the Summit. Administration of the Core Executive in Developed Countries* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000); Jean Blondel, Ferdinand Müller-Rommel and Darina Malová, *Governing New European Democracies* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2007), chap. 8; Ferdinand Müller-Rommel, “Prime Ministerial Staff in Post-Communist Central and Eastern Europe: A Role Assessment by Cabinet Ministers,” *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*, 24, 2 (2008), 256-271).

⁵¹ Rudy Andeweg, “A Model of the Cabinet System: The Dimensions of Cabinet Decision-Making Processes,” in *Governing Together. The Extent and Limits of Joint Decision-Making in Western European Cabinets*, eds. Jean Blondel and Ferdinand Müller-Rommel (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1993), 28.

⁵² I am grateful to Professor Cristina Barbieri for having raised this point.

⁵³ André-Paul Frogner, “Belgium: A Complex Cabinet in a Fragmented Polity,” in *Cabinets in Western Europe*, eds. Jean Blondel and Ferdinand Müller-Rommel (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1997), 92.

⁵⁴ Note that the prime minister can be part of the oligarchy or outside it. However, the important point is that, even when in the oligarchy, s/he is not so strong to be more influential than the other members. The oligarchy is acephalous because there are no prominent figures inside it. An opposite situation is that of the oligarchy with prime minister.

⁵⁵ Torbjörn Larsson, “The Role and Position of Ministers of Finance,” in *Governing Together. The Extent and Limits of Joint Decision-Making in Western European Cabinets*, eds. Jean Blondel and Ferdinand

given his or her possibility to interfere in a great number of decisions taken by his or her colleagues. According to Larsson, “the minister of finance can even be regarded as a second prime minister, since no other minister is involved in all the aspects of the life of the cabinet in the way the minister of finance is”.⁵⁶

However, when power is almost equally dispersed among ministers, neither individuals nor groups are able to determine for the most part the governmental policy. On the contrary, when power is primarily exercised by the prime minister alone or by an oligarchy, there is a marked deviation from the notion of collegial government; however, this does not mean that who is not prime minister or member of the oligarchy has not a voice in the decision-making process.

3.3 Types of Cabinets

By combining the two dimensions, a new typology arises. It makes it possible to single out eight types of cabinets on the basis of their internal decision-making process (table 4).

TABLE 4: TYPES OF CABINETS

Internal distribution of power		Centralisation of the decision-making process	
		DECENTRALISED	CENTRALISED
PRIME MINISTERIAL		1. Radially dominated cabinet	2. Dominated cabinet with centralised decision-making
OLIGARCHICAL	WITH PRIME MINISTER	3. Ministerial cabinet with guided oligarchy	4. Inner circle with prime minister-based cabinet
	ACEPHALOUS	5. Ministerial cabinet with acephalous oligarchy	6. Acephalous inner circle-based cabinet
DISPERSED POWER		7. Cabinet with autonomous and 'separated' ministers	8. Acephalous cabinet with centralised decision-making

In a *radially dominated cabinet* (type 1), the decision-making process develops especially in the periphery and is channelled through integrated arenas only when it is necessary. The prime minister is predominant⁵⁷ within cabinet, s/he gives instructions to individual ministers and decides the governmental programme and lines of action; s/he exercises his or her power mainly by means of bilateral meetings with the ministers. In short, as Hefferman and Webb assert, the prime minister “is at the centre of an

Müller-Rommel (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993), 212-218; Jean Blondel, Ferdinand Müller-Rommel and Darina Malová, *Governing New European Democracies* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2007), chap. 11.

⁵⁶ Torbjörn Larsson, “The Role and Position of Ministers of Finance,” in *Governing Together. The Extent and Limits of Joint Decision-Making in Western European Cabinets*, eds. Jean Blondel and Ferdinand Müller-Rommel (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993), 207–208.

