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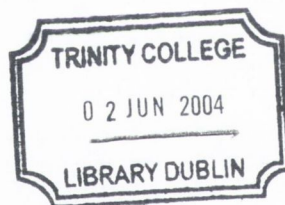
DO PARTIES MAKE A DIFFERENCE?  
THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GOVERNMENT INTENTION AND  
GOVERNMENT OUTPUT IN THE PUBLIC POLICY SPHERE.  
THE CASE OF GOVERNMENTS IN IRELAND 1977-1997.

by

**Lucy Eleanor Mansergh**

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Trinity College,  
Dublin

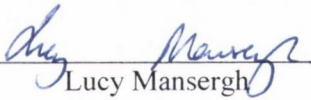
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## Declaration

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## Summary

Students of representative democracy are not in agreement as to the degree of influence that parties exert over public policy. One possible route by which partisan influence may be investigated is through a case study of pledge fulfilment. I submit that there are seven requirements for a partisan difference to be suggested through this pledge approach. These are as follows:

1. parties stand for different policies (Sullivan and O'Connor 1972),
2. voters perceive the parties' different stances (Sullivan and O'Connor 1972),
3. voters cast their ballots on the basis of the different policy positions on offer (Sullivan and O'Connor 1972), taking into account the reputations of the parties with regard to policy consistency (Downs 1957, Denver and Hands 1992),
4. parties in government redeem more of their own policy promises than those of the opposition (Klingemann, Hofferbert and Budge 1994, Thomson 1999),
5. parties, if they get into government after the election, generally redeem the policy promises they offered before the election (Sullivan and O'Connor 1972),
6. where parties do not remain faithful to their pre-election promises, the voters punish them at the following election (Downs 1957),
7. actions promoted in manifestos account for the vast majority of later government actions.

In this thesis, I test for all seven requirements over the Irish government terms 1977-2002.

I use different methods to test the seven requirements. For the first three and sixth requirements, I rely largely on collated evidence from secondary sources.

For the fourth and fifth requirements, I analyse the content of manifestos and government programmes for pledges and then check for their redemption. The methodology employed to collect this data owes to Thomson (1999), with a couple of exceptions. I test three different models of the relationship between what parties say and what they do, using the derived pledge data. The first model, The Baseline Model, hypothesises that being a party in government should be all-important to getting a party's manifesto pledges redeemed. It also tests whether or not pledges are made in *important* areas of policy, and the extent to which political parties share the same policy agendas. The second model, The Government Party Model, seeks to elaborate the political and institutional factors that assist government parties in redeeming their own pledges. The final model, The Opposition Party Model suggests factors likely to enhance the probability of the government of the day redeeming some of the opposition parties' policy pledges.

Briefly, this model suggests that an opposition party's pledges will be more likely to be adopted by the government-of-the-day where the opposition party is either strategically important for the stable continuation of the government or where it is in broad policy agreement with the party/parties in office.

To test the final requirement – that manifestos largely anticipate government action – I perform a qualitative analysis of arts policy in Ireland, concentrating on the period 1977-2002.

The broad findings of this thesis suggest that Irish voters are not particularly interested in policies per se at election time, although they can perceive party differences on more prominent policy areas. The available national evidence suggests that roughly 50% of voters *may* be motivated by party/policy, though more detailed analysis of electronic voting ballots from three constituencies at the last election intimates that the percentages may actually be much lower than previously supposed.

Despite this, however, political parties when in government do, by and large, redeem more of their manifesto pledges than not, although not significantly more than they redeem of their opposition colleagues' pledges. Policy agreement between opposition and government parties was identified as a strong factor in enhancing the likelihood of government party pledge redemption. Other factors identified as important for a coalition party, specifically, in fulfilling its pledges were agreement on the pledge between the coalition partners, ownership of the relevant portfolio and the pledge relating to economic or societal issues.

One secondary source (Marsh and Kennedy 2003), relying on evidence from the 2002 election, suggests that Irish voters do punish parties for weak performance but that punishment relates more generally to overall economic performance than performance on specific issues (pledges).

Finally, the evidence from the area of arts policy submits that actions taken by governments that were evidenced in *any* of the parties' manifestos and, if relevant, government programmes at one particular election represent only a small proportion of the actions that the parties take, once in government.

The findings of this thesis do not, therefore, provide evidence for a large degree of partisan difference in public policy.

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More generally, *The Party Mandate* (Thomson, 1999) served to provide a model for the basic structure of this thesis and, indeed, was the source for many of the hypotheses and methods used. Without Thomson's prior work, it would be difficult to assess the significance of my findings for Ireland, given that The Netherlands is the only other multi-party system on which a pledge-study has been performed. In respect of my sixth chapter,



relating to the arts in Ireland, I also want to thank Dr. Ruth Blandina-Quinn for her comments and suggestions on an early draft of the chapter.

I have to say a big “thank you” to my proof-readers – to Mum for her exhaustive identification and correction of my “gerunds”, among other grammar and content items; to Danny, for his advice on both style and content and speedy return of my first six chapters; and to Dad, for his helpful additions and encouraging ticks.

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## Abbreviations

D.C.U.	Dublin City University
DL	Democratic Left
D.P.O.L.	Dublin Promotions Organisations Limited
FF	Fianna Fáil
FG	Fine Gael
GP	The Green Party
Lab	The Labour Party
M.P.	Member of Parliament
NC	The National Coalition
PDs	The Progressive Democrats
R.T.E.	Radio Teilifís Éireann
S.T.V.	Single Transferable Vote
T.D.	Teachtaí Dála
T.U.C.	Trades Union Congress
U.K.	The United Kingdom
U.N.	United Nations
U.S.	The United States of America
V.A.T.	Value Added Tax
WP	The Workers' Party

# CHAPTER 1

## PARTISAN THEORY OF REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACY

### 1.1 Introduction

The term “democracy” carries much polemical weight. At one point or another, most countries have claimed to be democratic. No author in the field of democratic theory has yet managed to come up with a definition of democracy that has gained universal endorsement within the field; “Greek, Roman, medieval, and Renaissance notions intermingle with those of later centuries to produce a jumble of theory and practices that are often deeply inconsistent” (Dahl 1989, 5). Gallie (1964, 157-8) claims that democracy constitutes one of a few “essentially-contested concepts”, which are “concepts the proper use of which inevitably involves endless disputes about their proper uses on the part of their users.”

Nonetheless the assumption that *parties make a difference* is fundamental to most contemporary conceptions of representative democracy (as distinct from direct democracy), yet even this is by no means uncontroversial. At its most simple level, representative democracy comprises a state in which those who vote delegate authority to elected representatives at regular intervals. Most elected representatives belong to a political party. Those elected are not legally-tied to the wishes of the electorate and those governed may freely express dissent (Manin 1997, 6). Public decisions are thus “justified in debate” (Manin 1997, 191). What academics within the field tend to disagree about is the extent and nature of the difference that parties propose, and that they can and do exert on public policy, and how these differences relate to the preferences of the electorate. Two extreme positions may be identified; the first is that the scope for partisan influence is small, in that systemic economic and socio-economic imperatives tend to dominate. The opposing view is that individual parties have the potential to matter greatly to the formulation and implementation of most public policy.

The first position, which asserts the prevalence of socio-economic factors in the determination of public policy, has supporters from different intellectual traditions. These include Convergence Theorists and Neo-Marxists (Castles 1982). In the first place, it has been contended that, where both government and opposition parties are



broadly in consensus on the dominant issues, the value of gaining office is less to a party than where sharp policy disagreement exists between them (Budge and Keman 1990, 27). The Convergence Theorists argue that agreement between parties on policy issues across countries is growing as technological imperatives in advanced societies “override political factors making for diversity, and progressively shape social structures and public policies in a similar mould” (Castles 1982, 6; see also Galbraith 1985, Kirchheimer [1964] 1990). The Neo-Marxists argue that the ability of the state or constituent parties to determine policy outcomes is itself determined by the nature of the dominant class-struggle in society, rather than party politics.

The opposing paradigm “attributes observed variance in public policy outcomes to political factors” (Castles 1982, 5). According to Schmidt (2002, 168), supporters of this view rely on a number of assumptions regarding the relations between “social constituencies, parties and public policy”. A political party, it is suggested, pursues preferences that broadly correlate with those of its voters, in conjunction with its pursuit of office. Once in government, the incumbent party has (or incumbent parties have) the resources to implement those policies advocated in the campaign period. Policy differences between governments, therefore, are a function of the party composition of government factoring in “the distribution of power in parliament and in extra-parliamentary arenas, institutional arrangements, adaptation to changing environments, socio-economic circumstances and international independence” (Schmidt 2002, 168). Not merely, however, is government policy a function of its party composition, it may also be a function of the political position of the minister holding the particular portfolio (Laver and Shepsle 1993, 178). Lastly, some contend that it is not enough that parties are *capable* of implementing policies, once in government; for voters’ preferences to be given true representation, it is necessary for them *actually to do so* (Ginsberg 1976, 41).

The question remains as to why, once a party gets elected or negotiates its way into office, it should pay the slightest attention to what it proposed before the election? Why not do as it wants? We often hear the term “mandate” bandied about after an election with regard to what a party or parties entering government have been given authority to do by the electorate. Part of the answer to why a party will heed its pre-election promises lies in the notion of this “mandate”.

## 1.2 “The Mandate”

The notion of a mandate per se has no universal meaning – however there are two commonly used interpretations in the literature. The first is that of a delegate’s licence to carry out certain promises (Mulgan 2000, 318). This licence has a narrow and a broad sense. Often at a general election, an issue or issues surface as being particularly contentious and parties are perceived to be strongly divided over what policy actions are appropriate. Where one party gets returned, that party is “spoken of as ‘having a mandate’ from the electorate to carry out the line of action that it indicated in relation to the issue or issues at the election” (Harrison 1958, 164; see also Kavanagh 1981, 8). This is perhaps the narrow sense in which the mandate as licence is understood. The broader sense in which it is comprehended is that of endowing trusteeship for the nation (Birch 1971, 60). This is best typified by the U.K. Conservatives’ approach pre-1970, in which they contended that, on winning an election, they were authorised to do that which they felt appropriate, according to their consciences and personal views (and as corralled by the party whip).<sup>1</sup> This need not necessarily accord with those policies that they campaigned on (Harrison 1958, 164; also see Schedler 1998, 193). This is a generalised representative’s licence, not tied to any specific promises. This licence may still be regarded as representative, if the persons elected share some of the interests or characteristics of their voters (Birch 1971, 15).

There are problems with the narrow interpretation of a mandate as a licence. Adopting this interpretation, it is not clear that those policies upon which the parties may be differentiated are also those that motivate voters. It may be the case, for example, that a clear majority of voters believe the reallocation of government responsibilities across departments to be a non-issue. Yet the political parties may fight hotly over this issue, or over the proposed parliamentary committees to oversee the departments’ activities, potential alternative uses of personnel and so on. Only on spurious grounds could the proposed restructuring be included in an alleged *mandate from the people*. Another example may help to clarify the point. Suppose that the primary election issue for voters is the matter of income taxation and its reduction. The parties all endorse the lowering of such taxes. Has the lowering of taxes not been overwhelmingly endorsed by the people? Should it not comprise part of any resultant government’s mandate? In colloquial terms, that is exactly what is understood by the concept of the mandate.

