

**THE GOVERNMENT IN TWO SEMI-PRESIDENTIAL SYSTEMS:
FRANCE AND PORTUGAL IN A COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE***

Gianluca Passarelli

1. Introduction

*«...the boundaries of government are unclear;
it is not even always the case that governments
are sufficiently coherent internally to deserve
being given a collective label.
The idea of government is more an abstract concept
that a universal reality.*

Jean Blondel

[The Organization of Governments, 21]

Starting the analysis of two semi-presidential governments having in mind this highlighting “definition” by one of most eminent scholars of Government is certainly encouraging in facing difficulties. Nevertheless, I cannot and I don't want move away from both stressing and explaining similarities and differences in the government organization and structure. The better way in trying to do it still remains the comparison [Blondel 2005].

France and Portugal have the same form of government: semi-presidential. From the institutional point of view semi-presidentialism shows a President of the Republic elected (directly or not) that coexists with a Prime Minister who is accountable to the Parliament [Sartori 1994]. The direct popular election of the Head of State - in both countries - confers an additional legitimacy with respect to the formal prerogatives that are they attributed, although it is the internally established equilibrium of the political system that determine the actual capacities, and the relative effectiveness, of intervention in the political and institutional dynamics. Nevertheless, if presidential powers in semi-presidential systems have been investigated - much more at the formal level than at the practice-political ones - the literature is less vast on the understanding of the government functioning and organization.

Therefore, in this paper I am interested in analyzing the governmental organization: the ministers' work-activity, and that of other governmental structures and/or actors *lato sensu* (even if not having a ministerial relevance). In particular, I would orient the paper more on the analysis of the government's functioning through the perspective of the form of government, trying to highlight a bit more the literature on the semi-presidential government (may be less investigated, in this field, *vis-à-vis* the presidential and parliamentary ones). So, my interest is focused on how the semi-presidential government functions: hierarchically or collegially [Blondel & Manning 2002]; on how they are structured, divided or unified; on the background of

* I would thank Jean Blondel for his precious comments to the first draft of the paper, and to Carlos Huneeus for the honor in inviting me to Santiago, and for his kindness during the last year of debating on governments. I would also thank the discussants. Nevertheless the Author take full responsibility of what he writes. I am grateful to Dr. Fernando Bento Ribeiro Parliamentary Assessor Divisão de Informação Legislativa e Parlamentar Assembleia da República, for supporting in gathering data on Portugal; and to Dr. Peticollet of the French SGG for helping me with the case of France.

ministers (who they are?); on their number [Huseby 1998], on the system by which they are recruited; and on what is the real role of the PM and of the President, etc.

In such a way it would be very interesting to consider the functioning of semi-presidential government in France and Portugal, which politically works differently enough, i.e. depending on the concordance (or not) between the presidential and the parliamentary majorities. The organization of government could be hierarchical or collegial, depending on the balance of powers between the President and the PM. Governments have varying levels of decision-making centrality, across a spectrum with a maximum of centralization – the President is the chief of the parliamentary majority on one extreme, and a maximum of collegiality – the PM governs with ministers as the other.

Therefore it matters whether the President has majority in Parliament or not, that is the possibility to act (to some extent, and with some peculiar differences between the two cases) as a President of presidential regimes. Cohabitation is an important institutional and political situation to investigate too because from it rises a peculiar government functioning. The level of presidential-prime ministerial power affects the governmental organization, amplifying or weakening the ministers' role. The different possible political patterns conduce inevitably to the style of leadership that the chief of government adopt: by centralizing the government's organization and decision-making style, or by governing together in a (more) collegial manner.

The analysis of French and Portuguese experiences could furnish interesting elements to such an approach. In France the de Gaulle's presidency (1958-69) has been strongly centralized with (relatively) scarce autonomy conferred to the ministers. In the same schema, to some extent, has acted Mitterrand even if the government assumed a more collegial form during the two periods of cohabitation (1986-88; 1993-95) of his presidencies. Vice versa, in Portugal the President Eanes has tried to perform has a hierarchical and centralized government, whereas the PM and its ministers have had some relevance as well. From 1985-87 the Government has lost (or better hardly modified) more and more its stronger characteristics of collegiality (coming from its coalitional structure) and the PM – especially with majority government – has tried to assume a hierarchical behaviour.

Finally, I would stress the main socio-political characteristics of ministers (political/parties/parliamentary groups or technical/intellectuals) [Cotta 1991] being appointed/recruited by the President and/or PM. In the same way I will indicate in which arena, and when, the chief of Government can intervene in a more effective manner by affecting the executive agenda as well as the policies.

2. The Government in semi-presidential systems: differences with presidential and parliamentary systems

A minimal but effective definition states that the Government is «the group of men and women who are in charge of the different sectors of the public services» [Blondel 1982, 14]. Thus, if generally speaking we can refer indifferently to the government as the “executive”, we need to better specify what we mean with that word in semi-presidential cases.

I have so far referred to the PM and the President, because of different reasons, both political and institutional. The most important is that semi-presidential government is, at the end, based on a “dual executive”, on a diarchy [Duverger 1980; Elgie 1999; Sartori 2004]. (And we shall see the differences of the government's “functioning” depending on the powers of PM and President in the periods of cohabitation or not).

Even if it is not the core of the analysis in this paper, the institutional framework of the two countries we are studying need be briefly illustrated. The relevance comes from the “particular” structure of the government in semi-presidential systems. In fact, the semi-presidentialism “provides” two actors concurring in lead-

ing the government. Beside the institutional point of view, we need to examine and to explain peculiarities and similarities, trying to establish if semi-presidentialism “produces” a typical “government’s functioning”.

The government in a truly semi-presidential system is said to be subject to ‘dual responsibility’, i.e. it has to be supported or accepted by Parliament, as in parliamentary systems, but also by the President (formally or not). In France, this constellation emerged in 1962, when the introduction of the direct election to the presidency made the President the most important and legitimate representative in the eyes of voters. Vice versa in Portugal the government’s responsibility ceased to be formally dual in 1982. Yet those institutions have evolved over time. In both countries there have been some institutional changes, the most significant of which is – in France - the constitutional amendment of 2000¹ that reduced the presidential mandate from seven to five years; while in Portugal the constitutional revision of 1982 removed the Council of the Revolution, and, most important, erased the PM’s political responsibility to President. In addition, there have also been changes in perceptions and practices of the institutions in France and Portugal, mostly as consequences of relevant transformations in the political system’s dynamics.

Generally speaking, in semi-presidential systems the President could be considered as governmental actor even if s/he is not the formal chief of the government. The latter is led by the PM who should receive the support of a parliamentary majority through a vote of confidence, explicitly or not². So, the PM [Jones 1991] acts as a governmental chief but that situation can be modified depending on the political system, the political practice and the presidential powers. In some semi-presidential cases, the President may intervene directly as a chief of government particularly if - at least - one of the parties of the coalition government contributed to elect him/her as head of the state. Therefore, why looking at the presidential powers in semi-presidential systems should be important in examining the government’s functioning? Because studying the government in semi-presidentialism means to deal with a dual executive, notwithstanding the level of prime ministerial or presidential influence on the government’s structure and functioning. Nonetheless, we do not deal here with all aspects of presidential power, but only with those which relate to governmental power-sharing such as the PM/ministers appointment and dismissal, or the (early) dismissal of Parliament.

The first step is looking at the formal structure of government, often meaning the Council of ministers.

The second level of analysis of the government functioning concerns with the administration. Also the formal prerogatives of the PM and of the President deserves a deep description: essentially because they are the two political actors (more) involved, formally or not, with the government in semi-presidential systems.

Finally, in order to understand how effectively the government functions, it is fundamental studying the relationship between the actors-institutions briefly listed, and those that are concerned in some way with the government.

The main variable is the concordance or not between the political majorities in the Parliament and the President. Thus, considering that the political equilibrium between the President and the PM affects both government’s functioning and organization, the hypothesis that follow are: 1) cohabitation tends to favor a more collegial government’s functioning; while 2) two homogenous majorities tends to push toward a more hierarchical government’s organization. Political and institutional changes determines who really is the “chef of the Government”, and thus if s/he leads a more hierarchical or collegial structure.

In this line of thinking, two more elements can help us in detecting the government’s functioning: 1) The presence/absence of the so-called “junior ministers” could be seen as a sign, certainly not an indicator, of the PM’s/Chief of Government’s strength, or better resources, in conducting its policies; 2) The socio-political background of ministers furnishing data on the level of individual freedom toward the political parties and the chief of government. Generally speaking a ministerial position may be prestigious, but «often it seems also to be the results, to a very large extent at least, of “luck” and of “accident”» [Blondel 1985, 11].

I am aware of the conceptual differences between Cabinet [Blondel - Muller-Rommel 1997] and the Government. The first as “restraint”, a specialized political institution:

«The cabinet, in a word, is a board of control chosen by the legislature, out of persons whom it trusts and knows, to rule the nation»

[W. Bagehot, *The English Constitution*]

The Government as a whole, including personal of government and not. Nevertheless, I will refer to government as a larger and “interchangeable” term.

¹ Participation in the referendum on the constitutional amendment on 20 September 2000 reached an all-time low in turnout, with just over 30 per cent.

² In France the vote of confidence is not mandatory, while in Portugal it is explicitly required in order to be appointed.

3. The Government in Portugal

“O Governo deve dispor da possibilidade de realização do seu programa e as oposições, cuja acção é essencial, devem possuir condições institucionais para corresponderem, através do acompanhamento crítico da acção governativa e da apresentação responsável de propostas e alternativas, à confiança política que também mereceram dos eleitores.”

Jorge Sampaio
April 6, 2002

Do exist comparatively a few studies on the functioning of the Portuguese government. First of all because of the relatively recent democracy (1974-76); then the institutional nature of semi-presidential system induced scholars to give more attention to the relationship between the President and the parliament. Thus, we will try to highlight a bit more the governmental side.

The Constitution of 1976 has established that the Government «is the organ for the conduct of the general policy of the country and the superior organ of public administration». The Government comprises the PM, the Ministers, the Secretaries and the Under-Secretaries of State. In addition, the Government may include one or more “Secretários de Estado” (Deputy Ministers).

The number of ministries and secretariats of State, their titles and powers and the mode of coordinating them shall be laid down, as appropriate to the case, in the decrees appointing the holders of the offices or by decree-law. Vice versa, in order to secure loyalty the ministers have tended to appoint “secretary of state” independent, rather it was not the case for the PM’s office. The PM’s autonomy toward its political party, and thus in appointing its ministers, derives from the nature of Portuguese parties in itself. The genetic feature of parties has given preference to the leadership (the central office) over the membership [Panebianco 1982; Van Biezen 2003]. And a good “index” of this liberty is clearly indicated in the number of independent ministers (Graph 1) appointed but also on the number of reshuffles (*remodelações*) made, particularly since 1987 (and without any significant consequences on the unity of government) [Passarelli 2005]. Nevertheless, it must be stressed the choice of ministers was based on the personal trust much more in the past than since the “majoritarian” period [Portas - Valente 1990, 335]. In fact the number of technical/independent ministers has decreased in the eighties, and vice versa the number of politicians has growth.

GRAPH 1 about here

The main institution of the executive is the Council of Ministers (CM): it comprises the PM, the Deputy PMs, if any, and the Ministers. As in the case of the President, the Secretaries and Under-Secretaries of State may be required to attend meetings of the CM. Thus, even the programme of government has become much more a collegial goal rather in the past it was «purely individual, without any political coordination» [Ibidem, 335] (Figures 1-2).

FIGURE 1 about here

The CM determines the general lines of governmental policy and it supervises to its implementation. From a political point of view this organ decides whether to seek a vote of confidence in the Assembly of the Republic, and it has the relevant power to accept and to approve a bill and/or draft resolutions. In addition, it can admit decree-laws and international agreements that are not submitted to the Assembly.