⁵⁷ Saying that a prime minister is predominant is not equal to say that s/he commands the executive and controls its action as if s/he were a ‘*primus solus*’, such as the American president (Giovanni Sartori, *Ingegneria costituzionale comparata. Strutture, incentivi ed esiti* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2004), 117); rather, it means that s/he is prominent enough to be a head of government “with more authority and power than other actors ... , a ‘stronger or main element’ within the ... executive” (Richard Hefferman, “Prime Ministerial Predominance? Core Executive Politics in the UK,” *British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, 5, 3 (2003), 349). It goes without saying that the degree of these authority and power can vary.

interlocking network of bilateral contacts”.⁵⁸ Konrad Adenauer cabinets clearly fit in with the radially dominated type of government. Adenauer’s dominance of the executive has been defined “legendary”⁵⁹ and the post-war German political system has been described as a ‘Chancellor Democracy’ (*Kanzlerdemokratie*). During this time, the preparatory work for chief executive’s political decisions was mainly carried out in the Chancellor’s Office⁶⁰, and then the impact of this work reached the ministries.⁶¹ Further noticeable examples are those of Margaret Thatcher and Tony Blair in Britain. The former made a great use of bilateral meetings to the detriment of the cabinet as a collegial institution;⁶² the latter – another premier with a high degree of domination of the decision-making process – went much further than even Mrs Thatcher did. Neither the full cabinet – employed as a simple court of appeal or a clearing house for issues not settled elsewhere – nor the cabinet committees were the real decision-making arenas. Once again, this role was played by bilateral meetings between the prime minister and individual ministers.⁶³

If a monocratic distribution of power is associated with a tendentially centralized decision-making process, there will be a *dominated cabinet with*

⁵⁸ Richard Hefferman and Paul Webb, “The British Prime Minister: Much More Than ‘First Among Equals’,” in *The Presidentialization of Politics. A Comparative Study of Modern Democracies*, eds. Thomas Poguntke and Paul Webb (Oxford: Oxford University Press [2005] 2007), 40.

⁵⁹ Ludger Helms, *Presidents, Prime Ministers and Chancellors. Executive Leadership in Western Democracies* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2005), 104.

⁶⁰ Ferdinand Müller-Rommel, “Management of Politics in the German Chancellor’s Office,” in *Administering the Summit. Administration of the Core Executive in Developed Countries*, eds. Guy B. Peters, R.A.W. Rhodes and Vincent Wright (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000), 92-93.

⁶¹ Ferdinand Müller-Rommel, “Federal Republic of Germany: A System of Chancellor Government,” in *Cabinets in Western Europe*, eds. Jean Blondel and Ferdinand Müller-Rommel (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1997), 181-182. See also Ferdinand Müller-Rommel, “The Centre of Government in West Germany: Changing Patterns under 14 Legislatures (1949-1987),” *European Journal of Political Research*, 16, 2 (1988), 182; Ludger Helms, *Presidents, Prime Ministers and Chancellors. Executive Leadership in Western Democracies* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2005), 104-105. In Germany three constitutional principles are at stake: the Chancellor principle (*Kanzlerprinzip*), the Minister principle (*Ressortprinzip*) and the Cabinet principle (*Kabinettsprinzip*); the third “is the least important” (Robert Elgie, *Political Leadership in Liberal Democracies* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1995), 85). Ministers enjoy a so large autonomy in the decision-making that Mayntz has defined them “as sectoral leaders who exercise executive authority in their own right and not merely in the Chancellor’s name” (Renate Mayntz, “Executive Leadership in Germany: Dispersion of Power or ‘Kanzlerdemokratie’?” in *Presidents and Prime Ministers*, eds. Richard Rose and Ezra N. Suleiman (Washington: AEI, [1980] 1982), 150; but the departmentalisation of the policy-making process is counterbalanced by the co-ordinating role played by the head of government, who enjoys the authority to formulate guidelines of policy. Ibid.; Ferdinand Müller-Rommel, “The Centre of Government in West Germany: Changing Patterns under 14 Legislatures (1949-1987),” *European Journal of Political Research*, 16, 2 (1988), 180-184; Ferdinand Müller-Rommel, “The Role of German Ministers in Cabinet Decision-Making,” in *Cabinet Ministers and Parliamentary Government*, eds. Michael Laver and Kenneth A. Shepsle (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 154-159; Robert Elgie, *Political Leadership in Liberal Democracies* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1995), chap. 4; Ferdinand Müller-Rommel, “Federal Republic of Germany: A System of Chancellor Government,” in *Cabinets in Western Europe*, eds. Jean Blondel and Ferdinand Müller-Rommel (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1997).