Undoubtedly, such a phenomenon rarely occurs in the political arena. It is likely that, for many parties to take up an identical stance, at least one party will have to move

from a previously different position. Such movement may be at the cost of being perceived as opportunistic and unfaithful to ideals. Flagrant manoeuvring of policy positions to suit electoral needs, parties may fear, will either encourage traditional cleavages around their ideologies to dissipate or entice new parties to enter the political scene, filling in vacated gaps in the policy spectrum (Committee on Political Parties 1950, 153). It may of course also be the case that, where a party faithfully follows public opinion on a number of issues, it may find itself holding entirely contradictory policies (Birch 1964, 20). The point is that it is quite possible for a majority of voters to find an issue important and for all of the parties to agree with varying degrees of enthusiasm. However by defining the mandate as a licence to carry out only those policies on which partisan differences are acute, the possibility that all parties may have the same mandate to carry out the self-same policies is denied. Similarly, parties may be divided on trivialities that the general public takes no heed of. By definition, such trivialities would be included in the government licence.

Adopting a view of the mandate as a generalised licence also presents definitional difficulties. This interpretation has been roundly endorsed by those who see voter choice less as prospective policy judgements, but rather as retrospective judgements about policy satisfaction (Fiorina 1981; see also Ginsberg and Stone 1996, 148). According to this view, the voter merely has to decide whether or not he/she was satisfied with the performance of the previous government and, if the answer is positive, then the voter rewards the incumbent by helping to vote them back into office. As Ginsberg and Stone (1996, 148) explain, “any mandate conferred by a particular electoral outcome, therefore, is simply a general statement of preference for the status quo or for change, rather than a more specific mandate for particular policy initiatives.” While the meaning of “change” may be obvious in a two-party system where one party had previously been in government, the same may not necessarily apply in multiparty systems where there are more than two different government options. If a majority of voters in a multi-party system endorse change, on what basis do they decide between alternative government formations? The obvious basis of choice is prospective government policies - which infers that a generalised licence cannot apply.

The second general sense of the mandate is that of a command (Hofferbert and Budge 1992, 152). This is perhaps best illustrated by Finer (1975), who writes about conceptions of the mandate in the U.K. in the 1970's. He contends that the idea of the mandate is an inherently socialist or left-wing idea, tied in to the notion that union spokespersons negotiate objectives delineated by their members, and only those objectives, with the parliamentary Labour Party (Finer 1975a, 62). Extrapolating from this to the parliamentary level, Labour M.P.s are mandated to do what the unions and

Trades Union Congress (T.U.C.) demand at these negotiations and at the National Conference, but no more, without re-consultation. Finer explains that “this assumption has caused endless controversy, partly because the party’s critics have alleged that it contravenes the constitutional principle that M.P.s should not be bound by instructions from an outside body and partly because the Labour Party leaders have not always found it feasible to act in the spirit of Conference resolutions” (Finer 1975a, 62). On the other hand, parliamentary members of the Labour Party could claim that the mandate bound them to all that had been agreed as their platform or manifesto prior to the election (Scarrow 1996, 41). This could prove useful in circumstances where unpopular policies are pursued by the party leadership, for example, in social partnership negotiations or negotiations for the formation of government. The party negotiators can point to a mandate having been given to them to pursue their objectives, thereby strengthening their bargaining position. This constitutes the interpretation of the mandate as a constraint on alternative behaviour.

The mandate therefore should be seen as a somewhat elusive concept. Ranging from one extreme, where a party believes it can do what it wants once elected without looking back over its shoulder at what it said in order to get elected, to the other extreme of doing all in its power to redeem what it pledged prior to the election. While being able to point to a mandate from the people/party members may strengthen a party’s bargaining position, when needed on occasions, the question remains as to why most parties do not endorse the interpretation of mandate as a generalised representative’s licence?

### **1.2.1 The Logic of Redeeming Party Promises**

#### Parties are Policy-Driven

The first and perhaps most obvious potential reason for parties to redeem their platform pledges is that they are policy-motivated. This would imply that the pledges, most of which are included in their manifestos, are a true reflection of the party leadership’s policy goals and not just part of a strategem to get elected.<sup>2</sup>

Even if the leadership is not ideologically-committed to their policy promises, the party’s members may be. For members’ wishes ostensibly to have been heeded does not require that all party members, or even nominated delegates, were consulted in the devising of that programme. This only tends to be the case with left-wing parties

still dependent on trade union and other memberships for votes, finance and other resources. Rather, as is more usual with modern parties, a rubber-stamping by delegates of the party programme at the most recent annual conference serves to permit the leaders of the parties to claim that their election manifesto was endorsed by the membership. The claim is that little changes from the conference programme to the manifesto, in that the programme is the statement of the long-term ideological underpinnings of the party, while the manifesto is its current manifestation. However, the final test of whether the membership matters to the party hierarchy or not is whether the party does what it promised to do, even if only in spirit.

Without leadership or members committed to manifesto policies, the party still needs to have some idea of what it will do should it be successful in gaining access to government office. Typically parties do not prepare more than one such plan of action.

### No Plan B

Klingemann, Hofferbert and Budge (1994, 32) suggest that a party's programme is "their blueprint for government" for which "no other plan exists which has been so extensively discussed and agreed within the party and so authoritatively enunciated by partisans." The implementation of the manifesto therefore serves to minimise the amount of policy development a newly-ensconced government will have to undertake in its first few months of office. The manifesto gives the party time to get on with the business of governing rather than coming up with new ideas in its first few months of gaining office.

### Re-Election

A third rationale for a party attempting to redeem its promises can be found in the rational choice literature that has developed from the work of Anthony Downs (1957, 106-8). Downs reasons that because parties are primarily office-seeking bodies, they will adopt any policies that they believe will further their chances of attaining office. This requires that parties are able to change policies in order to capture the largest number of votes. Parties simplify the choice for the "rational voter" by providing ideologies, "verbal images of the good society and of the chief means of constructing such a society", backdrops against which the party programme may be adjudged

(Downs 1957, 96). That set of party policies that best reflects the preferences of the largest number of voters in a two-party system, will get its party elected into office. It is assumed by Downs that voter preferences may be expressed in terms of a single left-right dimension, and that each voter's preference, if stable, is single-peaked in distribution (Downs 1957, 120, using Black's *The Theory of Committees and Elections*, 1958). Parties may move along this policy dimension at will subject only to the constraint assumed by Downs that they may not leapfrog another party's current policy positions. In two-party systems, it is hypothesised that parties will converge on the position of the median voter, in equilibrium. In multi-party systems, most likely occurring where voters' preferences are polymodal, each mode, or large mode, may support a political party (Downs 1957, 125). In this context, a non-extreme party is strategically as well-off remaining loyal to its mode as moving towards one of its party neighbours on a dimension. This is because any new voters it wins by moving its policy position in one direction are likely to be counterbalanced by voters lost to another party in the opposite direction (Downs 1957, 134).

Parties, Downs postulates, will not only adopt those policies that will gain them crucial votes but will also attempt, to the best of their abilities, to implement these (Downs 1957, 108). This latter phenomenon is explained by the assumed long-sightedness of the leaders of the political parties, who will want not only to gain office on the backs of voters once but to do so again and again (Kalogeropoulou 1989, 289-90). Each party's desire either to retain office or to displace the current office-holder, will drive it to be both "reliable" and "responsible". "A party is *reliable* if its policy statements at the beginning of an election period – including those in its pre-election campaign – can be used to make accurate predictions of its behaviour (or its statements if it is not elected) during the period" and "*responsible* if its policies in one period are consistent with its actions (or statements) in the preceding period, i.e., if it does not repudiate its former views in formulating its new program" (Downs 1957, 104-5). Voters are assumed to value reliability on the grounds that they can broadly predict what a party will do once in power, and responsibility, on the grounds that they can use previous behaviour as a predictor of future (Downs 1957, 105; also see Fiorina 1981). Downs claims that "[...] reliability is a logical necessity in any rational election system, and [...] responsibility – though not logically necessary – is strongly implied by rationality [...]" (Downs 1957, 105).

Downs' theory serves to endorse one definition of the mandate above another. Downs conceives of parties as being driven to be largely faithful to their prior policy platforms because of a fear of electoral retribution. The voter is assumed to be utility-driven and will determine his/her vote calculus, taking into consideration a) the parties

most likely to deliver on their promises and b) the parties that espouse the voter's most preferred policies. Downs is not saying that the typical voter gives his/her vote to a particular party on the off-chance that the party leadership will decide, once in government, that actually pursuing the goals they promised in their manifesto does suit them (broad sense of mandate as a general licence as discussed in Section 1.2). By corollary, it is not logical to suppose that a party would be punished for non-redemption of its manifesto promises when its voters had given the party a broad licence to do as it saw fit once in office, regardless of whether or not these actions bore any relation to the pre-election manifesto.

Further, the narrow licence – where parties, before an election, sharply disagree on a number of high-profile issues and the voters are perceived at the election to have endorsed one party above another on the basis of the issue - is also potentially incompatible with Downs' Theory. If the party in government believes it has been given a licence to act in specific ways on only a limited number of issues, then theoretically it can abandon the rest of its platform. Yet by doing that, the party's behaviour in office (excluding actions taken on the high-profile issues) becomes less predictable from either earlier statements or behaviour. Obviously this may not become a problem at the next election for the party where the issues that concern voters also happen to be contentious between the parties. In such circumstances, the party's behaviour on important issues to the voter has been in accordance with previous statements. However, where the issue is not contentious between the parties, and despite the fact that voters may consider the issue to be one that requires action, the party in government may not feel obliged to take any particular course of action. It should therefore be expected that voters at the following election would regard the government party's behaviour on these issues as unpredictable, and that its share of votes would suffer as a consequence. The basic point is that the safest strategy for a vote-maximising party, in the absence of perfect knowledge about voters' concerns, is to behave as if it has been commanded to fulfil as much of its manifesto as possible. This is the interpretation of the mandate most logically compatible with Downs.

The conception of the mandate to be endorsed in this thesis, therefore, is that of a "mandate as constraint" on a government's options for action in policy areas dealt with in its manifesto(s). This implies that, both theoretically and practically, a party should be impelled to fulfil as much of its manifesto (or programme) as possible. The exceptions to this rule are where both voters and members are in accord as to the inadvisability of a particular policy (Manin, Przeworski and Stokes 1999, 16) or where a party believes it will be able adequately to defend its reasons for abandoning promises to voters (Manin 1997, 167). For parsimony's sake, however, I shall assume

that such occurrences are few and far between. The mandate is clearly important because it describes the nature of the driver behind the link between voters' choices, parties' policies, government action and subsequent voters' choices, parties' policies and so on. This link will be the subject of analysis in the rest of this thesis.