The role of CM is relevant particularly because its engagement on the financial issue, as it can approve the actions of Government that involve increase or decrease in public revenue or expenditure. We can observe a crucial difference between two periods, such as 1976-83 and 1985-2009. In the first decade neither ministers had given information to its colleagues on its activities during the CM, nor no PM asked for such an explication [Portas & Valente 1990, 344-45]. Vice versa, during the “majoritarian” period, and with the modifications made by Cavaco Silva, the cabinet’s features and human resources increased³ [Lobo 2005; Passarelli 2005]. In particular, Cavaco Silva, institutionalized the Monday meeting in which participate the SE-PCM⁴, and the head department of different ministries, and he had given a strong push toward a new governmental hierarchy supported by two vice-ministers.

In fact, we can indicate three main features of the functioning exercised by the CDM according to the kind of government in charge:

- a) With coalitions, the debate was a “private” one, a such of informal meeting between the chiefs of parties supporting government;

³ Between 1991 and 1995 the cabinet was composed of 25 people, which tried to “defend” the government from a lot of political demands.

⁴ Secretário de Estado da presidência de Conselho de Ministros.

- b) During the so-called “presidential governments”, the “true” debate was between the President and the PM (with the exceptional presence of some minister). The main function of the CM was purely technical.
- c) Starting with the “majoritarian” governments, was created a «political cabinet, to which participate ministers and secretaries». The latter debates on the political and social consequences of policies to be implemented [Portas - Valente 1990, 344-45].

Nevertheless, the functioning of government should be analysed also through the political and institutional relationship given by the semi-presidential system: President and PM *in primis*. Thus, it means to look at the differences between political equilibrium during time. That is the evolution of both political and parties system. The Portuguese political system has had an intense and effective change - much more “radical” than the French case, as we shall see later -, affecting particularly the balance of power among the “two heads” of executive, President and PM, and so the government’s functioning.

Prime Minister’s resources

The Prime Minister, is appointed by the President of the Republic, after taking the opinion of the parties represented in the Assembly of the Republic, and with due regard for the results of the general election. S/he will intervene in the appointment of other members of the Government by recommending them to the President. It should be mentioned, as relevant organizational features - the CETAL, then reorganized as CEJUR (for judicial and legal support)⁵. Thus, the PM is the political and administrative guide of the government.

The PM’s growing power - both political and administrative - it must be seen as a consequence of its political and electoral bigger autonomy, but certainly also looking at the tools it has. The PM’s cabinet - created in 1997 - had only 14 people as human resources, and it has the function of support the chief of government activities. During the Cavaco Silva governments, the numbers of functionaries increased (Cavaco Silva had 22 councillors), as well as the “councillors” which were recruited in order to suggest the PM in many policy areas.

The President of the Republic in the Constitution

Looking at the prerogatives of the President it is relevant in order to understand how really the government works. The powers of the head of the State have changed since 1976 both in a formal way and (mostly) in a political and real manner [Passarelli 2008a]. In 1976 the President had more formal powers than after the constitutional amendment of 1982 - often presented as a landmark for both presidential powers and role - that, as said, erased the Council of the Revolution - a military body presided by the President - that was substituted by a civil Council of State. But most importantly, the constitutional revision has reduced the discretion of the President on the dissolution of Parliament. The new text statues that s/he can dissolve the Assembly of the Republic after receiving the opinions of the parties represented in the parliament and of the Council of State. However, the real limitations concern the timing of the dismissal of the Assembly, impossible during the six months immediately following its election, or during the last half-year of the term of office of the President.

According to the Article 133, the President appoints the PM⁶, may dismiss the Government (but only when necessary to safeguard the proper functioning of the democratic institutions), and s/he could remove the PM from office (in the appointment and installation of the new one). S/he only can appoint and remove from office members of the Government on the proposal of the PM. Similarly, as said, s/he can preside over the CM at the request of the PM.

The President of the Republic and the Government

The relevance of first democratically elected President, Eanes, also thank to his (quasi) charismatic attitude deriving from the role during the Revolution, has conferred to the government a more centralized functioning. At that time, the President could appoint the PMs s/he preferred mostly thanks to a high fragmented parties’ system that allowed the constitution of the so-called “presidential cabinets” between 1978-79⁷. Nevertheless, the (quasi) constant political cohabitation of the President with a different parliamentary majority and a PM coming from the opposition (such as the socialist Mario Soares), have prevented, to achieve a complete hierarchical process.

The cohabitation: a constant element

The *coabitação* was (and it still is) an almost continuous factor of Portuguese political and institutional life, due essentially to an electoral element. The first order elections are the political ones, rather the second

⁵ Up to 1987 it was the GATL (*Gabinete de Apoio Técnico e Legislativo*), then substituted by the CETAL (*Centro de Estudos Técnico e Apoio Legislativo*) jurists appointed by the PM. In 1992 it changed its denomination in CEJUR (*Centro Juridico*)

⁶ After taking the opinion of the parties represented in the Assembly of the Republic and with due regard for the results of the general election.

⁷ The Prime ministers were Nobre da Costa, Pintasilgo, and Sá Carneiro.

order are the presidential [Freire 2005], and thus the President could not affect the parliamentary majority by profiting of the so-called honeymoon effect. The electoral results are in some way independent (contrary to what happens in France) even because of the different calendars (indeed the mandates of PM - or better the parliament - and President have two lengths of five and four years term respectively).

The presidential party: a relevant absence

Nevertheless, the (in)ability of President in acting effectively in the institutional and political contexts depends essentially by purely political causes. The Portuguese President has never been the leader of a parliamentary party, useful as a tool of political and institutional pressure toward the Government, to which s/he was in opposition or not, that is cohabitation or not. The only exception to this "rule"- neither Soares and Sampaio for the Socialist, nor Cavaco Silva for the Social democrats have been able to manage parties as "their" ones (as in the French case) -, it was the Prd⁸ of President Eanes. In any case the latter has had a very short life, without affecting the relationship between the President and the legislative.

The consequences of this evolution have been visible and effective not only on the relationships between the President and the Assembly but particularly on the governmental side. The functioning of government has been affected by the relevant absence of the President in its affairs by excluding a possible evolution through a more hierarchical and centralized functioning. For example, not allowing the President in exercising its powers as an independent variable acting on crucial arena, such as the ministers appointments and ministerial policies. In sum, there has not been an evolution through a personalized style of leadership, or better of government functioning, at least not in favour of the head of the State.

In order to better understand the organization of Portuguese government we can now briefly illustrate its formal functioning. Figure 2 indicates the schema of its internal dynamics and particularly of the decision-making process, as well as the interventions of different actors during that path.

FIGURE 2 about here

Thus, a first point that we can stress is that from a formal point of view, over the last 30 years the government's functioning undergo an evolution both formally and politically.

Administration and bureaucracy

The distinction between the professional politician and the professional bureaucrat remains important partly on normative grounds and partly as a framework for approaching the study of the relationship between politics and administration in specific contexts [Suleiman 1984, 107].

The Government has also some powers in order to perform its administrative functions, such as preparing plans on the basis of the laws relating to the major options, putting the budget of the State into effect, and making the regulations necessary for the proper enforcement of the laws. The Government also manages the services and the direct administrative activity of the State, both civil and military, and it supervises indirect and autonomous administrations.

In order to implement the policies adopted, the government disposes of a body of functionaries that compose the national bureaucracy. In Portugal, one of the most high centralized countries in democratic areas, the public administration strongly depends on the central bureaucracy of State [Barreto 1984; Baldi 2006].

The relationships of the Government with the bureaucracy - analogously to the French case -, the trustworthy staff (that is recruited among rank and file of party/ies at Government), rival the general directors and high ranking officials [Lucas 1988]. For example, the presence of ad hoc structures on the ministers with documentation functions, it is a relatively recent creation of the 90's [Portas - Valente 1990, 341].

However, the most relevant institution in this field is the General Secretary of the Council of Ministers (SG-PCM). It was created in 1976 following the model of the French *Secretariat General du Gouvernement*. In 1993 - through a decree-law - the PSD government had given to the SG-PCM some features not yet exercised, such as the supervision of the legislative process of the government. In general the SG-PCM assures an administrative support for the inter-ministerial coordination, and before the 1993' reform it had three main areas: 1) coordination and technical supervision; 2) data gathering and public relations; 3) administration. Finally, abandoning any political attitudes, in favour of a "pure" administrative feature, it allowed the SG-PCM to concentrate much more power than before.

In addition, the SE-PCM (State secretary of the PCM) is the administrative body charged of coordinating the organization of the PCM's meetings. The SE-PCM is appointed together with the ministers, and it participate to the meetings of the PCM. Starting from the mid 80's the SE-PCM has become a strongly politicized actor, to secure its ability in effective acting towards of ministers and other members of government. The SE-

⁸ *Partido Renovador Democrático* (Renewal Democratic Party). At the general elections of 1985 it obtained 45 seats and 17,9% of votes, but in 1987 it had only 7 seats and 4,9% of votes, to be considered as a "flash party" [Morlino 1995, 321].

PCM represents a sort of “bridge institution” [Lobo 2005, 105], between the juridical and political processes (Table 1).

TABLE 1 ; FIGURE 3 about here

Personal of Government’s career and recruitment

Studying governments, inevitably implies to look at who gets to power. In Portugal [Freire 2001], by observing the social background of ministers, we can summarize the following: the Cabinet beginners aged between 30 and 39 was equal to 23%. Nevertheless, as said Tavares de Almeida, the median age of Portuguese ministers over the last 30 years was lower than in Western Europe [Tavares de Almeida & Costa Pinto 2003, 20-9]. From the gender point of view it must be said that the only PM was Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo, rather the number of members of Cabinet still remain very low, with an average of 4,9% (Graph 2).

GRAPH 2 ABOUT HERE

The level of education of the ministers has reached high standard, and almost all of them have a university degree. Generally speaking, the most important political pathway to the cabinet has become a parliamentary career [Ibidem 35-6].

Dynamics: hierarchical or collegial; unified or divided

If the government functioning of 1976 was more collegial toward the role of the President, and in some what really divided between the head of the state and the PM, things are changed since. The formal features of the SG-PCM reformed in 1993, and the political/electoral evolutions appeared during the two-year period 1985-87, had given a more hierarchical profile to the government. It is the PM, through the PCM that decides and it accountable for decisions taken on policies. Ministers are included in a team, but at the end is the PM (and leader of the parliamentary majority as well as the party) that leads the cabinet and decide on many issues.

This trend can clearly be seen looking at the data on the legislative outcome, on which the government has a central role. The CDM has an important function even from the legislative point of view. In the last 30 years (Graphs 3-4) the number of decree-laws approved has decreased since the mid eighties, most probably thanks to the presence of (more) cohesive governments. Vice versa, for the rate of governmental legislative initiative there is not a clear and continuous trend, but rather the number of legislative proposal approved is depending on the presence of a majority government or a coalition.

GRAPHS 3-4 ABOUT HERE

Prime Minister’s hierarchical collegiality?

Since 1976 the Portuguese political and parties systems have changed a lot. The 1987’s political elections have been a crucial landmark in the electoral Portuguese history, with the victory of the centre-right wing Psd lead by Cavaco Silva. The absolute majority, both of votes and seats, meant not only a change in political system but also in the government’s functioning.

The Prime Minister has become the core of a process of centralization and presidentialization of politics that, for different reasons, has strongly limited the presidential intervention. In particular, since the last twenty years the PM is the pivot of the government both politically and administratively. Thus, the Portuguese case it seems to be similar to a model between the *team* one and the *prime ministerial* one. The trend is not yet consolidated but we can clearly see elements of both approaches: 1) we found «ministers that have common aims» in a system in which «much work is delegated to ministers, committees, or to the Prime Minister, but there is a spirit of understanding», and 2) frequent cases in which «ministers are noticeably dependent on the head of the government, for instance because he or she has considerably popularity», and/or repeated election victories [Blondel 1990, 263-64].