⁶² Kevin Theakston, “Political Skills and Context in Prime Ministerial Leadership in Britain,” in *Leadership in Context*, eds. Erwin C. Hargrove and John E. Owens (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003), 100-104; Ludger Helms, *Presidents, Prime Ministers and Chancellors. Executive Leadership in Western Democracies* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2005); 80-81.

⁶³ Richard Hefferman, “Prime Ministerial Predominance? Core Executive Politics in the UK,” *British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, 5, 3 (2003), 358-369; Kevin Theakston, “Political Skills and Context in Prime Ministerial Leadership in Britain,” in *Leadership in Context*, eds. Erwin C. Hargrove and John E. Owens (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003), 115-118; Ludger Helms, *Presidents, Prime Ministers and Chancellors. Executive Leadership in Western Democracies* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2005), 83-86; Oreste Massari, “Gran Bretagna: verso la presidenzializzazione?” in *Capi di governo*, ed. Gianfranco Pasquino (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2005), 122. Another important feature of the Blair premiership was the close relationship between the premier and the Chancellor of the Exchequer Gordon Brown, who in turn became prime minister in 2007. Richard Hefferman, “Prime Ministerial Predominance? Core Executive Politics in the UK,” *British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, 5, 3 (2003), 365-367; Ludger Helms, *Presidents, Prime Ministers and Chancellors. Executive Leadership in Western Democracies* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2005), 85; Richard Hefferman and Paul Webb, “The British Prime Minister: Much More Than ‘First Among Equals’,” in *The Presidentialization of Politics. A Comparative Study of Modern Democracies*, eds. Thomas Poguntke and Paul Webb (Oxford: Oxford University Press [2005] 2007), 40-41.

centralized decision-making (type 2). In this case, the chief executive wields the power for the most part through cabinet committees, other informal inter-ministerial meetings, or, to the extreme, the Council of Ministers, with all ministers attending. British cabinets – which, since the Second World War, have had a developed and important ramified system of committees and subcommittees⁶⁴ – have followed this pattern on several occasions. A pronounced combination of a strong leadership and good degrees of collectivity may be found in the Edward Heath cabinet. Heath was determined to be a strong prime minister, but, at the same time, made an intensive use of committees and devoted himself to maintain the ministerial collectivity.⁶⁵

As we have seen, some cabinets and their decision-making processes are dominated by an oligarchy. When the prime minister is a member of this group with an important say in the formulation of policies and the domination of the decision-making process is exercised mainly through bilateral meetings with individual ministers, the cabinet is a *ministerial cabinet with guided oligarchy* (type 3). In Italy – a country with a tradition, in particular until the 1980s, of very weak prime ministers⁶⁶ – the Craxi administration seemed to reproduce in part these characteristics. Indeed, Craxi, the leader of the Socialist Party, tried to exert a sturdy leadership, but he never guided a monocratic government, but, rather, a strongly oligarchical coalition cabinet.⁶⁷

On the contrary, in an *inner circle with prime minister-based cabinet* (type 4), a similar oligarchical group exercises its influence within a cabinet which decides mainly through partially or totally collective arenas. Belgian cabinets have often associated a quite collective decision-making with an oligarchical distribution of power and, at the same time, a growing personalisation of the

⁶⁴ Brian W. Hogwood and Thomas T. Mackie, "The United Kingdom: Decision Sifting in a Secret Garden," in *Unlocking the Cabinet. Cabinet Structures in Comparative Perspective*, eds. Thomas T. Mackie and Brian W. Hogwood (London: Sage, 1985); Simon James, "The Cabinet System Since 1945: Fragmentation and Integration," *Parliamentary Affairs*, 47, 4 (1994), 613-619; Patrick Dunleavy, "Estimating the Distribution of Positional Influence in Cabinet Committees under Major," in *Prime Minister, Cabinet and Core Executive*, eds. R.A.W. Rhodes and Patrick Dunleavy (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1995), 299-304; Simon James, "Relations between Prime Minister and Cabinet: From Wilson to Thatcher," in *Prime Minister, Cabinet and Core Executive*, eds. R.A.W. Rhodes and Patrick Dunleavy (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1995), 69-73; Martin Burch, "The United Kingdom," in *Cabinets in Western Europe*, eds. Jean Blondel and Ferdinand Müller-Rommel (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1997), 28-29.