### **1.2.2 The Big Question**

This thesis thus concerns the extent to which government actions correspond to the promises made prior to the election by the party or parties that go into government. More specifically it concentrates on the difference that being in government, whether or not as part of a coalition government, makes to the fulfilment of party promises made prior to an election. Moreover, this thesis seeks to develop our understanding of the relationship between party promises, pledge redemption and voter choice *within* the overall context of representative democracy. The object is not only to find out whether political parties are by-and-large held responsible to the electorate by fear of electoral retribution, but also to establish whether the policies introduced by each government on foot of party election promises are likely to be different to those produced if another party or parties had entered government instead.

#### Research Design

I have chosen to investigate this problem using a detailed case study of pledge fulfilment by Irish governments that formed between 1977 and 1997. My aim is to learn something more about the circumstances in which Irish voters were most likely to see redeemed the promises that the parties offered to them in their manifestos. The method I use to research the relationship between party pledges, government action and voter choice is to look at the universe of parties' intentions before an election, as approximated by the policy promises identified in their election manifestos, and compare these with what the governments that form actually do once in office. Irish voter motivations are examined to discern the degrees to which they typically care about policy at all, can identify different policy stances between the parties on various policy issues and indeed vote on the basis of such policy distinctions.

I test three different models of "the programme-to-policy linkage", a term used by both Klingemann, Hofferbert and Budge (1994, 17) and Thomson (1999, 5) to



denote the relationship between what parties say and what they do. The first model, The Baseline Model, hypothesises that being a party in government should be all-important to getting one's manifesto pledges redeemed. It also tests whether or not political pledges are made in *important* areas of policy, and the extent to which political parties share the same policy agendas. The second model, The Government Party Model, seeks to elaborate the political and institutional factors that assist government parties in redeeming their own pledges. The final model, The Opposition Party Model suggests factors likely to enhance the probability of the government of the day redeeming some of the opposition parties' policy pledges. Briefly, this model suggests that an opposition party's pledge will be more likely to be adopted by the government-of-the-day where the opposition party is either strategically important for the stable continuation of the government or where it is in broad policy agreement with the party/parties in office.

The models mentioned above are detailed in Chapter 4, following a review in Chapter 2 of earlier studies into the relationship between the making of policy, degrees of policy fulfilment and voter choice. In Chapter 3, I explain why Ireland is an appropriate political system through which to study both party faithfulness to election pledges and partisan effects on public policy. In Chapter 5, I set out my data and explain how I intend to operationalise my models. Chapter 6 takes an in-depth look at the pledges articulated and redeemed within one specific policy area, the area of arts policy, in Ireland over the period 1977-1997. In this chapter, I seek to fulfil two paramount aims: firstly, I show the reader how exactly I determined the fulfilment (or not) of pledges and secondly, I look at the extent to which government policy, subsequent to an election, is guided at all by manifestos. In Chapters 7, 8, and 9, I test the hypotheses generated by each of my three models, whilst in the last chapter, Chapter 10, I look to discern the extent to which the Irish electorate punishes errant government parties for non-fulfilment of their respective manifestos. It is clearly not credible to believe that parties will continue to fear electoral retribution for the large-scale non-redemption of pledges if there is no evidence at all that voters factor in the allocation of blame or credit into their ballots. In this concluding chapter, I also draw all of my findings together and draw inferences from these for further research into the relationship between partisan politics and pledge fulfilment.

As stated earlier in this chapter, I believe that Downs provides a clear rationale as to why political parties will be faithful to their pre-election promises, thereby enhancing the logic of the contemporary exposition of the partisan theory of democracy. In the rest of this chapter, first I review critiques of Downs' rationale for party faithfulness to election programmes, and then I review the broader critiques of the

partisan theory of democracy. In the final section of this chapter, I review previous studies of the impact of partisan politics, the broad field to which this thesis will contribute.

### **1.2.3 Downs' Rationale for Party Faithfulness to Pre-Election Promises**

Downs' model of party competition, and more specifically his exposition of why political parties will remain faithful to their pre-election promises, is not without its critics. Criticisms of his treatise on programme faithfulness may be divided into three categories: those that target his assumptions about parties; those that criticise his assumptions about voters, their motivations and their inferred actions; and those that reject the inferred importance attached by Downs to party programmes/manifestos (see for example Budge and Farlie 1977, ch.4).

#### Criticisms: Downs' Assumptions about Party Leaderships

In relation to Downs' assumptions about the behaviour of party politicians, a number of serious criticisms can be found in the literature. First, it is postulated that a party headed by policy-indifferent leaders will move along a policy dimension up to the point at which it has won a majority of the votes. Yet to avoid an assumed potential for voter confusion, Downs outlaws leap-frogging by parties. Barry ([1970] 1978, 120) claims that, in multiparty systems, the best strategy for a party (B) is to position itself closer to the centre of the distribution of the electorate on the ideological dimension than a party (A) on the left/right (assuming a normal distribution); "once there, it obviously has no incentive to move since it always wins, and, by the anti-leapfrogging stipulation it can permanently block movement towards the centre by the party" to its left or right. As such, the only way Party A can position itself closer to the centre than Party B is if it can leapfrog Party B. Barry argues that for Downs' theory to hold logically true in respect of the convergence of parties on the ideological centre in a two-party system, the possibility of leap-frogging must be allowed.

A second complication arises from Downs' assumption that party leaders are largely office-motivated, which may lead to conclusions other than those that he specified. Klingemann, Hofferbert and Budge (1994, 23) suggest that party leaders, if they are only interested in getting into office, should have no qualms about leaving a

losing party and becoming a member of the winning one. “If carried to extremes, this argument would predict new parties at each election, as losers pulled out of their old ones and the governing party(ies) split in the approach to the election, with leaders jockeying for new, favourable, unique electoral positions” (Klingemann, Hofferbert and Budge 1994, 23-4).

Ware (1987, 105-10) argues more broadly that, Downs, among other rational-choice writers in the area of party competition, has simplified the goals of parties to such an extent that his model is difficult to operationalise. Ware suggests that the public goals of parties and the private aims of the elites that lead them may not necessarily be the same within countries, across countries and over time and that these drivers may only be discerned by in-depth historical analysis.

#### Criticisms: Downs' Assumptions About Voters

Downs' theory is also said to fall short with regard to its assumptions about voters. First, Ware (1996, 329-30) suggests that it is inappropriate to see “party competition as being essentially the strategic positioning of parties in relation to policy programmes” because voters' preferences should not be seen as exogenous to parties' but rather somehow dependent on them. Dunleavy (1991, ch.5) and Schattschneider (1975, 68) also argue that it is erroneous to see the causal linkage as being only one-way. Dunleavy (1991, 125-8) suggests that parties can actively try to form voters' preferences by capitalising on social tensions, by limiting the abilities of newly-formed parties to gain access to parliament and through the control of the political agenda.

Second, some critics balk at the idea that the vote may be seen as an unambiguous verdict on policy. Ostrogorski ([1902] 1970, 618-9), for one, is highly sceptical of the practice of packaging issues together, and his view is that to interpret any vote as a verdict on any particular issue or set of issues is to read too much into election results, which are by their very nature, obscure.

[...] what was pompously called the national verdict was, as a rule, tainted with ambiguity and uncertainty; a group of electors gave or refused its approval to the party or to its champions in consideration of this or that point of the composite programme which they put forward, another group did the same on the ground of some other point. And after ‘the voice of the country has spoken’, people did not know exactly what it had said, and very often were entitled to wrangle over

the meaning of the vote; for, however paramount a particular question may have been in the public mind, considerations foreign to it constantly entered into the 'popular verdict'.

Developing this theme, the American Political Science Association in its 1950 report concluded that often the mandate was obscure due to the poor definition of alternative policy stances given by the parties (Committee on Political Parties 1950, 144).

Others have pointed to the fact that, in multi-party systems, the distribution of voters' preferences is rarely likely to be such as to generate a majority for any single party, and that therefore to talk about a mandate is erroneous. As *Finer* (1975a, 63) says "[...] it does not make sense to say that the voters have given a party a mandate to govern, let alone a mandate to implement a controversial programme, when 60% or more of the voters have voted against that party." Instead he suggests that, where a coalition government forms, or for that matter a single party minority government, the election result should be seen not as a programmatic mandate but as a mandate for a multi-party government or for compromise. If we accept *Finer's* stipulation that 50% +1 of the electorate must support one party for a mandate to come into effect, then his notion of the mandate becomes almost redundant. Even the majority governments of the U.K. between 1956 and 1970, given the role of the electoral system, were only elected on the basis of an average of 47.5% of the popular vote (*Kavanagh* 1996, 138). This average had slipped to 42.6% between 1997 and 2001.<sup>3</sup> *De Swaan* (1973, 289) like *Finer*, also has difficulties seeing a mandate in multi-party cases; "in multi-party systems, there seems to be no simple and fixed connection between the outcome of an election and the composition or policy of the subsequent ruling coalition unless, of course, some party has acquired a majority on its own. As a consequence, the voter in such a system cannot calculate the effect of his vote, not even if he knew how all citizens had voted, much less if he ignores their choices as he does at the time of the elections."

*Muller and Strom* (2000) disagree with the broad-brush approach of *Finer* (1975a) and *de Swaan* (1973) to coalition systems. They claim that coalition systems may be categorised according to the frequency with which elections determine coalition outcomes, and claim that Ireland, for example, belongs to a group in which elections regularly determine cabinet composition. Along with Portugal, Germany and Sweden, among others, in Ireland "either elections often result in absolute or 'working' majorities (i.e. pluralities large enough to allow for the survival of relatively stable minority cabinets), or elections are contested on the basis of pre-electoral coalitions, electoral pacts, or other party pre-commitments" (*Muller and Strom* 2000, 571).

Gallagher, Laver and Mair (2001, 339) contend, anyway, that it is erroneous to view single-party governments as distinct from coalitions. Rather they suggest that these systems in which single-party government is the norm function on the basis of intra-party coalitions of factions. What keeps these factions together is the knowledge that the electoral system militates against small parties, as is the case with the First-Past-the-Post system in the U.K., and not any strong accord on the direction of future policy (Gallagher, Laver and Mair (2001, 339). Therefore from the angle that a single party government may be no more than the result of political pragmatism on the part of faction leaders wanting to retain the potential to sit at the cabinet table, claiming that a majority voted in favour of them makes little sense. For the real bargaining over policy only starts once the party has taken office (Gallagher, Laver and Mair 1995). In this sense, the manifesto may be as redundant in single-party systems as in those with coalitions.