Finally, it is interesting to stress an indicator of such a change, and of its effectiveness: the opinion polls on the “governing institutions”. From 1978 to 1993 people who consider the PM as the actor governing the country is growth of the 100%. Vice versa the group of those who judge the President as the governing institution declined from almost 40% of citizens to a quart of them [Lobo 2005, 45]. In addition, the data on the President’s and the PM’s popularity show that the President has always⁹ had a bigger rate of “good opinions” than the PM [Veiga & Veiga 2004] (Graph 4a). Results are confirming the line of thinking according to which the higher direct engagement in politics, and policies, may affect the “chief of government’s” good popularity. Thus, being the PM *the* actor in the political arena, the PR has a “better” reputation among citizens but this result involve a “neutral”, *super partes*, honorific role that he plays. Except in case of adversarial parliamentary majorities [Passarelli 2008a].

GRAPH 4A about HERE

⁹ The data are available since 1986. The President’s popularity is higher than the PM’s one both in average (by presidency) and in absolute. Except for 1986 when the incoming PM (Cavaco Silva) did better than the outgoing President (Eanes).

4. The French Government and the Fifth Republic

«*Bien que la loi prévoi.e en maintes occasions des r.ésolutions arr.êtées en conseil des ministres, le conseil n'a point de secrétaire, point de procès-verbal, point d'archives. Aucune de ses soi-disant décisions ne revêt une forme précise et certaine. Deux ministres revenant chacun, après déjeuner, à son cabinet, en peuvent conserver chacun un souvenir différent, quand ils ne l'ont pas parfaitement oubliée, l'un ou l'autre, dans l'abondance des affaires effleurées*».
Léon Blum
[Lettres sur la réforme de l'État, 1918]

The De Gaulle's imprinting, and the constitutional reform of 1962

The French Fifth Republic's founder gave a fundamental imprint to both the institutions and their interpretation. From the Government point of view, Charles de Gaulle changed its role not only by introducing the direct election of the President of the Republic (through the 1962's referendum), but also thanks to the consequent "presidentialization" of the executive he adopted, and that it is still ongoing since [Portelli 1980; Clift 2005]. Even if not formally charged of the direction of the Government, the President intervened hardly in policies, appointments of ministers and organization of administrative structure. De Gaulle was directly *engagé* on current political affairs, considering *his* PM as a functionary playing a symbolic role, and coordinating ministers and deputies of the majority. The Gaullist imprint can thus be found both in the 1962 revision which introduced the direct election of the head of state, and in his political attitude (the idea of the State he had, the parties, the institutions, etc.). The logic of the 5th Republic is largely embodied by the de Gaulle's vision. In this vision, the president has fundamentally three roles: he represents the nation; he is the supreme judge both in conflict among institutions and on key decisions in defence and foreign affairs; finally, he is in charge of the nation under exceptional circumstances. In sum, a sort of personal political-institutional *weltanschauung*.

The Government and/in the Constitution

*I am not the government.
Sometimes people confuse me with it,
I don't know why, but I am not the government.
I have it in my power to bring certain
matters to the attention of the government
and if need be to give it advice*
François Mitterrand
[Brest, 8 October 1985]

In order to understand how the French government works, it is crucial starting by looking at the formal attributions that the Constitution stated. It is clear that the Constitution of 1958 tried to strengthen the Government, and the role of the PM. According to the Article 21, «the PM shall direct the actions of the Government [and] he shall be responsible for national defence, [as well as] he shall ensure the implementation of legislation. [In addition], he shall have power to make regulations and shall make appointments to civil and military posts».

Therefore, is evident - particularly *vis-à-vis* the past IV Republic - that the PM¹⁰ has a greater power than the previous *President du Conseil* and s/he is on a hierarchical position face the ministers.

So, the French government includes the PM, the Ministers and a number of junior ministers known as Secretaries of State [Thiébaud 1997, 90]. In general we can distinguish between:

1. The *ministres d'Etat* that can manage a ministerial department. Generally speaking *le titre de ministre d'Etat* is only honorific and has not any juridical effectiveness.
2. The *ministres* are at apex of an autonomous ministerial department (varying according to the PM's preferences in policies).
3. The *ministres délégués* next of the PM. They can be delegated to follow some issues¹¹.

[Chagnollaud & Quermonne 1996, 295-98].

The CM is the decisional body of the Government. It is composed of the President of the Republic, the PM, and the Ministers. The President shall preside over the CM (Article 9), but the PM may, in exceptional cases, deputize for him as chairman of a meeting of the CM by virtue of an express delegation of powers for a specific agenda (Article 21.4). The CM is a collective executive who determines and leads the national politics¹². The PM leads the CM and s/he coordinates its activities. Nevertheless, the PM's authority on ministers is not administrative but only political.

¹⁰ The use of the English word "Premier Minister", is not only symbolic but underline the role of head of governments over the ministers.

¹¹ Do exist three kinds of secretaries d'Etat: 1) autonomes; 2) auprès du Pm; 3) auprès d'un ministre.

¹² Also talk to the so-called tolls of "rationalized" parliament.

In addition, to the CM participate the delegate ministers (instituted by Mitterrand in 1993¹³, to better follow specific policies), but not the *secretaries d'état*, which are often asked from the PM to follow specific policies. Since the CM meets every Wednesday at the *Élysée* Palace (the official residence of the Presidency of the Republic), the number of annual meetings is equal to 50¹⁴. From the beginning of the Fifth Republic meetings of the CM have been dominated by the President who determines the agenda. And the PM plays a secondary role, although s/he can intervene (!).

From the point of view of the decision-making process the CM is the central element. Its deliberations are an important stage, often the last, of the process of governmental decision-making. The meetings are typically divided into three parts that can be described as follow:

1. Discussion of drafts bills, ordinances and decrees is avoided since agreement is usually achieved beforehand. However, the President may decide to let ministers express their opinion¹⁵ on relevant and controversial dossier.
2. Then the CM proceeds to the appointments of a wide range of senior members of the judiciary, the civil and the military services.
3. Ministerial statements on different policies.

[Thiébaud 1997, 92].

FIGURE 4 ABOUT HERE

Administration

The French political and administrative system is high centralized, and it is organized on the ministerial model. In this arena the bureaucracy is selected through meritocratic mechanisms that are impermeable to the incumbent government's pressures. This framework has been institutionalized with the Fifth Republic by de Gaulle through the *grandes écoles*, and the high managers appointed as technical ministers serving the presidentialized leadership.

In France the PM - that shall have at its disposal the civil service - and the ministers have two effective tools - behind the normative ones - to manage the public administration and to elaborate policies. The Government can discretionally appoint the high ministerial management (head department and ministerial head), as well as the highest public senior executives (about 7000 people). Each member of government manages the ministerial cabinet, and he/she selects discretionally the components for a defined time span. Each minister as well has a cabinet, normally between ten and twenty for ministers, and between five and ten for *secretaries d'état*. The ministerial cabinet also allow minister gathering and elaborating information on a specific policy.

The head of cabinet collaborate with the minister in order to coordinate meetings, preparing briefings, and keep relationship with the press and the electoral constituency. Most of apical positions are taken by civil servants of the *Grands Corps* (*conseil d'état*, Court of Counts, etc.), or, as in the case of Interior and Foreign Affairs ministers, by civil servants of diplomatic and administrative backgrounds. The National School of Administration (ENA) is the hinge between politics and administration, since at the end of the period of formation, functionaries are appointed to a ministerial cabinet, as the career's starting point toward Government, state's enterprise or moving at the private sector following the so-called *pantouflage*. So, French bureaucracy cannot have contemporarily an administrative and a political role. But it is made to carry out administrative functions. Following this criteria some authors explicitly asked about the presumed «supremacy of bureaucrats» [Fabbrini & Vassallo 1999].

The administrative impartiality toward the incumbent government has been facilitated by the long period of predominance of right-wing majorities (and Presidents as well). Starting with the eighties, and the first Socialist¹⁶ government, things changed and we can see a sort of turnover in the bureaucratic élite¹⁷. According to Rouban [1998, 80], if in 1958 and 1962 the rate of the central administrations executives substitution was equal to 33,9 and 35,5%, in 1981 and 1986 - following two alternations - were of 68 and 82,5% (!). Nevertheless, the absolute number of public functionaries is diminishing [*Ibidem*, 235-36].

The role of ministerial cabinets is very important because they «blend new policy-making functions with their more traditional role [making] it not easily distinguishable from the divisions of ministers [Thiébaud 1997, 98]. The policy and law making processes follow a "typical" path. Once drafted, proposal are submitted to oth-

¹³ At the beginning of the second cohabitation [Passarelli 2004].

¹⁴ Excluded the two weeks of holidays in August.

¹⁵ Such an opportunity for each minister to make a short statement has been strongly reduced under the Sarkozy presidency. Each minister can only talk for two (!) minutes. The exception is the minister of foreign affairs, Bernard Kouchner, which is allowed to talk for 15 minutes (!).

¹⁶ French Socialist have (had) a sort of schizophrenia towards the Fifth Republic's institutions, and particularly on the presidential direct election (Passarelli 2008b).

¹⁷ In 1981, 70 on the 129 general managers of central administration were transferred or substituted. There were appointed more than 50% of ministerial executive managers [Suleiman 1984, 112].

er ministers, and we can thus have inter-departmental committees, that are increasingly numerous (1290 per year in average) (Graph 5), thus suggesting that «there are transfers of whole areas of ministerial powers to the PM [*Ibidem*, 98]. This trend being also favorite by the fact that membership of the Government are incompatible with the holding of any Parliamentary office.

Prime Minister's resources

Si le Premier ministre n'a pas toujours le pouvoir de décider, il a celui d'agir, les moyens de faire agir ou d'empêcher d'agir. Pouvoir constitutionnel, pouvoir politique, pouvoir juridique aussi conduisent le Premier ministre à personnifier l'ensemble de la politique gouvernementale. Matignon, même en dehors de la cohabitation, fait toujours à peu près tout.
G. Carcassonne, Pouvoirs, n. 68, 42

The tools that the Constitution of 1958 gave to the government in order to «rationalize» the Parliament and the decision-making process, are important to state what have been the trends in the functioning, i.e. toward a structure more hierarchical or collegial. Beside the above quoted and illustrated Articles 20-21, do exist structural assets that enhanced the government's power face to the legislative. Considering the structural features of the semi-presidential system, it means that we have to look at consequences of that in term of collegial or hierarchical paths, and therefore, the kind of presidential or prime ministerial interventions.

Article 37 granted to government the power to act through decree in regard to all other matters does not indicated in Article 34 that delimits the subjects in which parliament would be allowed to legislate. Appeal the Article 45.2 "*declaration of urgency*" (Graph 5a) enables the government to avoid the usual second reading of a bill in each house of parliament (*navette*). The average is about 84 while the two legislatures in which Article 45.2 has been adopted more were the seventh and the ninth, probably because of the presence of left-wing governments facing a hostile majority in the Senate.

GRAPH 5a ABOUT HERE

The Article 38 allows government to legislate through *ordonnances*, for a limited time, within issue-areas normally requiring laws debated and debated by parliament, protecting deputies - for example - from voting for unpopular laws (Graph 6). In the last decade this tool has been "discovered" by the governments (the average is equal to 13) also thanks to the compliance of the Presidents, normally hostiles to it.

GRAPH 6 ABOUT HERE

The package vote (*vote bloqué*) (Article 44.3) states that government can require a house of parliament to decide, by a single vote, on all or part of the text under discussion, retaining only the amendments proposed or accepted by the government (Graph 7). Its use has growth starting with the eighties, and now is declining (the average is 25) due to the presence of majority, one party, governments.