⁶⁵ Ludger Helms, *Presidents, Prime Ministers and Chancellors. Executive Leadership in Western Democracies* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2005), 77-79. Brian W. Hogwood and Thomas T. Mackie, "The United Kingdom: Decision Sifting in a Secret Garden," in *Unlocking the Cabinet. Cabinet Structures in Comparative Perspective*, eds. Thomas T. Mackie and Brian W. Hogwood (London: Sage, 1985), 51-52 reports a quotation from *The Times* of 7 February 1984, according to which, during the Heath government, "all Cabinet committee decisions, even non-controversial ones, were reported to the Cabinet, giving ministers who had not been closely involved the opportunity to have their say".

⁶⁶ As Mauro Calise, "Presidentialization, Italian Style," in *The Presidentialization of Politics. A Comparative Study of Modern Democracies*, eds. Thomas Poguntke and Paul Webb (Oxford: Oxford University Press, [2005] 2007), 96 points out, the Italian prime minister, before those years, was "scarcely even *primus inter pares*, with the status of little more than a mediator among the parties (and factions) that comprised his government". See the same work for a study on the strengthening of the prime ministerial figure in Italy in the last two decades. On the weakness of the Italian prime minister see Sabino Cassese, "Is There a Government in Italy? Politics and Administration at the Top," in *Presidents and Prime Ministers*, eds. Richard Rose and Ezra N. Suleiman (Washington: AEI, [1980] 1982); David Hine and Renato Finocchi, "The Italian Prime Minister," in *West European Prime Ministers*, ed. G.W. Jones (London: Frank Cass, 1991), 79-88. Robert Elgie, *Political Leadership in Liberal Democracies* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1995), chapter 7.

⁶⁷ Maurizio Cotta, "Italy: A Fragmented Government," in *Cabinets in Western Europe*, eds. Jean Blondel and Ferdinand Müller-Rommel (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1997), 148; Cristina Barbieri, "Dentro il cabinet. Novità istituzionali nei rapporti tra ministri," in *Il governo e i suoi apparati. L'evoluzione del caso italiano in prospettiva comparata*, eds. Cristina Barbieri and Luca Verzichelli (Genova: Name, 2003), 137-138.

prime ministerial power. This is true, for instance, for Martens governments in the 1980s.⁶⁸

But, as pointed out, oligarchical cabinets may be formally headed by a weak prime minister; and this prime minister would not have any central role within the oligarchy – and therefore within the group exercising the real power – and, on the whole, s/he would have only a little voice in the decision-making process. Such a picture can be found, together with a decentralised decision-making, in the *ministerial cabinets with acephalous oligarchy* (type 5). The Kiesinger cabinet in Germany, from 1967 onwards, came close to this model. Chancellor Kiesinger was “[d]oomed to chair a grand coalition cabinet brimming with political heavyweights from both major parties”⁶⁹, and, even within his own party, he was marginalized; as Baylis states, he “could do little more than serve as coordinator and broker among the powerful figures of his cabinet”.⁷⁰

In the *acephalous inner circle-based cabinets* (type 6) the distribution of power is similar, but the decision-making process is more centralized. In the early 1970s, the Dutch cabinet was an example with respect to the formulation of socio-economic policy. A small group of ministers, known as the ‘Socio-economic Triangle’ and composed by the ministers of finance, economic affairs and social affairs, decided on the relevant matters. For its role – the socio-economic policy became more and more important for the general governmental policy – and also for reasons of political representation, the prime minister joined the group in the Den Uyl cabinet (1973-1977).⁷¹ In Germany, the Kiesinger cabinet’s first six months, a period in which the full cabinet was the true decision-making arena, showed many of these traits.⁷²