Other critics contend that Downs' assumptions with regard to voters are too restrictive. First, it is suggested that it is difficult to predict what would happen if the distribution of voters' preferences happened not to be stable (Stokes 1966, 168). Similarly, it has been questioned as to what the likely form of party competition would be should each voter's preferences prove not to be single-peaked or indeed, amenable to placement on a single right-left continuum (Stokes 1966, 165; Budge, Robertson and Hearl 1987, 26). Others have homed in on the assumption that voters care much about policy, arguing instead that what primarily motivates them is their party identification. Epstein (1980, 272) contends that "voters tend simply to follow their respective parties on policy positions as on other matters" but that this *following* does not amount to anything so concrete as a mandate to enact specific policies at election time.

Whether or not voters are impelled to vote on the basis of their preferred candidate or party or, indeed, party image, by default they are sanctioning the policy stances of the parties. As Pomper and Lederman (1980, 128) claim – "there is an inevitable fusing of party and policy, and therefore an inevitable programmatic result from elections. Voters cannot choose either a program or a party alone, but must select both simultaneously, even unwittingly or wittingly" while parties cannot distinguish between those two motivations in their voters. In the interests of responsibility, which the party can only assume to be valued by some section of their voters, the party will not move drastically away from its previous policy positions. Voters develop a consumer-like "brand-loyalty" to a party, and only if strongly against the policies or performance of the party, the tone of the programme or the leadership style, will they go to the trouble of educating themselves as to the contents of other parties' programmes (Budge and Farlie 1977, 207). Some commentators have argued that it is

unlikely that voters will change allegiance even if displeased with certain of their favoured party's policies or its most recent performance in government, because long-term record of performance is what voters judge parties on, not just recent promises (Harrop and Miller 1987, 149).

The assumption that manifestos are important in order to hold politicians accountable and reliable, depends crucially on the idea that the electorate is aware of what is broadly contained within the manifesto and that everything that a party stands for is comprehensively contained in the manifesto.<sup>4</sup> In the Western World few, if any, voters would appear to read their preferred party's manifesto. Of the few that might read a manifesto, the sheer volume of policy promises denies the possibility that the voter may hold the party accountable for each of these (Kavanagh 1981, 9). In practice, however, different interest groups, combined with the opposition, and most importantly, the media, are likely to monitor and draw attention to much of what is contained in the government's manifesto and other platform statements and has not been implemented, and thus hold the government accountable. As Grofman (1993, 7) puts it "voters who are relatively poorly informed can nonetheless make reasonable choices by making use of a variety of information heuristics, such as following the polls, or paying attention to endorsements provided by reference groups with known political views." The government, conversely, is likely to be trumpeting those promises that they have already redeemed or are in the process of so doing. While their intentions may not be entirely driven by the desire to keep the electorate informed about the fate of the universe of government promises, the end result is likely to approximate this.

Manifestos play a role over and above informing the electorate about the majority of contents of a particular party's policy agenda. Finer (1975b, 380) suggests that manifestos are used by parties to differentiate themselves from one another, to inform candidates and local canvassers of the party's national policies and limit free-lancing by individuals on such policies, and lastly to provide a *conclusive knock-down argument* for the pursuit of particular policies by politicians being hounded as to the wisdom of such courses of action by civil servants or the opposition. Whether it is the word of a candidate given to a voter on his/her doorstep, or the promises of a leadership to its members and electorate, it is clear that for a politician to be able to come around again, pledging other deeds *and* being believed, his/her party leadership must redeem a minimum of their manifesto.

It is, however, argued by some critics that even if the electorate was aware of a number of pledges that the government gave prior to being voted in, they would not necessarily be able to punish the government should it default on its promises, as

Downs' theory posits. In cases where the government of the day happened to be of a minority status, whether coalition or single-party, it is clear that the non-fulfilment of pledges could be put down to an inability on the part of the government to garner sufficient extra support to get its proposals through. Even in the case of a coalition government with majority status, because the policies of the government may derive from several manifestos, voters may find it difficult to identify the party to punish for non-enactment of particular policies (Schmidt 1996, 173). Having said that, the majority of government policy proposals are traceable back to the individual party manifestos (c.60% on average of programme pledges in Ireland 1981-1997). While the average voter may not go to the length of identifying the origins of each pledge, such information may also feed through the media or the parties themselves, in the run-up to the following election (Garry and Mansergh 1999, 82-3) or the voter may simply identify the pledge with the image or ideology of a particular party in government and punish the other party for blocking its redemption. A further problem may, however, occur if all parties' records in office are equally unreliable and parties rarely fulfil their election promises (Stokes 2001, 10-11). Voters, under such circumstances, may find it difficult to reward and punish any parties for non-fulfilment of their pledges. I shall return to this question in Chapter 10.

Criticisms: Downs' Assumption About the Import of Election Programmes (Downs 1957, 105)

Ostrogorski ([1902] 1970, 618) is perhaps the strongest critic of the manifesto, arguing that the bundling together of issues may not only prove to package contradictory policies in the same manifesto, but that it allows the party so much lee-way in what it wants to stand for, that the voter has no control. He explains –

The problems preoccupying public opinion being numerous and varied, it was necessary, instead of grouping the men in accordance with the issues, to adapt the issues to fixed groups of men. With this object confusion of the questions of the day was erected into a system; they were huddled together into 'omnibus' programmes; they were put one on the top of another; they were shuffled like a pack of cards, some being played at one time and some at another; at a pinch those which caused irreconcilable divergencies were made away with.

Finer (1975b, 379) is also critical of giving a major role to party manifestos – in particular he notes that the burgeoning size of the manifesto over the last half century, and the more detailed commitments therein conduce to “bad government and the discredit of the parliamentary system as a whole.” Finer ridicules the idea that policy issues may be “enumerated”, that sections of manifestos may be objectively counted as comprising an “item” or a “policy” – for in this way the government may feel that it must carry through each promise however “impracticable or actually harmful” it may turn out to be (1975b, 380). Kavanagh (1981, 9) agrees – “instead of the mandate referring to a major issue, governments now use the term to justify a battery of items in the manifesto, however picayune they may be. As pledges are fulfilled, so the government spokesman claims that he has kept faith with the electorate, regardless of the popularity of the measure.”

Kavanagh goes on to claim that, from a normative perspective, this is particularly harmful where the rigid implementation of a manifesto occurs within an adversarial two-party system, given the assumed zero-sum nature of single-party government (Kavanagh 1981, 7). Another complaint relates to the notion that it is desirable that policies “concocted” whilst out of power should be implemented once a party's fortunes pick up – the opposition being characterised by a dearth of policy advisors, lack of civil service back-up and an absence of interest group consultation (Kavanagh 1981, 7). Finer (1975b, 380) sums up his overall view as follows - “[...] these shopping-list type manifestos simultaneously do too much and too little. When a government sets out to be ‘faithful’, it is frequently ‘unwise’; and when it has learned to be wise, it is frequently ‘unfaithful’.”

It is certainly the case that governments can and do change position within a given policy area, and not only because they are prompted to do so by an obvious change in voter sentiment. Rose (1984, 5) refers to this phenomenon with reference to governments in Britain – “both Conservative and Labour governments have shown themselves adept at steering policy in a graceful arc that, in the fullness of time, looks suspiciously like a U-turn to its critics.” It may therefore be the case that the nature of the partisan difference found between the government of the day and its opposition is dependent on the point in time at which their policy positions are recorded. One strong hypothesis would be that the differences between parties are heightened at election time but that positions converge somewhat thereafter. The rationale behind this is that parties highlight their *differentness* from other parties at election time, trying to garner as much voter and member support as possible. After the election, whether it is because of the conservative impact of the civil service on government policy, or because parties no longer need to heed their members as these are not needed until the



next election, or because election campaigns involve considerable posturing, the parties may move closer together.

In testing the proposition that there is a connection between voters' policy wishes, as mediated to at least some degree by parties' policies prior to an election, and government actions thereafter, we need a proxy for those policies before the election. In most parliamentary democracies, manifestos have been the most authoritative collation of party policies published before the election. Reading into these pledges or policy promises does lend itself to subjectivity, for, as Schedler (1998) has pointed out, not only are some pledges substantive while others are not, some are precise while others are more woolly. One person's superficial reading of a manifesto is not likely to be exactly the same as another's. Yet readers are still likely to agree broadly on what policies the document contains and the general gist of policy proposals.

Downs' treatise enhances our understanding of why parties might try to redeem their pre-election pledges and therefore how democracy might be mediated through political parties. It therefore fills in a gap in the explanation of how and why representative democracy might be expected to operate. This enhanced explanation of party motivation, however, does not settle the question of how broad or narrow the scope is for parties to make a difference to the types of policies that are made during a term of office, even given a mandate. A large number of writers believe the scope to be narrow (See, for example, Katz and Mair 1995; Schattschneider 1975; Michels [1915] 1968). It is to these critiques that I shall now turn.

### **1.3 Critiques of Partisan Theory**

#### **1.3.1 Parties' Scope to Influence Public Policy is Limited**

The first major critique of the partisan theory of representative democracy, as set out in Section 1.1, is that it overemphasises the degree of autonomy that political parties have over public policy. Two types of argument were mentioned at the start of this chapter. One related to the idea that actual public policy is the product of the balance of class divisions within a society and not simply what the political parties have decided to support (See Castles 1982, 30-3). A second argument was that, as societies have modernised, the range of public policies offered by the political parties has narrowed.

Developing the second point – this convergence of policy-sets, it has been suggested, has occurred either because technological advance is driving economic and

social development in one direction (Castles 1982, 6; see also Galbraith 1985, Kirchheimer 1964) or due to the evolution of party systems. In support of this latter point, Katz and Mair (1995, 16) contend that the evolution of the party is tending towards the “cartelisation” of parties, under which the established parties bolster themselves, through their manipulation of and virtual incorporation into the State, against new parties trying to access the benefits of office. In this era, “the goals of politics [...] become more self-referential, with politics becoming a profession in itself – a skilled profession, to be sure, and one in which the limited inter-party competition that does ensue takes place on the basis of competing claims to efficient and effective management” rather than necessarily policy content (Katz and Mair 1995, 19). In other words, these authors conceive the policy pool to be largely shared by the established parties such that policy outputs are bound to be similar, whichever party nominally gets into government.

Schofield (1993), a rational choice theorist, comes to same conclusion - that government policy outputs are broadly similar - but by a different route to Katz and Mair (1995). He posits that general policy equilibrium in coalition systems may be based on the policies of all the parties in a system rather than just those of the parties in government (Schofield 1993, 21-2). He suggests that parties arrive at positions in policy space before an election by regarding both their sincere policy preferences on various dimensions and their bargaining power in negotiations for coalition formation (Schofield 1993, 5). In reckoning those latter considerations, clearly the relative policy positions of the other parties and their likely electoral successes will be taken into account. Therefore, which particular party or parties get into office matters less than the policies of all of the parties in the system, as represented or approximated in each party manifesto.