GRAPH 7 ABOUT HERE

Another, or better the most important "weapon of the weak" (Graph 8) is the so-called *guillotine*, with which a government can declare a bill to be an issue of confidence, and the bill is considered adopted unless the parliament succeeds in passing a motion of censure¹⁸. Contrary to what it is maybe commonly retained, the Article 49.3 has been adopted in a relatively few number of cases (the average is 9,4). From a political point of view, it is possible to suppose that it has been used to hidden internal division of the majority more often in case of one party governments (Rocard, Mauroy, Raffarin) than for coalitions, even during cohabitation (Jospin never used the 49.3; obviously to avoid the blackmail of the minor allies).

GRAPH 8 ABOUT HERE

Generally speaking, beside the formal rules, the PM has organizational and operational resources [Elgie & Machin 1991, 67]. The organization of the PM's office is deliberately oriented to the coordination and supervision of the governmental actions. A good example of this organization comes from the government at present in charge (Fillon II): it is organized in almost 40 offices to which collaborate more or less 5000 people. Among the main services that the PM has at its disposal, we can indicate: 1) the *cabinèt* of the PM, compost of 25-50 people (included the "personal councilors"). It has at its disposal relevant powers of arbitrage and decision-making, and it help in solving conflicts among ministers (or ministries) [Di Virgilio 2005]. It is lead by a *directeur du cabinèt*, while both its composition and its mission are established by the PM itself. It follows the functioning of ministers and it keeps relationships with the heads departments of the central administration; 2) the *Secrétaire général du Gouvernement* (SGG), which is compost of almost 100 people, coming from the high level of public functionaries. It is a sort of «hinge institution, which intervenes at the Government's procedural deci-

¹⁸The use of the procedure of Article 49.3 after the 2008' revision is limited to one use per parliamentary session, except for Finance and social security bills.

In addition, the Article 45.4 allows government to circumvent the Senate by asking the National Assembly to rule definitely on a bill when a joint parliamentary committee is unable to approve a common text.

sion-making level» [Fournier 1987, 145]. It organizes the decision-making process of the Government: from selecting problems to get in the agenda of the CDM, to the publications of such decisions in the *Journal Officiel* [Fabbrini & Vassallo 1999, 164-65]. In sum, the SGG is the key¹⁹ administrative service under the PM's authority: it is the body responsible for organizing, administering, co-coordinating and recording the decision-making work of the government [Elgie & Machin 1991, 68] (Table 2).

TABLE 2 - FIGURE 6 about HERE

It must be stressed that during the period of cohabitation the schema illustrated above tends to change (or better it has changed). The PM - even if cannot neutralize the presidential power of early dismissal of National Assembly - has the power to strongly reduce the President's influence of preside the CM. Since 1986-88, the PM has «discovered» the *council of cabinet*. It is an organ not forecasted in the Constitution but inherited from the IV Republic. It is composed of by the chief of "executive" and its ministers, and it has the mission of preparing the meetings of the CM.

Moreover, the PM has the power to shape the government s/he leads by fixing the limits of ministerial competences. The number of ministers (Graph 9) and the structures of ministries have varied not considerably since 1958²⁰. The only "exceptions" to the average (15,6) being a few government in which the growth of the number of ministers can be ascribed to the reshuffles and/or problems among the coalition's allies). The presence of women in the government started to increase only in the mid eighties, but the average is still very low (1,9), the two exceptions being the Jospin's government and the two cabinets appointed by Sarkozy.

GRAPHS 9 – 9A about HERE

Having the most part of ministers coming from the public administration or the political parties, tends to amplify the government's functioning towards a more collegial form²¹, that can vary only through the political change in the equilibrium between the PM and the President.

If the Article 20 states that the Government shall determine and conduct the policy of the Nation, and that it is accountable to Parliament, the President strongly intervened in the decision-making process. The consequence has been a trend of hierarchization, particularly since 2002.

In order to "measure" the government's functioning and its hierarchical or collegial internal dynamics, we can look - as suggested in its works by Thiébault - at its decisional performance, and particularly to its legislative outputs.

Graph 10 shows data on the legislative "production", taking in account the rate of government-sponsored bills (*projets de loi*) at the expense of those initiated by parliament (*propositions de loi*). The rate of governmental proposal approved has always been higher, with an average of 82,1% (only during the legislature of the "longue cohabitation" the rate of government-sponsored bills decreased up to 71%).

HERE GRAPH 10

Finally, also the number/rate of the decrees adopted in the CM, rather than in the *Conseil d'état*, can furnish an indicator of the governmental attitude towards the legislative process. Graph 11 indicates that the rate of the decrees approved in the CM never reached 10% (average of 4,7%).

HERE GRAPH 11

The President of the Republic in the Government

Constitutional rules, or better institutional practices and political/electoral dynamics determine equilibrium in Government balance of powers and in its functioning. Thus, even if the text of the Constitution (also after the 2008 revision) indicates that the PM should play the key leadership role as head of the government, in practice for all but the period of cohabitation, actual direction of the Government has been assumed by the President.

The regular intervention of the President in policy-making decisions strengthened the salience of policy issues in presidential elections. This of course reduced the president's capacity to act as a supra-partisan arbiter. Moreover, given his limited resources (formal and "material"²²), the President depends on the support of a legislative majority and the large resources located in the hands of the PM and government. This process has often been analysed in terms of «presidentialization» [Poguntke & Webb 2005]. Yet this is quite contrary to the original presidential logic, as we have defined it here. Presidentialisation rather appears to be the conse-

¹⁹ Do exist two other General Secretariats under the responsibility of the PM: the National Defence (SGND), and the Inter-ministerial Committee on European Economic Cooperation (SGCI). Other services can vary according to the tastes and interests of the incumbents.

²⁰ We should take in account the President's role in the number of ministers since 1980's, and particularly with the presidencies of Chirac e Sarkozy.

²¹ According to the Article 22 instruments of the PM shall be countersigned, where required, by the ministers responsible for their implementation.

²² 7000 people during the Chirac presidency and only 50 at his direct dependence.

quence of the rise of the partisan logic, federating parties in favour of or against the incumbent or future president, at the expense of the president-as-arbiter [Grossmann & Sauger 2009].

The parliamentary majority and the government: a few cases of cohabitation

In periods of cohabitation, the President is brought back to a more limited role, the PM taking over the effective political leadership from the President²³. The tension within the Fifth Republic is (or better was) resolved by each general legislative election. Whether there will be concordance of presidential and legislative majorities or not, the system will lean towards the presidential or the parliamentary logic. And, thus toward the PM or the President with consequences on the Government's organization. Do it is still like that after 2000-08? Cohabitation continues to be seen as an anomaly in the French case, and in fact, since 1958 there has been only 9 years of divide majorities (1986-88; 1993-95; 1997-2002). In this line of thinking, it should be noted that during the periods of cohabitation between the President and the PM there are been a sort of «competition on the job», rather with homogenous majorities the two political actors operated a «division of the work» [Fabbrini & Vassallo 1999, 161].

The presidential party: a crucial factor

With regard to both legislative and presidential elections, the leader of the party in parliament has been - except during cohabitations - the President and not the PM. Presidential candidates have been partisan candidates, at least since de Gaulle left the political arena. In any case, de Gaulle, together with Mitterrand, Chirac, and Sarkozy has been the leader of a "presidential party". Vice versa, Pompidou, and Giscard d'Estaing (much more) have had some problems in controlling the homolog branch of party in parliament, and in using it as a tool of political struggle [Passarelli 2008].

Thus, under the partisan logic of the Fifth Republic, the President becomes some kind of super PM, albeit protected against any form of censure, designated by universal suffrage and effectively governing the country. In this vision, the presidential race is less based on individuals but is rather policy or ideologically orientated.

In this line of thinking, it is relevant to stress that presidential powers, and their influence on government's functioning change considerably. Particularly, both because governments have three types of skills for facing problems: 1) coordinating policy; 2) policy-making; 3) decision making, and because tasks that governments have to fulfil often tend to surface and the reality will be different from the formal structure [Blondel 1990, 26-7; Blondel 1993].

HERE FIGURE 6

Ministers as preferred by the President, and recruitment

Tous pour un, mais pas un pour tous : ainsi peut-on résumer les relations de Nicolas Sarkozy avec ses ministres, qui se retrouvent fort dépourvus depuis que la bise est venue. Le chef de l'Etat règne en souverain absolu, prenant toutes les décisions, donnant pour mission à l'«intendance» de suivre. Le gouvernement applique comme il peut les consignes, tente de satisfaire le président en employant ses méthodes, prend des risques sans filet et, parfois, disjoncte. L'hôte de l'Elysée, alors, ne soutient pas toujours ses soldats perdus. Ceux qui ont failli n'ont souvent plus que leurs yeux pour pleurer. Ils sont nombreux à avoir subi ce triste sort, fragilisant l'image de l'équipe au pouvoir.

Quels que soient leurs torts, ils paient parfois cher leur portefeuille. Les rares qui n'ont pas connu la disgrâce craignent d'y tomber, leur capacité d'initiative étant inhibée par la crainte d'échouer ou de déplaire. Bilan : du Premier ministre aux secrétaires d'Etat, l'attelage de l'exécutif semble réduit à l'état de zombie

Le Point 19/03/2009

In order to examine the evolution of intra-executive relations, it is important to look at the cases of appointment and dismissal of ministers by the President. It must be said that the government's structure found its juridical bases on the Article 8.2 which establishes the rank and attributions of ministers and secretaries of state²⁴. Nevertheless, the number of ministers and secretaries d'état vary from each government. In particular, the appointments vary - as usually - depending on the degree of majority concordance between the Presidency and the Parliament (supporting the Government).

In case of divided majorities the PM has greater freedom in choosing his ministers, in accordance with other parties' leader of the coalition (if any). Otherwise, with homogenous majorities, is the President that politically, *de facto*, chose the ministers among the exponents of the majority party, or better *his* party, the presidential party [Cole 1993]. On the other side, the PM may appoint several junior ministers to his office to assist running the various different services. In this staff people are chosen for their loyalty and competence. Not surprisingly, the *cabinets* at the Elysée and Matignon exert considerable influence over the other cabinets. In terms of the coordination of legislative and the influence of *cabinets*, it is worth mentioning that inter-ministerial groups are very important. All-important government bills pass through inter-ministerial meetings,

²³ The President presides over the CM, and thus the PM use the *conseil of cabinet* where are discussed and approved the decisions.

²⁴ The decrees of attributions of ministers are deliberated in the Council of Ministers; while for the secretaries of state they are deliberated by the President of the Republic.

which inform the *conseil des ministres* and the inter-departmental councils. In sum, political information moves up towards the PM and the President, moves across the Parliament or down to the services of the bureaucracy. In this sense, the ministerial *cabinets* are constantly involved, drawing up, proposing and pursuing with varying degrees of emphasis virtually all textual and other manifestation of political information [Gaffney 1991, 7-8]. To understand the particular importance of higher civil servants in the French politico-administrative system, it is necessary to understand the general system of elite recruitment that the French state has devised, as I have already mentioned talking of the *Grandes Ecoles*.

Every minister gathers around him a staff of loyal advisors, who today are almost all civil servants. In addition, all ministerial *cabinet* nominations are at the discretion of the minister concerned, and are drawn from a network of people in or close to the minister's personal followers [Suleiman 1981, 119]. There are two essential reasons for this dominance: 1) First, the allocation for payment of the ministerial cabinet is very limited, and therefore its members must be paid from outside. In this case the civil service provides a pool of suitable candidates. 2) Second, the French civil service colleges turn out a uniform product. If in the early Fifth Republic the majority of cabinet members were *compagnons* of de Gaulle, at the end of his presidency the higher civil service have increased their representation [Gaffney 1991, 8-9]. In general, in fact, the duration of ministers in office is an indicator - perhaps the most obvious or the most striking - of the nature of the ministerial "condition" from the point of view of each individual member [Blondel 1985, 21].

Looking at the sociological background of personal of government we can see that in France the proportion of women does not exceed 5 % of the total number of cabinet ministers. A quart of them reach office before they are 45 years of age. Finally, the rate of graduates among ministers is of 82% [Thiébaud 1991, 24-5].