A *cabinet with autonomous and “separated” ministers* (type 7) is characterized by the decentralization of the decision-making process and by the presence of more or less equal ministers, among whom nobody is strongly prominent. These ministers are largely autonomous in taking decisions within their jurisdiction. During the premiership of Aldo Moro, a prime minister acting as a mediator, the Italian cabinet functioned in this manner.⁷³

⁶⁸ Arco Timmermans, “Cabinet Ministers and Policy-Making in Belgium: The Impact of Coalitional Constraints,” in *Cabinet Ministers and Parliamentary Government*, eds. Michael Laver and Kenneth A. Shepsle (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); André-Paul Frogner, “Belgium: A Complex Cabinet in a Fragmented Polity,” in *Cabinets in Western Europe*, eds. Jean Blondel and Ferdinand Müller-Rommel (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1997), 92-93.

⁶⁹ Ludger Helms, *Presidents, Prime Ministers and Chancellors. Executive Leadership in Western Democracies* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2005), 107.

⁷⁰ Thomas A. Baylis, *Governing by Committee. Collegial Leadership in Advanced Societies* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), 75. See also Ludger Helms, *Presidents, Prime Ministers and Chancellors. Executive Leadership in Western Democracies* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2005), 107-109.

⁷¹ Rudy Andeweg, “The Netherlands: Cabinet Committees in a Coalition Cabinet,” in *Unlocking the Cabinet. Cabinet Structures in Comparative Perspective*, eds. Thomas T. Mackie and Brian W. Hogwood (London: Sage, 1985), 148-149; Rudy Andeweg, “Centrifugal Forces and Collective Decision-Making: The Case of the Dutch Cabinet,” *European Journal of Political Research*, 16, 2 (1988), 144-146.

⁷² Ludger Helms, *Presidents, Prime Ministers and Chancellors. Executive Leadership in Western Democracies* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2005), 108.

⁷³ Cristina Barbieri, *Il capo del governo in Italia. Una ricerca empirica* (Milano: Giuffrè, 2001). The Italian ministers have often and generally enjoyed a high degree of autonomy. Some authors have defined the Italian government as a “collection of ministries” (Jean-Louis Thiébaud, “The Organisational Structure of Western European Cabinets and its Impact on Decision-Making,” in *Governing Together. The Extent and Limits of Joint Decision-Making in Western European Cabinets*, eds. Jean Blondel and Ferdinand Müller-Rommel (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1993), 89) or as a “government by ministries” (Sabino Cassese, “Is There a Government in Italy? Politics and Administration at the Top,” in *Presidents and Prime Ministers*, eds. Richard Rose and Ezra N. Suleiman (Washington: AEI, [1980] 1982), 175). Furthermore, in the past, committees, “instead of being instruments for the coordination of the ministries, ... [were] a way of projecting into the government the particular interests of individual

Finally, sometimes, there may be rather collegial cabinets which decide by means of a centralized decision-making, and, according to our types, they are to be called *acephalous cabinets with centralized decision-making* (type 8). In this case, good examples may be found among the cabinets of the French Fourth Republic.⁷⁴

To sum up, the typology shows eight types of cabinets. With regard to them, it is worth noting that they are Weberian ideal-types.⁷⁵ In other words, a certain cabinet may tend to a certain type, and, however, exhibit some characteristics typical of another. The typology shows us the features that prevail within a government with respect to the two mentioned dimensions.

4 SOME COCLUDING REMARKS AND RESEARCH OUTLOOKS

In this paper I have presented a sum of what literature has proposed about the classifications and typologies of cabinets in parliamentary and semi-presidential democracies. I have tried to systematise it, in order to point out its major shortcomings and to isolate the good points from which it is possible to start in building an amended and more comprehensive typology. The typology has been created on the basis of two main dimensions, namely the internal distribution of power (who actually takes decisions in the cabinet) and the centralisation of the decision-making (the arena of the decision-making). The result is a grid of eight types able to give a complete picture of the real world of cabinets. For each type, I have briefly described some examples selected across countries and across time.