### **1.3.2 Parties are Unresponsive to the Views of the Electorate**

A second major critique contends that parties are not responsive to the preferences of citizens. The main Downsian assumption is that parties pursue preferences similar to those of their voters in an attempt to maximise their vote. A number of writers argue instead for a different conception of representative democracy, one in which elites are recognised as having a deterministic role in the formation of political attitudes and behaviours.<sup>5</sup> A second set of writers take issue with the idea that parties will reliably be able to interpret/gauge voter opinions.

## Elite Rule

One such challenge is that, where democracy is institutionalised, elites form and perpetuate themselves such that this “dominant minority cannot be controlled by the majority, whatever democratic mechanisms are used” (Parry, 1969, 30 and 33). Mosca and Pareto, among others, claim that “the typical citizen drops down to a lower level of mental performance as soon as he enters the political field” (Schumpeter [1943] 1976, 262), his political thinking becoming “associative and affective” (Schumpeter [1943] 1976, 262), little better than the “sentiments and passions of the common herd” (Mosca [1939], 155-6 quoted in Nye 1977). It is argued by Schumpeter ([1943]1976, 262) that this has consequences for the operation of democracy; firstly, in relation to political affairs, that the citizen ceases to be rational, even in the absence of persuaders and, secondly that where political groups are present, the more irrational the voter, the easier it is for these groups to hijack them, directing their opinions and votes for their own immediate gain.

Michels ([1915]1968, 362-4) postulated in *Political Parties*, his analysis of the Social Democratic Party in Germany, that the undemocratic nature of political parties constituted a “sociological law”, that is, his “Iron Law of Oligarchy”. He recognised that, with the development of mass parties, their sheer size, both in terms of members and their consequent administrative needs, required the parallel development of a party organisation (Hands 1971, 160). This growth in organisation gave rise to professional leaders who, due to the required division of labour within the party, soon developed their own political agendas, no longer deriving from or corresponding to those of its members. He suggested two reasons why such professional politicians might begin to act in an oligarchical manner. Firstly, they have a “desire to dominate”, and secondly that, through the embourgeoisement of these socialist leaders, their priorities change (Hands 1971, 161). Michels further pointed to a number of factors that enable this new elite to consolidate its position. This elite has the advantages of a greater expertise in the political field, they can control party finances and the press; they also benefit from the “psychological need” of the masses to be led (Hands 1971, 160). Michels ([1915]1968, 343) concurred with Pareto’s [1892] notion of “the circulation of elites”, where he argued that it was rarely the case that one elite was entirely displaced by another, thereby allowing for a greater perpetuation of the self-interested goals of the leaders, by ensuring that new leaders who have grown through the ranks come to accept and revere the goals of the old elite (Hands 1971, 162-3). He thus concluded

that government was invariably government by an elite, an elite, furthermore, which was unlikely to be responsive to the wishes of followers (Plamenatz 1973, 58).<sup>6</sup>

Thus the central thesis of the elite theorists was that, in any relatively complex political system, real power is concentrated in the hands of a relatively small elite, independent of the formal or informal distribution of power. Most importantly, this is because the power enjoyed by elites consists in the setting of the political agenda - "He who determines what politics is about runs the country, because the definition of the alternatives is the choice of conflicts, and the choice of conflicts allocates power" (Schattschneider 1975, 66).

### Unstable Public Opinion

Even in those circumstances where politicians decide to pander to the exogenously-determined desires of the so-called "irrational", it is not clear that they would be in any way more successful at winning votes than those that did not. This critique of the responsive nature of political parties relates to Dye's (1995, 315) argument that, when political leaders attempt to take on board the preferences of particular sections of voters, they may well interpret those preferences wrongly. Such misinterpretation may occur for a number of reasons. First, public opinion may be very volatile or unstable and hence political parties must choose a point in time at which they will gauge that opinion. That opinion will, however, be specific to that point in time.

Second, an interpretable ordering of the electorate's preferences may not be possible. Arrow's impossibility theorem is being referred to here, in which Arrow posited that given certain possible preference orderings of three or more people, a majority in favour of more than one alternative may result – in other words, a "cyclical majority" (McLean 1987, 165). He proved that, of four conditions that he stipulated for a social choice to be made meaningful, at least one would have to be violated for the possibility of these cycles to be removed (Ware 1987, 4-5).<sup>7</sup> The theory of representative democracy can, in certain circumstances, counteract these difficulties by pointing to the role of political parties as agenda-setters – "If the process of bundling issues yields less than three choices, voting cycles are eliminated. Majorities can rule. Even if there are three or more choices (parties), their various packages of issues (party programs) can be structured in such a manner as to eliminate or minimize the possibility of cycles" (Klingemann, Hofferbert and Budge 1994, 15-6).

Ultimately, however, it is possible that political parties will not be responsive to voter wishes because they failed to gauge popular opinion correctly.

### 1.3.3 Democracy is about Elections

A last critique to be discussed rejects the notion that democracy should be seen in terms of the reflection of a section of societies' preferences about public policy. For proponents of this view, "democracy must be understood solely in terms of the 'inputs', rather than the 'outputs' of the system" (Ware 1987, 9).<sup>8</sup> Democracy should be valued therefore "to the extent that its most powerful collective decision-makers are selected through fair, honest, and periodic elections in which candidates freely compete for votes and in which virtually all the adult population is eligible to vote" (Huntington 1993, 7; also see Di Palma 1990, 15-6).

Advocates of such an approach may be segregated into two divergent sets. The first set of writers emphasises the quality and nature of political participation (see Pateman 1970, MacPherson 1973 or Mill [1861] 1962), the approach harking back to the normative values of Athenian Democracy. Here, the end result of voting is secondary to the degree to which deliberations between citizens were informed and inclusive. Pateman (1970) asserts the educative effects of participation across a variety of political and social fora for achieving high-quality electoral participation.

The second set of writers, best exemplified by Schumpeter ([1943] 1976), concentrate on the electoral procedure and its scope for citizen choice in who should represent them (or indeed who should not represent them). Democracy, according to this approach, "is a political *method*, that is to say, a certain type of institutional arrangement for arriving at political – legislative and administrative – decisions" (Schumpeter, [1943] 1976, 242). Schumpeter arrived at such a conclusion through the discounting of democracy's value as a participatory process, for as cited in Section 1.3.2, he viewed the electorate as largely incapable of making independent, informed choices.

Clearly, proponents of either of these perspectives would not support the overwhelming emphasis that the partisan theory of democracy places on party policies and any support that may be inferred for them through voting at elections.

## 1.4 Empirical Tests of Partisan Theory

It is easily admitted that the importance placed on elections and their relationship with public policy by the partisan theory of democracy is not accepted by all. If the value of democracy lies rather in its procedures or educative effects (Pateman 1970; MacPherson 1973; Mill 1962; Schumpeter [1943] 1976), then clearly how the disparate policy preferences of the public are translated into public policy output is of lesser interest. In contrast with this view, I contend that it is of crucial importance that parties can be differentiated according to their policy proposals before an election, so that any choices made by voters can be seen to be reflected in what happens after the election. If the alternative is that all parties stand for the same thing, then there is little participative benefit to be derived from voting as there is nothing to choose between them. Furthermore, the exact procedures used to elect officials become far less important, as public policy will be the same regardless of who wins elections. To say that the existence of policy differences between parties is theoretically important is not enough, however. It must also be shown that these policy differences have some impact on what actually happens.<sup>9</sup>

### 1.4.1 Single Policy Outcomes

One approach to testing the hypothesis that parties can and do make a difference to real world public policy, relies on the search for radical policies that have traditionally been seen as the hallmark of a party driven by a particular ideology (Gallagher, Laver and Mair 2001, 376-7). The assumption is that, if Party A differs radically from its competitors with regard to a particular policy proposal, and if that policy is actually implemented, especially if it changes the status quo, then in all likelihood the outcome is due to the influence of Party A in government (Gallagher, Laver and Mair 2001, 377). Kavanagh (1990, 218-24) looks at the case of privatisation in Britain and concludes that the enthusiasm of the Conservative government for selling state assets could not conceivably have been shared by the Labour Party had it been in government during the 1980s. In this sense, having a Conservative rather than a Labour government in office did make a difference to important policy outputs. Another study of Great Britain during the same time period looks at the impact that the Conservative Government had on trade unions and local government (Gamble 1994). While these

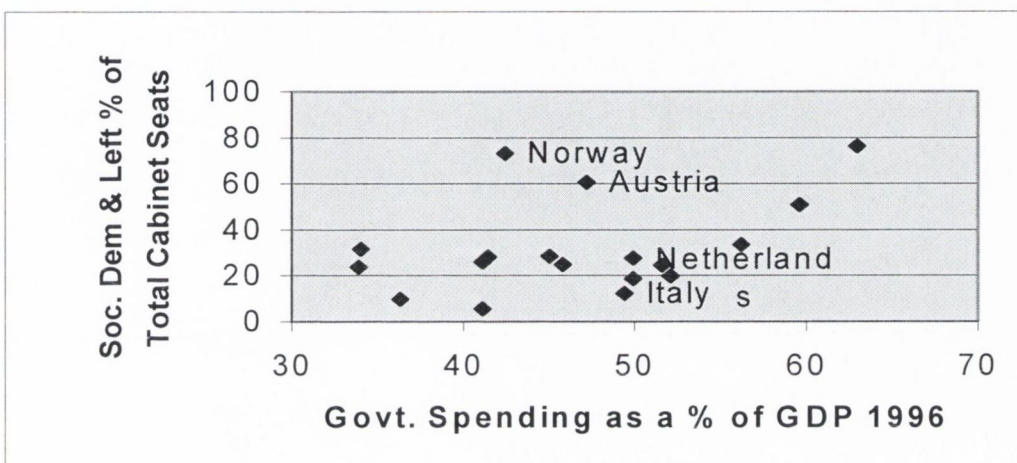
types of study can suggest strong evidence for a partisan impact on public policy, they do so only with reference to particular policies in particular countries at particular points in time. The nature of such studies obliges the writer to pick a policy initiative that is, by its nature, controversial in the political system. In other words, little may be drawn by way of inference for other countries, other policies and perhaps other times.

#### **1.4.2 Partisan Composition and Macroeconomic Indicators**

The scope for making inferences is somewhat broadened by the second general approach to be discussed. These works deal with testing for relationships between major macroeconomic variables and the party composition of government. In some cases the macroeconomic variable being measured is government spending (Cusack 1997, Thérien and Noël 2000, Levitt and Snyder 1995), in others it involves key economic indicators such as inflation, the unemployment rate, interest rates and taxation (Allers, De Haan and Sterks 2001, Warwick 1992, Quinn and Shapiro 1991). Both types of approach include both longitudinal and cross-country studies of the correlations between party composition and specific indicator.