Having a system with two political and institutional actors intervening and affecting the government's functioning, it is crucial to observe how vary their popularity. In particular, the level of appreciation/good opinion can influence the choice to precede, for example, to a reshuffle, to enlarge participation among government members or to centralize the governance.

Looking at the possible correlations between different types of popularity measures and kinds of government, Grossman has shown that «the simple volume measure does not really appear to be determined by popularity. However, an increase in net support for the President helps to reduce the size of government and the other way round. Strong support, moreover, diminishes the danger of government reshuffles. This is also true for the PM. The impact is almost nil for changing the PM, even if both often go together.» [Grossman 2009, 276-77]. In France the popularity - «that is the best indicator of the ambiguity of Prime Minister's role» - of the PM has been regularly «dominated» by that of the President [Parodi 1997, 89], and that has had strong consequences in confirming the idea of the chef of the government as fusible (the only exception being the cohabitation) [Ibidem, 90].

We know that the President continues in using the PM as a "fusible", to dismiss him (and/or ministers - *remaniements*) when his popularity is low. Nevertheless, as has been shown [Grossman 2009, 277-78] parts of the motivation to change government stems not from current bad polls, but from the prospects of better polls after change. Reducing the size of government appears to have beneficial effects on presidential support. Firing ministers, benefits a President's reputation. However, another, somewhat counterintuitive result indicates that presidents do not really benefit from government reshuffles in terms of popularity; rather the contrary. On average, reshuffling government or changing the PM do in fact lead to lower popularity. Yet this does not appear to stop French presidents from trying to shift blame to their ministers. So, it seems that the president has used the institutional privileges to reshuffle and replace governments very much in his own best interests.

If during the *Vè République* the PM's popularity has been 9 points lower (in average) than that of the President in terms of satisfaction (and 5 points higher in terms of discontent) [Parodi 1997, 95], the Sarkozy presidency has shown (so far), different results. In the contrary of what "generally" happens (except during cohabitation), the popularity, or better the satisfaction for Sarkozy is lower (10 points in average!) than that of its PM since the sixth month after the 2007 elections²⁵. This data should be interpreted as a sanction of the direct engagement of the President in the policies, but most remarkably (*et pour cause*) as a change on the government's functioning towards a more hierarchical structure.

A (unstable) presidentialized diarchy?

[...] *Le chef de l'état organise comme jamais avant lui le pouvoir exécutif autour du palais de l'Élysée, donc de lui même [...].*

La présidentialisation ne fait pas de doute.

Elle a d'abord lieu au détriment du Premier ministre.

Nicolas Sarkozy n'agit pas seulement en chef de l'Etat, mais aussi en chef du gouvernement.

Le programme du ministère Fillon est le programme présidentiel, jusque dans les moindres détails.

²⁵ Le journal du dimanche <http://www.lejdd.fr/>.

*Le président préside et gouverne. Il détermine l'ordre et l'orientation de réforme.
Il surveille leur mise en œuvre. Il commente en public et assume sans hésitation leurs résultats, bons ou mauvais.
Bien des dossiers se traitent directement au palais de l'Élysée, entre le président, ses conseillers et les ministres concernés.
Il arrive que François Fillon apprenne par la presse une décision gouvernementale.
Aucun président de la Ve République n'avait auparavant poussé les choses aussi loin.*

A. Duhamel
[La marche consulaire, 34-5]

The introduction of the direct election of the President has contributed to the consolidation and the bipolarisation (even in a two parties schema) [Grunberg - Haegel 2007] of the party system. The 1967 elections, moreover, were characterised by a highly proactive de Gaulle promoting his camp and the necessity of congruent presidential and parliamentary majorities. The partisan logic of the Fifth Republic was thus never completely absent, even if de Gaulle seemed to fight it forcefully in its early days.

In their recent article, Grossman and Sauger [2009, 427-35] indicated this presidentialization as the end of a political and institutional process made of four phases: 1) the Gaullist Republic: (1958–65); 2) the politicisation of the Fifth Republic (1965–81); 3) the political fragmentation and institutional challenges (1981–2002); 4) a new political system (2002-?). This path it seems to conduce towards a return of parties and the President. The latter as a “super” PM and not (if he never was) as an arbiter.

A first important cause of this “tendency” could be, I believe, found on the constitutional reform of 2000 - which shortening the presidential mandate from seven to five years - has changed the functioning of the Fifth Republic government. We cannot still stress exactly to which extent did this affect the relative importance of the two heads of the executive, but the President is going being not more perceived, at least in the rhetoric politics, as a *super partes*.

In 2002 PM Jospin decided to invert the calendar, implying the presidential election were more important than the legislative ones and thus had to be held before, thus reinforcing the presidentialisation of the Fifth Republic. The 2000’ s reform combined with the inversion of electoral calendar institutionalised the President as a partisan leader and the actual head of the executive, and strongly limited the chances of divided government.

The general thrust of the reform appears to favour Parliament at the expense of the executive. It is true that rationalised parliamentarism [Huber 1996] was meant to redesign executive–legislative relations in favour of the executive after the failure of the Fourth Republic. Yet it is not certain whether the rise of the executive in the post-war period is really due to the measures limiting parliamentary power. Alternative accounts rather emphasise the importance of the combined impact of the presidential and legislative elections, as well at the importance of party discipline [Sauger 2009]. This latter aspect may in fact appear a lot more important, provided that even in countries where the government does not completely dominate the parliamentary agenda, the executive has expanded its relative power. While it is of course difficult to anticipate the practice resulting from the constitutional changes, these reforms appear to bury all attempts to revive the presidential logic under the Fifth Republic. As cohabitation will become more unlikely, the President will be more than ever a super PM and partisan leader. The President-as-arbiter increasingly appears as a figure of the past.

5. Conclusions. But in progress.

Institutions matter. To some extent [Keeler 1993]. Political and institutional theories, tell us that Portugal and France have similar formal institutional frameworks. In addition, the two countries show analogous formal governments’ structures, in particular because the Lusitanian case “imitated” the French model [Elgie 2009]. However, the two systems are consolidating different functioning due to the political equilibrium changes, and to the institutional trends of the semi-presidentialism, because if «one examines the characteristics of national executives, therefore, differences among these appear to be as large as differences among groups, parties or legislatures» [Blondel 1990, 257].

The impact of Fifth Republic institutions on the executive power and the policy-making have had an important role in strengthening governments (stability and control of the legislative power) but they did not actually completely remove the influence of the head of the State. He continues in intervening in the government’s affairs thanks to consolidated praxis, but also to the role he has built on the basis of a profoundly modified political and party systems. These tendencies, are evident with the Sarkozy presidency, which he interpreted in a “consular” [Duhamel 2009] way, by continually intervening as he was the chief of the government.

Vice versa, in Portugal, the “considerable” power of the President did not allow him/her in playing a relevant role in the government affairs. The PM, a sort of *primus super pares*, is the key political actor in leading a “classical” collegial government, that is slowly but constantly moving throw the continuum next to the “pure” ideal type of “cabinet”.

So, from an institutional point of view, the French Fifth Republic, in somewhat considered as a model of the semi-presidential system, it seems not (anymore) to be alone, nor an archetype [Elgie 2009].

The comparison of the government functioning in two countries having a similar institutional frameworks, such as France and Portugal, did not furnished particular elements in supporting the interpretation by which semi-presidentialism has a own structure of government.

By looking at the results we have illustrated in this paper, we can infer that differences in government functioning between the two cases analysed arise from political conjunctures, political culture, administrative legacy, etc. The institutional elements are common and they certainly matter, but the *nature* of government, the style of the cabinet, the dynamics on decision-making, policy-making and coordination depend more on *extra* institutional variables.

The government as organization is not the *lieu* of power *in se*. In particular, we face two cases of cabinet government, that is «government by cabinet, and not government direct by an individual, be he or she Monarch or President: this means that the ministers are involved in general problems as well as in specific matters; this also means that they are involved politically as well as administratively in governmental life» [Blondel 1991, 5].

However, starting from this aspect, the two systems tend to vary enough. In France, it is the Government to be the core of the system mostly when the parliamentary majority that supports the government is different from the presidential one (cohabitation). The recent constitutional changes (2000; 2008), and the political restructuring of political and parties' system have had a crucial role in giving a strong hierarchical pressure to the government. Is the President that centralizes the policy-making and the decision-making processes, while the PM is a assort of secretary that coordinate the Mps and ministers.

Vice versa, in "normal periods" do exist a sort of "direct link" between the bureaucracy and the presidency - although through the government - that strength the trend toward a president's intervention especially during homologues majorities. Thus, the influence of presidents has been at odds with their constitutionally granted powers. De Gaulle, Pompidou, Mitterrand, Chirac, and Sarkozy (so far), managed to dominate the executive branch well beyond the prescriptions of the 1958 Constitution. And, thus the political and institutional changes in the relationship between the PM and the President, have affected the «*instance collégiale*» of the French government [Chagnollaud & Quermonne 1996, 293-94].

In the Portuguese case we can see a similar tendency of hierarchization, or better of presidentialization [Lobo 2005] of the government but still in a solid collegial organization form. The PM is the key actor in managing the government, particularly when s/he leads a one party majority [Passarelli 2005]. Ministers are not very much relevant actors as well as the bureaucracy. The President can only intervene - even in an effective way - when the PM and the coalition who support it will "clash". In an more general sense, the Portuguese government is thus (mostly) hierarchical. Agents are clearly subordinates to specific principles, and there are few horizontal checks and balances. Within each ministerial department, the department head (typically a cabinet minister) is solely responsible for all decisions, and the PM sits at the very apex of this hierarchical executive. So, this brief writing confirms, and highlights better previous analyses on the Portuguese government's functioning, and particularly on the PM's prevalent role on the process of governmental coordination [King 1994, 153; Lijphart 1999, 114]. The role is so prevalent that - with maybe some exaggeration - someone considered it as a case of «presidentialism of the Prime Minister» [Moreira 1989, 36].

However, we can thus say that in spite of their similar formal institutional features, French and Portuguese governments function differently enough. Much less compared to what happened in the case of the exercise of the presidential powers [Passarelli 2008a], but in a significant enough way. The two semi-presidential systems have as much as different trends in the functioning of their governments.

TABLES 3-4 ABOUT HERE

Even if they are similarly organized, the French government is moving towards a more centralized and hierarchical structure. This data has been consolidating since 2000, and particularly after the successive electoral and political events. In particular the Sarkozy's presidency has shown (so far) a great level of power concentration on the President's hands, with a strong imprinting on a hierarchical functioning of the decision-making process in which the role of the PM and of the Parliament is much less big than in the letter of the Constitution. The only exception to this structure of institutional relationship in the government functioning is the case of divided majorities (cohabitation), even if the latter seems to be unlike.

Vice versa, or maybe better similarly, the Portuguese case indicates a growing strengthening of a more hierarchical structure of the government's functioning. Nevertheless, compared to the French case which "since ever" had a "hierarchical element" in itself - mitigated or exaggerated - the Portuguese experience can be considered as a more "parliamentary"- collegial government, as the President's "incapacity" to strength its role, à *la de Gaulle*.

Thus it seems that the Portuguese government is moving, or better has been consolidating toward a sort of PM's "hierarchical collegiality". The latter could apparently be as an oxymoron, but it well explain the "nature" of the Portuguese government. It is collegial because of its "parliamentary" consolidation model and function-

ing, even in a formally established semi-presidential system. However, in this case is the PM who governs (compared to the President); the previous is, among the ministers, a “*primus super pares*” rather a “*primus inter pares*” as happen in classical parliamentary systems. In any case the principles of collective and egalitarian government are markedly eroded in practice.