The main aim of this paper was to provide a useful and amended framework for those interested in the study of cabinet government and of the mechanisms of governance⁷⁶ through which it works. Indeed, the typology allows, on the one hand, true and genuine comparative studies on cabinet government and its decision-making processes and, on the other, opens the door to new research outlooks.

As for this second point, one path could be, for example, the explanation of the types of cabinets. Why, in a certain political context, does a particular type of cabinet emerge and another does not? In other words, it could be possible to investigate the factors affecting the two mentioned dimensions of the typology. In this respect, a major impact seems to be that of parties⁷⁷, in particular with regard to the dimension of the distribution of power. As we have seen, the party variable is not for sure internal to the typology, but it affects this from the external. Specific political-party situations may enhance the position of some actors or, on the contrary, make the power more

ministries" (ibid., 202). On Italian cabinet committees until 1980s see Pasquale Ciriello, *Ordinamento di governo e comitati interministeriali* (Napoli: Jovene, 1981). Cf. also David Hine and Renato Finocchi, "The Italian Prime Minister," in *West European Prime Ministers*, ed. G.W. Jones (London: Frank Cass, 1991), 84–88; Frederic Spotts and Theodor Wieser, *Italy, a Difficult Democracy. A Survey of Italian Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, [1986] 1995), 116–117; Maurizio Cotta, "Italy: A Fragmented Government," in *Cabinets in Western Europe*, eds. Jean Blondel and Ferdinand Müller-Rommel (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1997), 153–154.

⁷⁴ François Petry, "The Role of Cabinet Ministers in the French Fourth Republic," in *Cabinet Ministers and Parliamentary Government*, eds. Michael Laver and Kenneth A. Shepsle (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 126–129.

⁷⁵ Max Weber, *The Methodology of the Social Sciences* (Glencoe: The Free Press, 1949), 89–99.

⁷⁶ Wolfgang C. Müller and Kaare Strøm (eds.), *Coalition Governments in Western Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Kaare Strøm, Wolfgang C. Müller and Torbjörn Bergman (eds.), *Cabinets and Coalition Bargaining: The Democratic Life Cycle in Western Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

⁷⁷ G.W. Jones, "West European Prime Ministers in Perspective," in *West European Prime Ministers*, ed. G.W. Jones (London: Frank Cass, 1991), 173–177.

dispersed among them. Another factor could be the personality of some figures, for example of some prime ministers. Müller-Rommel has argued that five types of factors are likely to account for the functioning of cabinets. They would be the “structural characteristics of the political system”; “political parties”; “the role of individual ministers”; the “behaviour of prime ministers”; and “the administrative characteristics of the prime minister’s office”.⁷⁸ Therefore, a task that is out of the capacity of this paper, but that could be pursued in an interesting and fruitful manner, is to empirically test these hypotheses according to the new framework.

An alternative choice could be the analysis – instead of the causes – of the consequences of the types of cabinets in terms of products of the decision-making. Is there a relation between the type of the cabinet decision-making and the policy outcomes of the cabinet? For example, it is likely that a more dispersed power implies less radical policies and more compromises among the relevant actors thanks to a sort of mutual control⁷⁹, whereas a strong centre (e.g., prime minister) favours impositions on other ministers and therefore, sometimes, even more radical policies (however this may be affected also by the degree of ideological heterogeneity of the cabinet). A specific research on this theme could be a good point in order to link processes and outcomes.

As we can see, the framework I have presented – apart from being a synthesis and an improvement of the literature – is both a tool for making easier our understanding of cabinet system in a comparative perspective and a good starting platform to study many important aspects of the this world with a basis to orient oneself in it.

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⁷⁸ Ferdinand Müller-Rommel, “Cabinets in Post-Communist East-Central Europe and the Balkans: Empirical Findings and Research Agenda,” in *Cabinets in Eastern Europe*, eds. Jean Blondel and Ferdinand Müller-Rommel (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), 199–201.

⁷⁹ Wolfgang C. Müller and Thomas M. Meyer, “Mutual Veto? How Coalitions Work,” in *Reform Processes and Policy Change. Veto Players and Decision-Making in Modern Democracies*, eds. Thomas König, George Tsebelis and Marc Debus (New York: Springer, 2010), 101–108.

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