With regard to spending, both longitudinal and cross-country studies are commonly based on similar assumptions. Because of the long-term spending commitments involved in running most aspects of a modern state, few expect the scope for partisan differences to be anything more than changes at the margins of public expenditure – a little more on defence, a little less on the arts – thereby conceding that governments rarely have the power to alter drastically the general levels of government spending (Gallagher, Laver and Mair 2001, 389). Furthermore, most rely on simple left-right indicators of the party composition of government, such as the left versus right control of cabinet seats, however inappropriate this measure may be.<sup>10</sup> As we can see from Figure 1.1, although certain countries correspond well to the expectation that left-wing predominance would correlate with higher expenditure as a percentage of GDP, there are some notable exceptions – Norway, Austria, The Netherlands and Italy. The rationale given for what some might see as a conservative acceptance of the status quo is that much government spending is tied to projects previously agreed upon, and societal factors such as demography are rarely under the control of governments, however hard they might try (Schmidt 1996). Major spending items are only barely under the auspices of Government control, given the “relative autonomy of social and economic life [...] in which private actors choose mainly according to the calculus of

micro-level costs and benefits. Although these costs and benefits are influenced by political-institutional circumstances, it is rarely the case that incumbent parties are able to effectively control outcomes” (Schmidt 1996, 166; see also Kittel and Obinger 2003 and Cukierman 1994).



**Figure 1.1** Government Spending and Government Ideology in Europe 1996\*

\*Graph produced from table taken from Gallagher, Laver and Mair 2001, 385

However even given these reservations, a large body of literature lends support to the idea that there is a difference between left-wing and right-wing governments with regard to how much they spend on different policy areas (see Cusack 1997, Thérien and Noël 2000, Budge and Keman 1990, Levitt and Snyder 1995). On the other hand, there are others who have found no significant relationship in these terms (see, for example, Dye 1966). Gallagher, Laver and Mair’s (2001, ch.13) cited evidence would suggest that finding a partisan impact on public policy may be an artefact of the design of particular projects. Those studies that do find an impact are often geared towards the analysis of individual expenditure items (e.g., Thérien and Noël 2000, Castles 1989) and differentiate between single party majority governments and other government formations<sup>11</sup> (Gallagher, Laver and Mair 2001, ch.13). More broadly, where cross-country studies are concerned, those that come out with significant correlations between the partisan control of the cabinet and particular spending patterns are often specifically focussing on countries with a similar level of economic and social development (Castles 1982, 10). Simply put, the debate that exists between the two rival paradigms is partially attributable to the fact that those that assert the supremacy of socio-economic factors in the determination of public policy tend to



sample countries at more divergent stages of economic development than do the researchers from the “politics matters” paradigm (Castles 2002, 221).

Cross-country and longitudinal studies of the relationships between the partisan composition of government and other key economic indicators might be expected to show more conclusive results than spending patterns in the national accounts because of the greater amenability of these variables to political manipulation (Gallagher, Laver and Mair 2001, 392). Allers, De Haan and Sterks (2001) found that municipalities in the Netherlands run by left-wing dominated councils had higher property tax burdens than other councils. Muller (1989, 367) discovered that the presence of a socialist government coincided with a diminution of the gap between the incomes of the middle classes and the rich, whilst the governmental strength of conservative parties was unrelated to the size of the gap between the rich and the middle class.” Another study looked at the differences in approach of right-wing and left-wing governments to the commonly perceived trade-off between unemployment and inflation, and found strong evidence to suggest that inflation was lower and unemployment somewhat higher under bourgeois administrations than under socialist governments (Warwick 1992, 884); also see, Budge and Keman 1990, 150). More recent evidence with respect to partisan influence on unemployment and inflation indicators suggests that a partisan effect is contingent on political control of the Central Bank (Way, 2000), although this is refuted by Cusack (2001). Cusack, Notermans and Rein (1989, 495) support previous results with findings of their own which suggest that increases in public sector employment are related to both the strength of union membership and left-wing control of the cabinet. Quinn and Schapiro (1991) found that the Democratic administrations in the US tended to pursue a growth strategy of high business and capital taxation and low interest rates (consumption-driven) whilst Republican administrations did the opposite and tried to encourage investment-led growth, by reducing corporate taxation and encourage savings.

It is difficult to deny, on the basis of these findings, that the partisan control of government has some sort of a relationship with policy outcomes. However, what is also clear is that this is a long way away from drawing the conclusion that the partisan control of government *caused* such outcomes. Unfortunately with this sort of analysis, many inter-related economic and political factors come into play that could have caused the outcome we are seeking to explain, and one cannot do much more than claim a correlation between partisan composition and the nature of policy outcomes. On the political side, it is not clear that those to whom we are according influence were actually those wielding the power. Keohane and Nye (1989, 24-5) postulate that the scope of national policy-making is increasingly constrained by the growing

interdependence of states, and that therefore agenda-setting and policy outcomes may only be partially attributable to the national government of the day. Mair (1995, 40) suggests that political parties continue to be a focus of attention because of the enhancement of their “status and role as public office-holder” and despite the fact that increasingly they are becoming “less relevant as representative agencies (in terms of both their purposive role and their position on the ground).” Lehner and Schubert (1984, 133) claim that much corporatist bargaining, for example, occurs not between unions and the parliamentary party but instead between unions and bureaucracies. They claim this to be the case because “parties and parliaments do not possess to any degree the necessary apparatus for information processing and planning with regard to highly specialized problems, nor do they have a sufficiently professionalised personnel.” Castles (1982, 162) further cautions us that many of the aforementioned studies rely exclusively on key economic indicators that are previously known to be amenable to political control. He suggests, however, that the “success of intervention in one area necessarily limits control elsewhere.”

### **1.4.3 Programme-to-Policy Linkage Studies**

A final approach to the analysis of partisan impacts on public policy overcomes Castles’ criticism of studies on the partisan control of selected economic indicators. It also takes on board the suggestion by Schmidt (1996, 166) that partisan differences may not necessarily lie in policy outcomes but rather in the “choice of public policy instruments and the nature of policy outputs, such as legislation and policy on taxation and expenditure.” This approach looks at the universe of a prospective incumbent party’s (or parties’) intentions before an election and compares these with what the governments they join actually do. Where intentions differed at the outset and one or more parties’ manifestos seemed to guide government policy, a partisan difference may be inferred. In the past, these studies have sometimes been named “party mandate studies” (e.g. Thomson, 1999 and Hofferbert and Budge, 1992) or “tests of mandate theory” (e.g. Royed, 1996). In what follows, studies that look purely at the relationship between policy documents and policy results are referred to as “programme-to-policy linkage studies”. As these studies ground a large part of the subsequent argument in this thesis, the following chapter is devoted to reviewing them. Briefly, however, there are many variants of this type of study, from those that use the party manifesto as the best approximation of party intentions, to those that supplement this with an official programme for government. Approximations of this sort have invariably shown that

parties may be differentiated according to stated policy orientations (see Klingemann, Hofferbert and Budge 1994, Thomson 1999). How party or government intentions are measured is often a question of the country specifics – whether or not coalition governments are the norm, whether manifestos are generally published, and so on. Once the appropriate documents are selected, however, studies generally conform to one or other of two general methodologies. The first is to rank the emphases given to different policy areas, as identified by content analysis, and then attempt to match these emphases with public expenditure categories, ranked in order of scale. Party faithfulness to their pre-election platforms is supposedly vindicated where there is a strong relationship between policy emphasis and public spending priorities. The second methodology concentrates on the systematic identification of manifesto pledges or promises, coupled with an analysis of the redemption of such pledges in the enactment of bills, the publication of public accounts and so on. However, we will return in detail to programme-to-policy linkage approaches in the following chapter.

In summary, if we accept that the representative model of government, as mediated by political parties, is, to all intents and purposes, the form of democracy that much of the Western World has sought to realise, it is important to assess how closely the theory matches political reality. In truth, the “contest of the paradigms”, between the “politics matters” and “politics does not matter very much relative to socio-economic determinants” schools, may often be relegated to a more mundane “contest of the methodologies”. How the studies have been set up has largely determined the balance of the evidence in favour of, or against, the importance of partisan effects. In many cases where partisan difference was not found to be substantial, the explanation may lie in the lack of variability in public expenditure (Gallagher, Laver and Mair 2001, 390) which itself may be an artefact of the lack of transparency in public accounts.

## **1.5 Conclusion**

What Downs’ theory adds to partisan theory is a rationale for why a party will try to keep its pre-election promises even if these go against the party’s immediate concerns. However as Royed (1996, 54) and Thomson (1999, 41) note, the fact that a party does as it promised prior to the election once in office, does not in itself provide evidence of a partisan effect. This is because not all other possible variables, apart from the partisan composition of government, have been taken into account in looking at the

determination of public policy. Policy differences between governments, as defined by Schmidt (2002, 168), are a function of the party composition of government, factoring in “the distribution of power in parliament and in extra-parliamentary arenas, institutional arrangements, adaptation to changing environments, socio-economic circumstances and international independence.” Few studies, with the exception of the single policy case studies, manage to take the gamut of possible other variables into account when testing for partisan difference in public policy. At the most basic level, given that only one set of parties can be in government at any one time, it is obviously impossible to answer the counter-factual question of what another set of parties would have done if they had been in power at the same time (Gallagher, Laver and Mair 2001, 376).

Many of the factors that will be discussed in this thesis relate to Schmidt’s account of the “distribution of power in the parliamentary arena”, “institutional arrangements” and even “adaptation to changing environments”. However not all of Schmidt’s potential factors are taken into account in looking for degrees of government adherence to their pre-election party promises. I do not, for example, look at the impact of corporate bargaining on pledges made or even pledges redeemed, though clearly this is an important factor (see Murphy, 1999, ch.11). Even were I to include all of these factors in determining the likelihood of the redemption of various types of pledges, not all that a government does during its term of office is likely to be predicated on what its manifesto or manifestos contained. If I find evidence for the requirements of a mandate effect – that parties stand for different sets of policies, that voters are aware of policy differences between parties and that voters cast their ballots on such a basis – I have at least discerned whether a partisan effect is possible, as mediated by elections. If a strong relationship is then found between what the party said it would do and what it does once in government, and if these policies were not also suggested by opposition parties, then we have strengthened the probability that what this government did is different to what another combination of parties might have done. How strong that difference is will, of course, depend on how much the manifesto governs what a government does. If I were to find that a government party does redeem most of its manifesto promises and that most of these were not shared with another party outside of government, yet if the manifesto only accounts for 10% of the legislative agenda of that same government, then clearly there is the potential that the other 90% of legislation is consensual or, indeed highly contentious, but not related to election pledges. In such a scenario, the partisan difference found might or might not be very superficial. Certainly Rose (1984, 72), in his study of the U.K., found that on average only c.11% of government bills could be traced back to the

manifesto and that by and large bills reflect “the ongoing policy process in Whitehall or the force of events.”

The pledge approach to analysing the programme-to-policy linkage is, in my view, a good way in which to suggest any partisan effects on public policy. Pledge studies of such faithfulness do not rely on the prior segregation of left- and right-wing parties, however appropriate such categorisations may be, or on the spurious assumption that all a government does is reflected in government expenditure accounts. Nor do pledge studies rely on impressionistic readings of government intention via the number of lines devoted to an issue in a manifesto. Instead, students of the pledge approach separate the dross in the manifesto from the statements of intent. From there, the pledges made by the parties in the system are searched for in any number of output measures. In other words, the attraction of the pledge approach to testing for the prevalence of government faithfulness to pre-election party promises, is the specific nature of the pledge, whether that is of intent or redemption.