In any case, compared to the first decade of its democratic consolidation [Magone 1990] - the collegial “nature” of the Portuguese government has been strongly weakened both in its structure and functioning. This change has been slow but constant, and it has undergone an acceleration in the 80’s for both political/electoral, and organizational reasons. The Cavaco Silva’s victory at the elections of 1987, has been accompanied with a centralization and strengthening of the governmental (or better prime ministerial) resources. In addition, the presence of a clear majority (in vote and seats) for ten years, accompanied by the great independence of the leadership towards the(ir) party(ies), had given an effective push to the “prime ministerial” leadership. In this sense, the government appears as a collegial institution working hierarchically, in which the PM is the *deus ex machina*, while the ministers are progressively losing their power.

In addition, we have seen that measuring the compactness of the government could be a good indicator of the government’s functioning towards a more hierarchical or collegial way. However, we know that despite the fact that governments are «relatively small and very visible [having] a common goal and [acting] as a team», «they may will not be united and their differences may even come out in the open» [Blondel 1990, 257]. In this schema it is thus crucial to look at the selecting government ministers process, that is who and how they are selected. These arguments it is fundamental also because - as seen - «the exact limits of the set of individuals who form part of the government cannot always be clearly marked [...] [as well as] many national executives include under-secretaries or junior ministers» [Ibidem, 262].

In France the recruitment of personal of government comes mostly from a sort of “iron triangle” between parties (obviously the ones of the parliamentary majority), notables, and technical. About 20% of ministers have not any political experience (Mps, participation in party and local politics). The presence of “pure” and mixed bureaucratic background experience is significant. Generally speaking, «the relative weakness of parties leaves a greater space for the recruitment of ministers from less political institutions» [Cotta 1991, 188]. Thus, the chance to become part of the government (*in lato sensu*) is greater for *Grandes ecoles’s alumni*, and ministers’ executive managers [Aberbach *et al.* 1981]. In addition, the increasing President’s power, and its control of the presidential party, have allowed him in appointing more “independent” ministers. But in general he continues to lead *his* ministers by «whipping them» [Brossolette 2007]. Some examples of the last trend comes from the Sarkozy presidency: the Foreign Affairs minister B. Kouchner, an ex socialist member, etc.

In Portugal most part of ministers’ recruitment comes - as we have seen - from political parties. The genetic of Portuguese parties - who conferred more power to the “central office” face of them - has strengthened the role of the leadership in appointing ministers, (as well as other personal of government). In this schema and crossroad, the State administration is the weaker pillar. The constant diminishing number of “technical/independent” ministers, is only make up for by the PM’s freedom in appointing some extra party people. Or, in alternative, some local notables, the so-called barons whose use the party label for the elections but are “independent” from them since their personal electoral-strength.

Finally, cohabitation - that is the presence of two adversarial majorities in Parliament and at the Presidency - is a fundamental interpretative key of the government’s functioning in semi-presidential systems. In particular, the kind of answers given to the management of some issues such as: the dismissal of parliament; the ministers appointment; the CDM’s governance, and the policy-making process, implies a trend towards a more hierarchical or collegial government’s functioning. Thus the political equilibrium, and particularly the difference between the cohabitation and the concordance of majorities, are playing a crucial role in affecting the government’s functioning in the two systems.

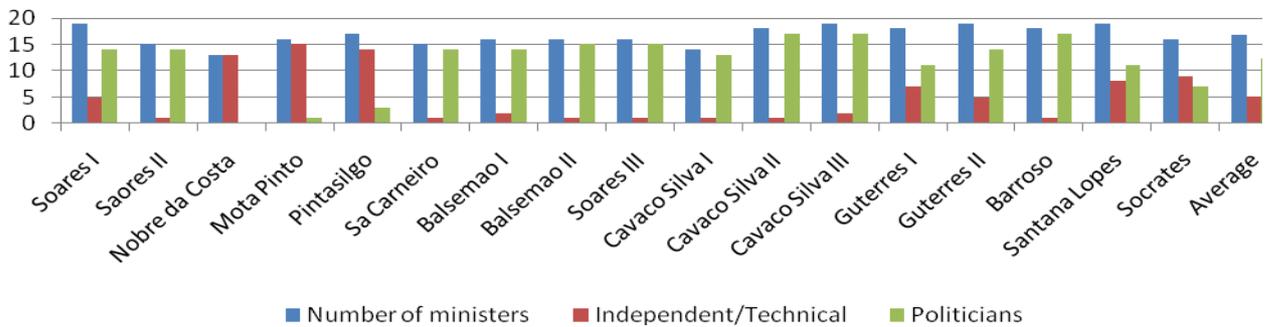
These considerations on the French and Portuguese governments are well funded on data, and they seem be rooted. Nevertheless, we need further researches and a bit more time in order to verify that they will “survive” to the actual actors (Sarkozy *in primis*), and to the general features (mechanic and dynamics) of both the political and the parties systems.

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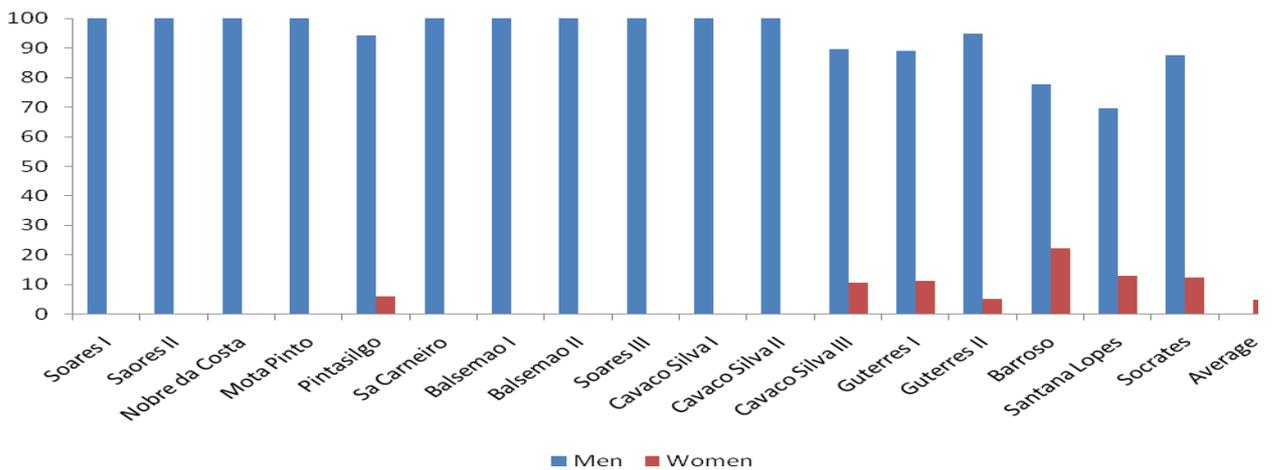
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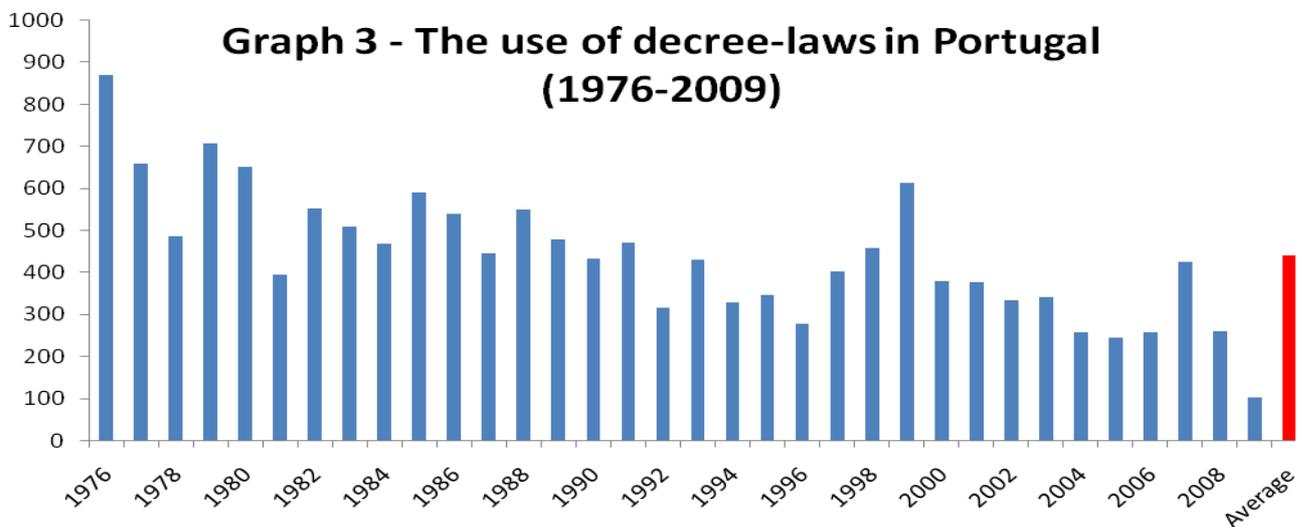
Graph 1 - The number of ministers in the Portuguese Governments (1976-2009)



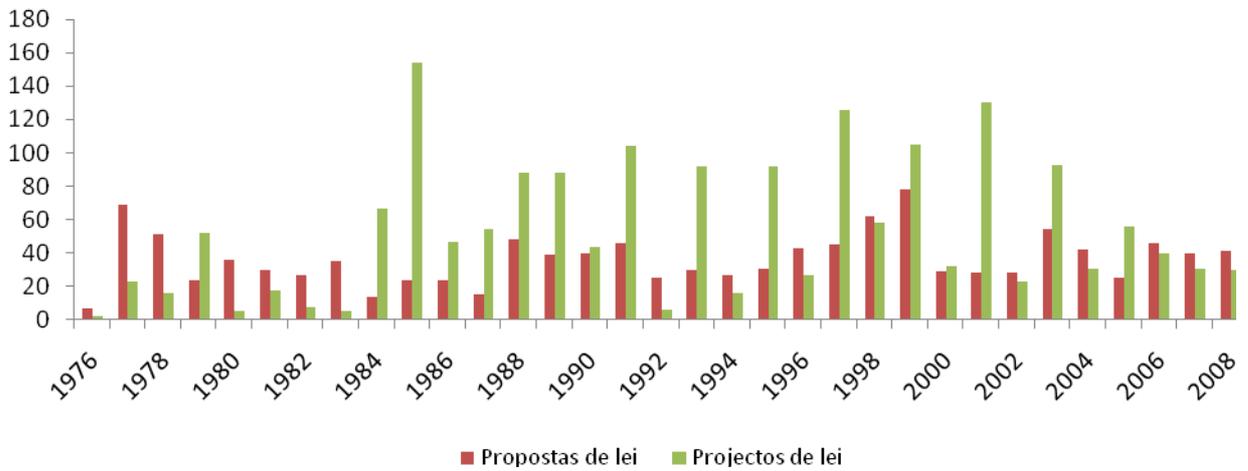
Graph 2 - The rate of ministers' gender in the Portuguese Government (1976-2009)



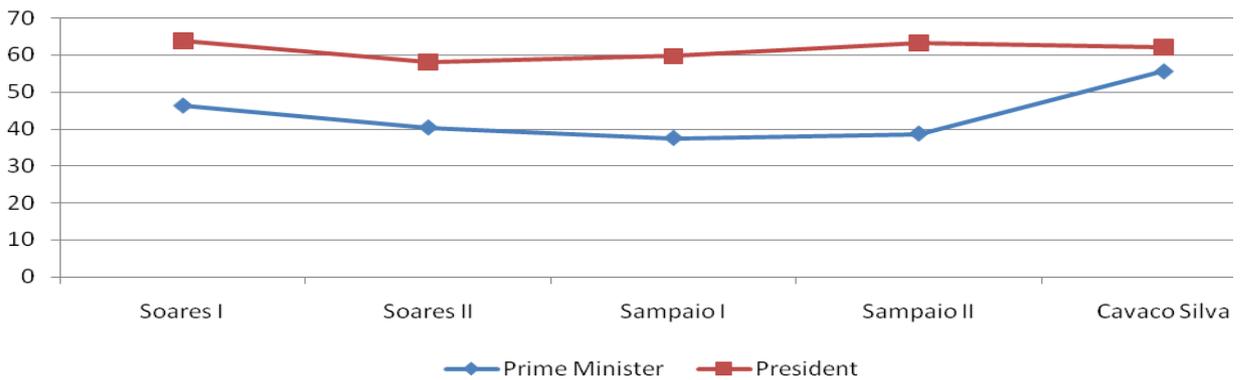
Graph 3 - The use of decree-laws in Portugal (1976-2009)