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## Endnotes

1 It should be noted that Alan Ware (1987, ch.3) contends that increasingly the Conservative Party in the U.K. behaves as if it were obliged to fulfil its promises because it has been mandated by the people.

2 The distinction that I make between “issues”, “policies” and “pledges” is as follows: “issues” are taken to comprise areas of concern to the public; “policies” are the parties’ proposed methods of tackling these issues; and “pledges” comprise items of policy.

3As calculated from election results shown on [www.psr.keele.ac.uk/area/UK/UK.table.htm](http://www.psr.keele.ac.uk/area/UK/UK.table.htm) [2003, December 6]

4 That the electorate is required to know what is contained in a party manifesto to give a mandate is disputed by Mulgan (1978) who contends that the inclusion of any promise in a manifesto places an obligation on the party to fulfil their mandate (cited in Goot 1999, 333).

5 For a good overview of the literature in this area, and from which many of the critiques referenced here emanate, see Klingemann, Hofferbert and Budge 1994, ch.1.

6 One of the main critics of this Elitist View of Democracy is Robert Dahl (1958, 1971). He argues that where the true leaders of a group do not seem to be the overt leaders, then there must be a real leaders behind them, pulling their strings, and where “subsequent evidence shows that this covert group does not make a ruling elite, then the theory can be saved by arguing that behind the first covert group there is another, and so on” (1958, 463). It cannot constitute a theory, in the Popperian sense, because it cannot be falsified. Instead Dahl posits that there are multiple actors in the policy process, and that the influence of each is not uniform across issue areas (1971, 169). As issues crop up, coalitions of interested parties drawn from the political strata form and persist for varying degrees of time. As issues change, the interested parties change, and those involved in policy-making on those specific issues change accordingly (1971, 181).

7 The following are Arrow’s four conditions: a) Unrestricted domain: any possible ordering of the alternatives,  $x$  and  $y$ , by individuals is admissible in generating the collective choice. b)The Pareto principle; if everybody prefers  $x$  to  $y$ , then the collective choice must rank  $x$  ahead of  $y$ , c) Independence of irrelevant alternatives, in that irrelevant options do not change the preference ordering of relevant alternatives, d) Non-dictatorship: there must be no individual whose preferences determine the nature

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of the collective choice, regardless of the preferences of anyone else. For further detail, see discussion in McLean 1987, 165-7.

8 With reference to Schumpeter [1943] 1976, 269.

9 For good overview of the general literature see Laver, Gallagher and Mair 1995, ch.13 and 2001, ch.13 and Castles 1982, from which many of the ideas for this literature review emanate.

10 Schmidt (1996) claims that use of the Left-Right distinction may ignore the more valid inter-party ideological differences, such as ecologism, or religious orientation.

<sup>11</sup> See reference to Blais, Blake and Dion 1993, in Gallagher, Laver and Mair 2001, 390.

## CHAPTER 2

### PREVIOUS STUDIES OF THE PROGRAMME-TO-POLICY LINKAGE

#### 2.1 Introduction

In Chapter 1, I discussed various interpretations of the term “mandate” and concluded that the sense in which it can be best understood, in the light of Downs’ work in the area, is that of a constraint on party behaviour. However, I also claimed that it is difficult for observers of politics, let alone practitioners, to interpret exactly what is inferred from an election vote, and in particular, what it means in terms of the endorsement of policies. The safest route to re-election for a political party, Downs suggests, is therefore to assume that the voter values predictability in party behaviour and that this consistency is best achieved by following through on pre-election promises, should the party get access to government office. Obviously, this will not be a problem for the political party if its representatives wholeheartedly endorse the policies themselves.

However for the link to be shown between voter choice, party promises and government performance, as provided by the partisan conception of representative democracy but with the added rationale for government faithfulness to pre-election party promises coming from Downs, we need more than just evidence of a programme-to-policy linkage. We need evidence of a mandate having been given to the parties by their voters. We need a test that checks all of the following six requirements.

- 1) parties stand for different policies (Sullivan and O’Connor 1972, 1257)<sup>1</sup>
- 2) voters perceive the parties’ different stances (Sullivan and O’Connor 1972, 1256),
- 3) voters cast their ballots on the basis of the different policy positions on offer (Sullivan and O’Connor 1972, 1256), taking into account the reputations of the parties with regard to policy consistency (Downs 1957),
- 4) parties in government redeem more of their own policy promises than those of the opposition (Klingemann, Hofferbert and Budge 1994, Thomson 1999),
- 5) parties, if they get into government after the election, generally redeem the policy promises they offered before the election (Sullivan and O’Connor 1972, 1257), and



6) where parties do not remain faithful to their pre-election promises, the voters punish them at the following election (Downs 1957).

In fact, most previous studies of the “mandate” rely on only testing 1) and 5) or 1), 4) and 5). These are largely tests of various forms of programme-to-policy linkage, often not designed to suggest the existence of a partisan impact on public policies or indeed of voter endorsement of policies. Where writers do not look at what voters mean when casting their votes at the very least (requirements 2), 3) and 6)), means that using the term “mandate” in relation to these types of study is misleading, given that the term is nearly always taken to refer to voter endorsement of an issue position/policies. From hereon in, therefore, I shall adopt a term used by Klingemann, Hofferbert and Budge (1994) and also Thomson (1999) to describe the connection between what a party says and what it does (requirements 1), 2) and 3)): this term is the “programme-to-policy linkage” and most of the studies to be reviewed in this chapter are rather more programme-to-policy linkage studies rather than mandate studies per se (Klingemann, Hofferbert and Budge 1994, 17 and Thomson 1999, 5).

The test of partisan theory is not complete however. We also want to know the extent to which manifestos predict government action. The extent of partisan difference a party or parties can make to public policy is the seventh requirement of the test:

7 Actions promoted in manifestos account for the vast majority of later government actions.

What I am not saying or trying to support in this thesis is that parties that get into government *should* in some sense follow through on their pre-election promises. What I am interested in finding out is whether or not the programme-to-policy linkage is strong, as suggested by Downs on the grounds of a particular theory of party competition. More broadly, I should also like to see if there is supplementary evidence to suggest that the programme-to-policy linkage might also support the thesis that parties can and do make a difference to the sorts of public policies that governments pursue, as the representative conception of democracy suggests.

Previous tests of the programme-to-policy linkage fall into two broad categories. The first set are tests derived from a particular conception of party competition that revolves around the differential emphasis accorded to issues by each of the parties in the system. The first section in this chapter will give a broad outline of this saliency theory of party competition. In the second section, I shall discuss the tests of the programme-to-policy linkage that have been derived from this approach. The second set of tests to be discussed are those that rely on the identification of pledges from manifestos and then compare pledges given with their actual redemption. Finally, I

refer to a third type of study that has been used to test the link between party promises and government performance – a hybrid between a saliency test and a pledge test. In the final section of this chapter, I relate the broad findings of the three sorts of studies, in the light of the seven-step requirement identified for a full and complete test of the existence of partisan democracy, using a programme-to-policy linkage study.

## 2.2 Saliency Theory

The saliency theory of party competition rests on Robertson's (1976) attempt to fill in various of the gaps in Downs' rational choice model of party competition, as outlined in Section 1.213. He contends that national leaders will still be loosely tied to their party's ideology and traditions, and thus cannot move to any policy position that they want, without damaging their future electoral performance (Robertson 1976, 40). Competition, therefore, in Robertson's view, is not about moving to that point on a policy dimension where the median voter's policy preferences lies, as in Downs' model, and directly confronting other parties on their policy proposals. Instead saliency theorists endorse the view that party strategists believe that certain issue areas, if salient, disproportionately benefit their party as opposed to other parties (Robertson 1976, 67; Budge and Farlie 1983, 24). Parties are, by corollary, also constrained in what they may emphasise or highlight, by way of policy, by what is plausible for them, given their historical policy record (Robertson 1976, 66). A strong law and order policy that has traditionally been identified with a particular party, Party A, is only unwisely emphasised, according to this approach, by Party B. This is because particular parties are seen to *own* certain issues, or are certainly perceived as being strongly associated with them, and even a scant mention of an issue owned by a rival party could prove to be electorally disadvantageous (Budge 1987, 24-5). A party, it is hypothesised, will emphasise its own issues where certain defeat or a win is assured, in part to placate party members and in part to increase their chances in the long-term of gaining or retaining office (Budge and Farlie 1977, 216-9). On occasions where the party is in a highly competitive situation, they will attempt to move towards the midpoint of party-policy-defined space. In doing so, they will increasingly highlight non-partisan issues and, as in every other electoral situation, attempt not to mention any issues that may benefit the opposition, in their attempt to win over marginal voters (Robertson 1976, 189; Budge, Robertson and Hearl 1987, 28). Parties, in other words,

will “talk past each other” on issues within a common policy framework, more so in non-competitive elections than in competitive.

Robertson (1976) utilised two sorts of indicators for British party policy – manifestos for the general elections of 1924-1966 and samples of candidates’ election addresses 1924-55 – in his attempt to provide some evidence for his “modified office-seeking hypothesis”. Being of the view that, over time, issues change too radically outside specific eras to lead to a degree of continuity for study purposes, he set about looking for broader themes or topics in the manifestos. Re-reading and refining the list of such topics led to a more exhaustive list of symbols totalling 21, to which the text units of the manifestos, in this case, the sentences, could be allocated. These 21 symbolic categories are as follows: Empire, Regionalism, Freedom, Enterprise, Democracy, Socialist Economy, Economic Planning, Special Groups, Culture, Commonwealth, Economic Stability, Productivity, National Effort, Social Justice, Technology, Military, Economic Orthodoxy and Efficiency, Incentives, Peace, Social Services and Internationalism (Robertson 1976, 73-5). Each of these categories subsumed more detailed topics. Plotting their varying emphases over these topics, Robertson concluded that the Conservative and Labour parties of the U.K. behaved much as his model had forecast; leaders did emphasise common non-partisan topics in elections where the outcome was uncertain, and in less-competitive electoral circumstances, the party’s *own* topics were highlighted (Robertson 1976, 171).

Question marks must be placed over a number of facets of Robertson’s study. First, probably because of the assumption that parties possess some issue areas exclusive to themselves, Robertson equates emphasis devoted to certain policy themes with the party’s position on that general theme. This equation may work well in the cases of *owned* issues. For example, unemployment may be perceived as being *owned* by Labour rather than the Conservative Party, as when mentioned in a manifesto, the mention generally relates to augmenting assistance or reducing numbers of people within the category. However, in cases where issues are not clearly identified with one political party over another, for example the issues of the protection of the environment or technological development, then emphasis cannot be taken as synonymous with position. Both parties may emphasise these issues, to much the same extent, but their positions on the issues are not necessarily going to be precisely the same. This will be discussed in more depth later.