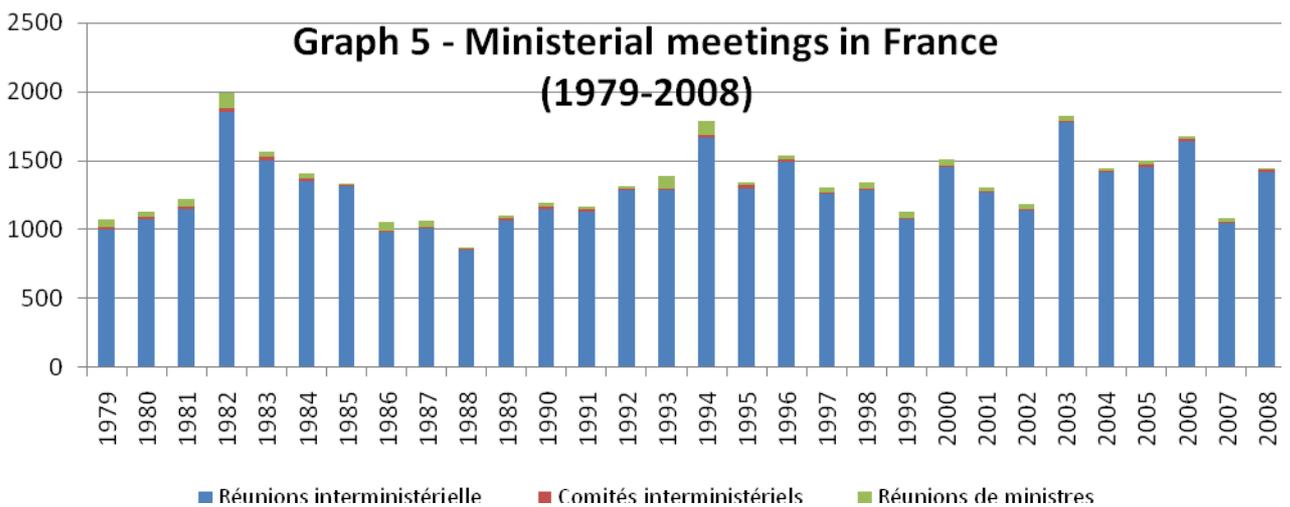
Graph 4 - Legislative outcome in Portugal (1976-2008)



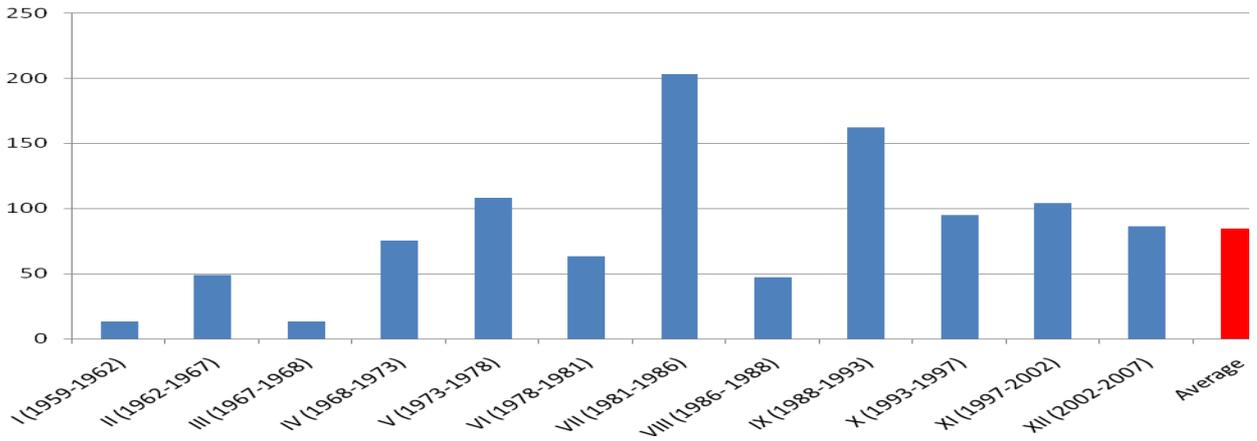
Graph 4a - The rate of "good" opinions for Prime Minister and President in Portugal (1986-2009)



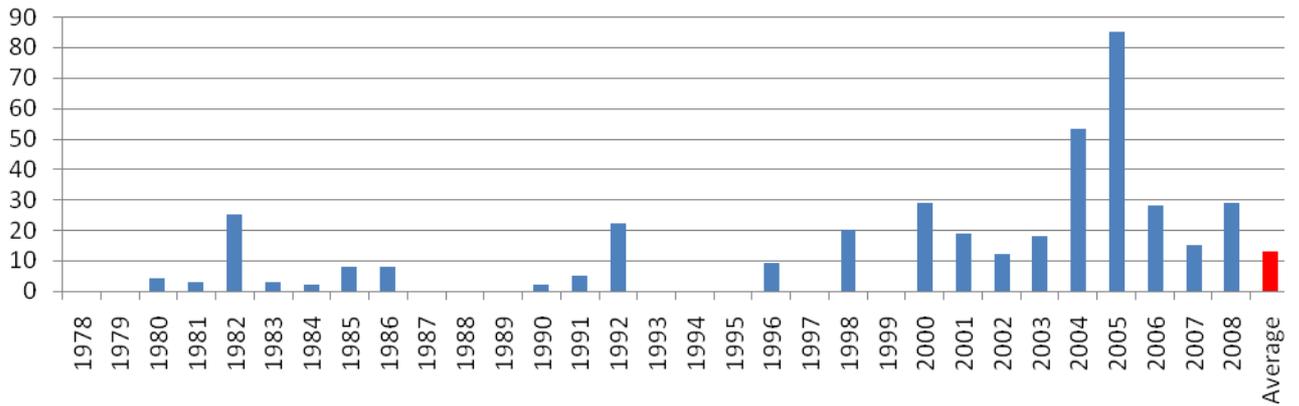
Graph 5 - Ministerial meetings in France (1979-2008)



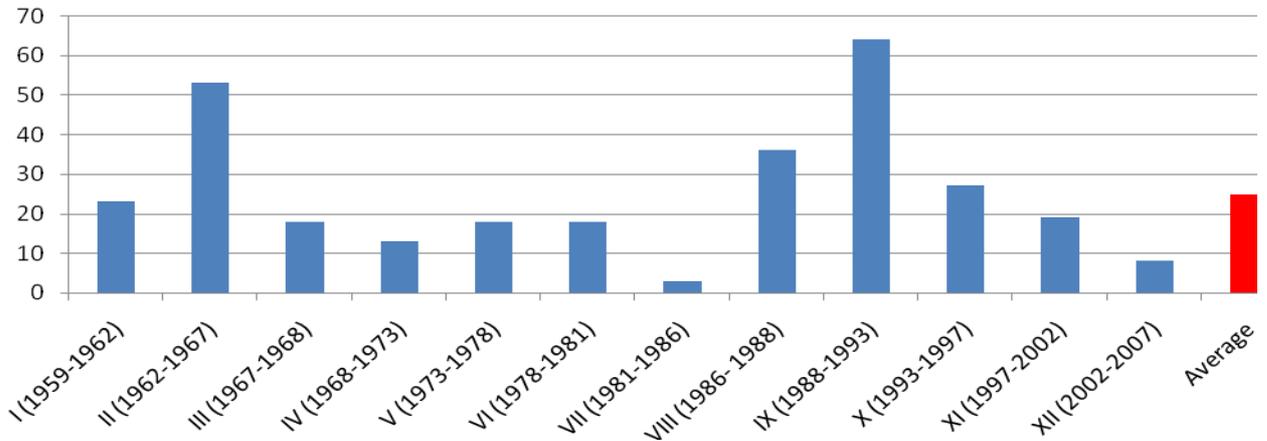
Graph 5a - The use of the "declaration of urgency" in France (1959-2007)



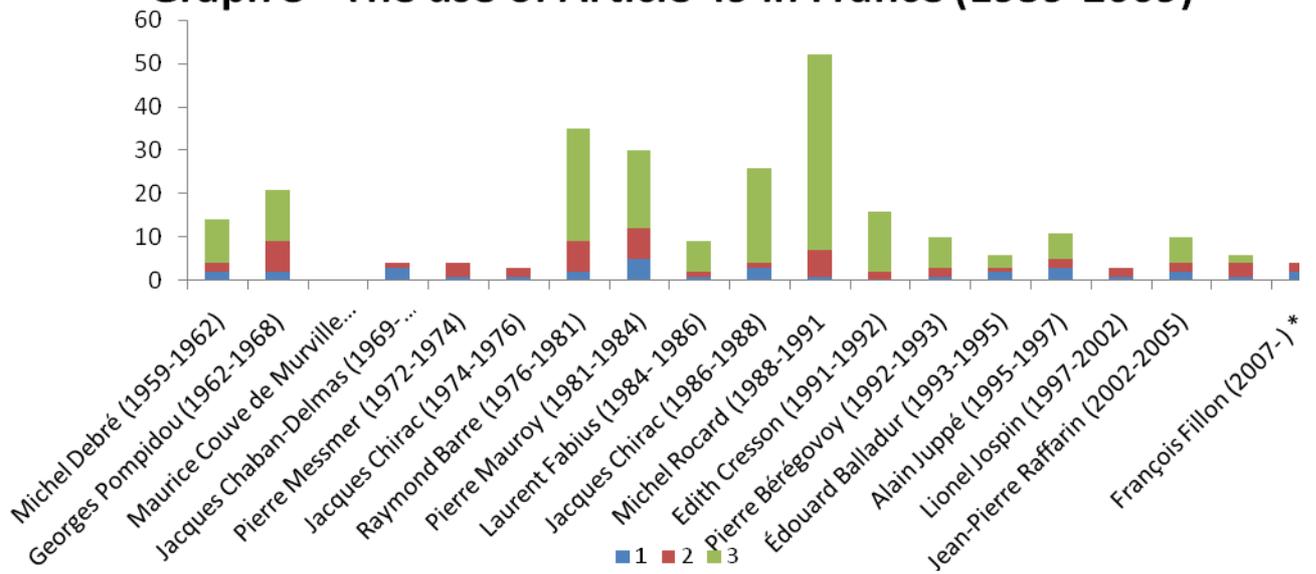
Graph 6 - The use of the "ordonnances" in France (1978-2008)



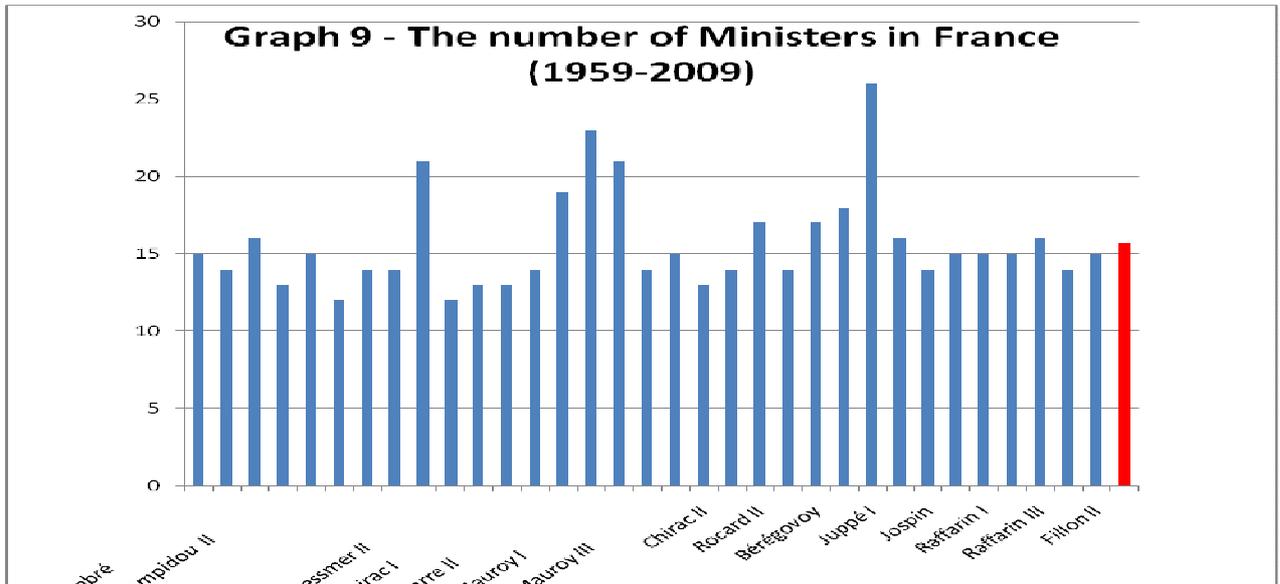
Graph 7 - The use of the "vote bloqué" in France (1959-2007)



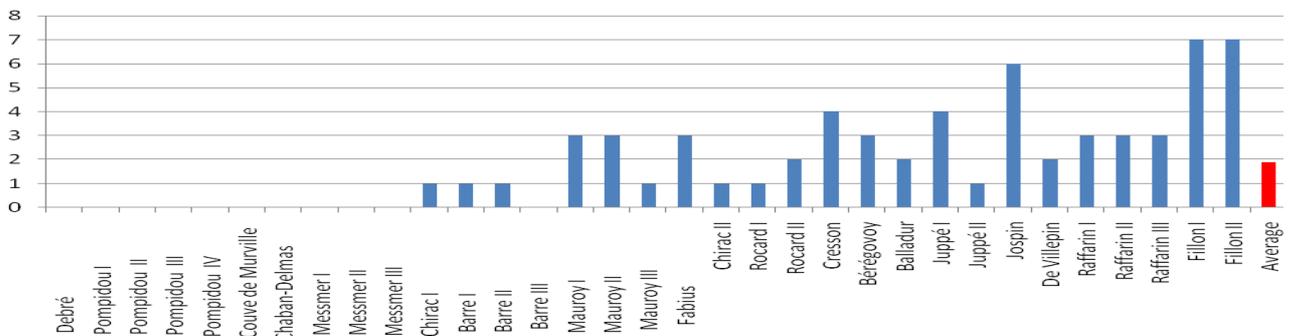
Graph 8 - The use of Article 49 in France (1959-2009)



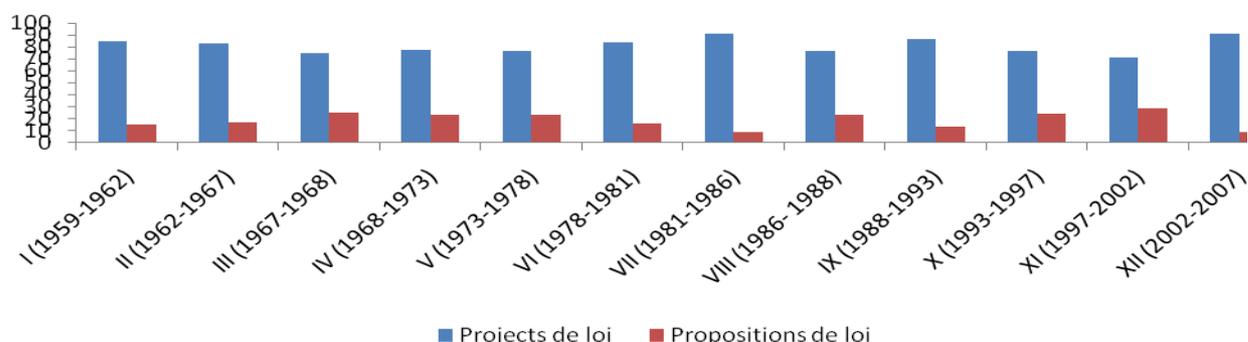
Graph 9 - The number of Ministers in France (1959-2009)



Graph - 9a The number of women in the French Government (1959-2009)



Graph 10 - The rate of Parliamentary and Governmental Legislative Initiative in France (1959-2007)



Graph 11 - The rate of decrees approved in the CM (1978-2008)

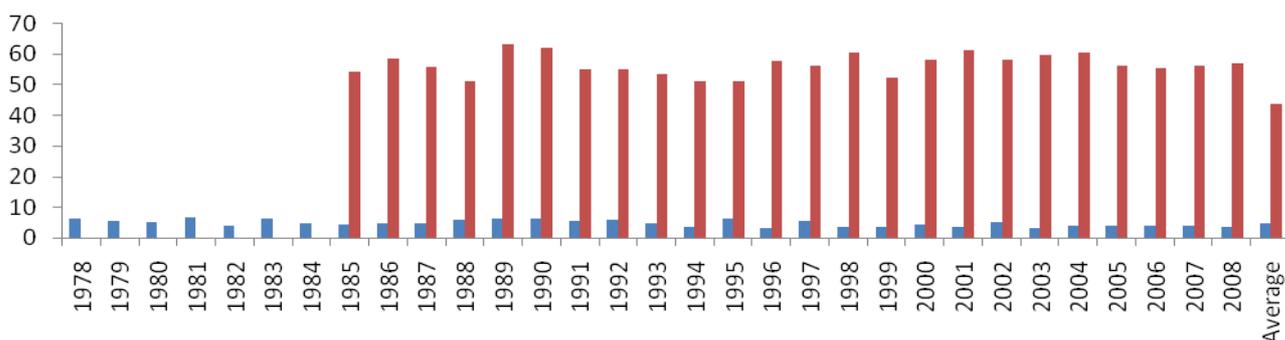


Table 1 - The Prime Minister's resources in Portugal

Centro de Estudos e Formação Autárquica [CEFA]
Comissão de Coordenação e Desenvolvimento Regional de Lisboa e Vale do Tejo [CCDR-LVT]
Comissão de Coordenação e Desenvolvimento Regional do Alentejo [CCDR-Alt]
Comissão de Coordenação e Desenvolvimento Regional do Algarve [CCDR-Alg]
Comissão de Coordenação e Desenvolvimento Regional do Centro [CCDR-C]
Comissão de Coordenação e Desenvolvimento Regional do Norte [CCDR-N]
Conselho Nacional de Ética para as Ciências da Vida [CNECV]
Conselho Superior de Informações [CSI]
Coordenador Nacional da Estratégia de Lisboa e do Plano Tecnológico
Direcção-Geral das Autarquias Locais [DGAL]
Inspecção-Geral da Administração Local [IGAL]
Instituto de Apoio às Pequenas e Médias Empresas e ao Investimento [IAPMEI]
Instituto Geográfico Português [IGP]
Instituto Nacional de Administração [INA]
Programa Foral
Serviço de Informações de Segurança [SIS]
Serviço de Informações Estratégicas de Defesa [SIED]
Sistema de Informações da República Portuguesa [SIRP]

Source: elaboration from <http://www.portugal.gov.pt/Portal/PT>

Table 2 - The Prime Minister's Resources in France (2009)

Cabinet du Premier ministre et organismes rattachés

Cabinet du Premier ministre
Cabinet militaire du Premier ministre
Commandement militaire de l'Hôtel Matignon
Service de protection des hautes personnalités
Centre de transmissions gouvernemental - Antenne de Matignon
Groupement interministériel de contrôle
Intendance du Premier ministre

Coordination interministérielle

Secrétariat général du Gouvernement (SGG)
Secrétariat général des affaires européennes (SGAE)
Secrétariat général de la défense nationale (SGDN)
Service d'information du Gouvernement (SIG)
Secrétariat général de la mer

Information générale

Direction des Journaux officiels
Direction de la Documentation française, auxquels sont rattachés les Centres interministériels de renseignements administratifs (CIRA)

Soutien

Direction des services administratifs et financiers du Premier ministre (DSAF)

Coordination sectorielle

Comité du service public de la diffusion du droit par l'internet
Direction du développement des médias (DDM)
Haut conseil à l'intégration (HCI)
Haut conseil du secteur public
Commission interministérielle de la politique immobilière de l'Etat

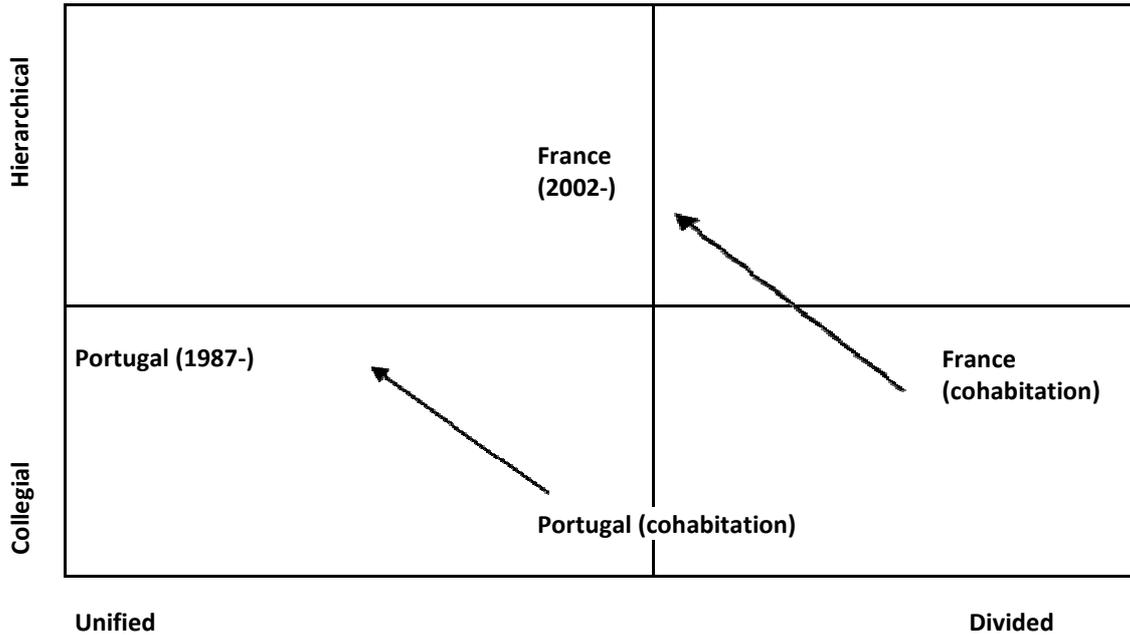
Commissaire du Gouvernement près de la Commission nationale de l'informatique et des libertés (CNIL)

Recherche, conseil et formation

Conseil d'analyse économique (CAE)
Conseil d'analyse de la société (CAS)
Conseil d'orientation des retraites (COR)
Conseil stratégique des technologies de l'information (CSTI)
Centre d'analyse stratégique
Commission des archives constitutionnelles de la Vème République
Comité consultatif national d'éthique pour les sciences de la vie et de la santé
Comité d'enquête sur le coût et le rendement des services publics (CECRSP)
Mission interministérielle de vigilance et de lutte contre les dérives sectaires (Miviludes)
Commission pour l'indemnisation des victimes de spoliations intervenues du fait des législations antisémites en vigueur pendant l'Occupation (CIVS)

Source: elaboration from www.premier-ministre.gouv.fr; Fabbrini- Vassallo 1999, 163; Elgie-Machin 1991, 69

Table 3 Government's Functioning in France and Portugal



Source: elaboration from Elgie 1999b; 2005; Passarelli 2008a.

Table 4 Majorities, President-Prime minister relationships and government's leadership style in France and Portugal