Two criticisms could also be made of Robertson’s operationalisation of the distinction between competitive and uncompetitive elections. An election is deemed to have been perceived by party leaders as competitive where Robertson deems it so, purely on the basis that in retrospect it was highly competitive (Budge 1994, 452).

However for parties to decide which issues to highlight and which to de-emphasise in the run-up to an election, a more appropriate measure of when the party hierarchies see an election as competitive must be found. Robertson assumed that, with perfect foresight, political parties can anticipate whether or not an election will be competitive. In a 1994 paper, Budge relaxed that assumption that the parties had perfect information and supposed that part of the reason for the lack of mobility of parties was to appeal to the voters that voted for them at the last election again (Budge 1994, 452). A number of models were tested using varying party campaign strategies within the confines of their relatively strict ideological positions (Budge 1994, 461). Two models emerged as the best predictors of party strategies. One suggested that parties which had performed relatively well at the last election would either stay put at the current election or move moderately in the same policy direction as before. For those parties, that had not won a greater number of votes at the last election, they would move in the opposite policy direction to that they had moved in last time (Budge 1994, 461). A second model that performed well predicted alternation in emphasis between elections, whatever the earlier election results (Budge 1994, 454).

Second, according to the logic of Robertson's theory, party behaviour is determined by the perceived competitiveness of an election. He fails to contemplate the possibility that, instead, an election is made competitive by party behaviour itself.

Budge and Farlie (1977) set about replicating the Robertson analysis of the British parties, supplementing it with a study of the American parties, for which extra symbolic categories had to be added. Much of their evidence corroborated that of Robertson – in both systems, the individual parties were highly differentiated from each other, and movements by them to highlight “across-the-board appeals” were most accentuated in competitive elections (Budge and Farlie 1977, 428-30). They used the same definition of “competitive” elections in this study as Robertson had in his 1976 study. Moreover, in both Robertson's study of the U.K. and Budge and Farlie's studies of the U.K. and U.S., it was found that a maximum of a quarter of all sentences, but an average of only 7% of them, were devoted to other parties and *their* policies (Budge 1987, 25). Both sets of findings showed that in these particular country cases, the saliency theory of competition proved more plausible than its precursor, Downs' economic theory. However, because both countries are, to all intents and purposes, two-party systems at the national level, any conclusions to be drawn from these must be constrained by that fact.

A third study, more recent than either of those mentioned previously, deals with both two-party and multi-party systems at the national level. Using a coding scheme entailing 54 categories largely derived from the original Robertson coding scheme for

Britain, and with country-specific sub-categories appended in some cases, Budge, Robertson and Hearl (1987) scrutinise the nature of party appeals in competitive elections in 19 different countries. These 54 categories are broadly categorised into seven general domains: Foreign Affairs, Freedom and Democracy, Government, Economy, Welfare, Fabric of Society and Social Groups. Each coder allocated the sentences, or “quasi-sentences” of manifestos or candidates’ speeches or other policy texts to the subgroups of these domains, some of which have distinctions between negative and positive references (Budge, Robertson and Hearl 1987, 459-65).<sup>2</sup> Counting up the references within each category, the authors claimed to have derived measures of the importance with which certain issue areas were esteemed by the parties. Exploratory factor analysis was then performed on all those issue categories which had taken up at least one percent of the party’s manifesto by one or more in the national party system in order to identify the dimensions of competition in various political systems.

In the conclusion to *Ideology, Strategy and Party Change*, Budge and Robertson (1987, 389-91) claim that their findings support the saliency theory of competition in that they find few negative and positive references to a particular policy within single manifestos and few general references to an opposing party/its policies. Further they claim to find convincing evidence that parties compete by emphasising policies advantageous to themselves whilst not mentioning those which might aid opponents.

These claims may be criticised given the evidence provided. In the first place, for any particular policy category to be included in the analysis, that category had to account for an “over time average percentage” of 1% or more for the whole country (Budge 1987, 31). This was qualified in that a variable might stay in the analysis if it was sufficiently important for the party that over time it averaged three per cent of mentions. The problem with this is that while over 35 years worth of elections a variable might not average as terribly important for a particular party, at a specific election it could amount to an appreciable proportion of a party’s manifesto emphasis. The nature of this study was to show that at each election, parties emphasise their own rather than the oppositions’ policies but unfortunately by averaging emphases over years, some evidence for or against saliency theory, by definition, is invariably lost.

Factor analysis of those saliency measures, these theorists claim, will elicit the nature of the dimensions upon which parties compete and from “the relative location of the various election programmes within the multi-dimensional space, [... they] can infer the movement of party positions over time and estimate convergence, divergence, etc” (Budge 1987, 30). Laver and Garry (2000) disagree. In their view “position and emphasis are quite distinct parameters of a party policy” (2000, 620). They

hypothesise that it is quite possible that one party will regard its position on a particular policy area as electorally advantageous, and devote many manifesto text units to it. Concurrently a competitor party will also regard its position, though more extreme than the first party's, as an asset and will allocate large tracts of its manifesto to the policy area. Laver and Garry point out that while the two parties have clearly differing positions on the same issue, the amount of attention devoted to each may be the same.

They operationalise the approach by devising a coding scheme for which every policy category has a pro, con and neutral coding. By recording the balance of pro and con coded units in any one policy area, and dividing this remainder by their sum, Laver and Garry claim their results to be positional (2000, 627). Budge (1999, 19-20) criticises this operationalisation of the positional approach on practical grounds, claiming that "at the extreme one could see the party position undergoing a hundred per cent reversal if the only direct reference in a 1974 manifesto was con and the only one in 1979 was pro." He adds that "there is not much real evidence on which to assess the validity of the confrontational approach", but that when tested for in the MRG data, seldom were both pro and con categories mentioned within the same party system. There is however some evidence to suggest that such a result may be an artefact of the coding scheme employed, its theoretical underpinnings and even perhaps the conventions adopted for allocating text units to those categories. Laver and Garry (1999, Table 2), for example, when using their coding scheme found that for the Irish and British parties of 1992 and 1997, both pro and con categories in the areas of economic and social policy were heavily used by all parties in the two systems.

Saliency theory is not a theory in the sense that it is falsifiable (Popper [1935], 2002). At no point in any of the three saliency studies detailed is there given any indication as to what evidence would have to be provided such that saliency theory as applied empirically could be rejected. In the Budge, Robertson and Hearl (1987) book, for example, we find that out of the 19 democracies studied, at one extreme, no parties share any policy categories in common with other parties in their system when their top five emphasised topics are scrutinised (Belgium), while at the other extreme, only two out of seven parties in the Japanese system own their own topics. In the Japanese example, we might decide that a more informative test of saliency theory would be to look at differences in the exact amounts of emphasis that each party gives to their top five topics. But again we have no benchmark ratio against which to decide whether or not the system has failed the saliency test.

Even if we can accept that measures of emphasis in manifestos, however counted, are good indicators of the saliency attached to issue areas by a party hierarchy, accepting that parties only compete on the basis of these differential emphases has far

from been proven. A more comprehensive approach would be to accept that both confrontation on policy issues and differential emphases of a multitude of issues coexist in party competition and to measure both direction and emphasis separately (Laver and Garry 2000, 620).

### **2.2.1 Saliency Tests of the Programme-to-Policy Linkage**

A number of studies using the saliency approach to test for government faithfulness to pre-election party promises have been performed. The general approach has been to take proxy statements of party intention, whether they are manifestos, leaders' speeches, or party platforms, and to designate units of these documents to a categorised coding scheme of issue emphasis. Counting up the numbers of text units allocated to each category, an approximation is made of the seriousness with which a party regards certain issues and how it ranks them in order of priority. A government's policy priorities are typically approximated by the percentage shares of total government spending devoted to certain issue areas. The approximations of government intention and government output are then matched up by relevant issue area, and a measure of the strength of the relationship between the two is recorded. Where a strong relationship is found across many issue areas, a strong link between programme and policy, it is claimed, has been shown to hold.

Ginsberg (1976, 42) analysed the content of Democrat and Republican platforms for the years 1844-1968 according to seven issue categories: these are Capitalism, Internal Sovereignty, Redistribution, International Co-operation, Universalism, Labor, Ruralism. These categories were selected by the author as being those traditionally most important in American history, and were defined in such a way as to allow for the negative and positive scoring of statements relating to the category. Every unit of analysis in each platform, in this case each paragraph, was thus assigned to a category and scored positive or negative by degree, whilst the number of times a particular issue area was mentioned was scored for emphasis. In determining whether or not critical differences in electoral commitments were concomitant with major policy changes once one party was elected, Ginsberg tested for a relationship between the emphasis accorded to particular issue positions within each category and positive/negative codings for issues derived out of statutes passed in government. He found that, by and large, negative emphasis on an issue position did correlate with a negative coding for a

statute, and thereby concluded that that which a party held to be salient at election time had a strong relationship with what it set out to do, once in office (Ginsberg 1976, 48).

Budge and Hofferbert (1990) use programmatic emphases collated by the Manifesto Research Group to test a number of regression models of the process by which U.S. parties' priorities are translated into government action. Their first model, "the competitive model", centres on the hypothesis that parties compete "within mutually defined issue spaces, [where] the outcome of competition is measured in a reinforcing or contradicting effect, irrespective of who holds what offices" (1990, 119-20). Their second model is the "complementary model" and, in contrast to their first model, this hypothesises that policy will be purely a product of consensual policies, policies upon which both parties agree (Budge and Hofferbert 1990, 120). Their third model, the "consensus model", suggests that where consensus exists on the relative emphases devoted to particular policy issues, it has a "disproportionate impact on policy", in the sense that such policy is much more likely to succeed through Congress. Their next three models, their "control model", "general program model" and "general partisan influence model", all assume that control of the presidency is important to the translation of emphasis into action. Models 5 and 6, the "general program model" and the "general partisan influence model", also test the extent to which not having control of the presidency can impact negatively on the opposition's success in fulfilling their pre-election promises. Model 6 incorporates a variable attempting to measure the impact of enduring partisan differences (Budge and Hofferbert 1990, 120). Regressing emphases on lagged federal expenditure patterns, they conclude that the two are "quite closely linked", but that a number of factors are likely to enhance that relationship. One such factor is control of the presidency. The authors therefore best favoured Model 5, the "general program model" (Budge and Hofferbert 1990, 129). They further claim that depending on the policy area, spending priorities are often better predicted by long-term partisan differences in emphases rather than short-term policy platforms. Policy areas that were better predicted by long-term partisan differences were physical resources and general government spending.

Hofferbert and Budge (1992) followed up the U.S. study with a test of government faithfulness to pre-election party promises in the U.K. Seeking to test how far manifesto policy priorities are translated into public policy after a British election, they scrutinised all the election manifestos of the Labour Party, the Conservative party and the Liberals in the post World War II period. The Manifesto Research Group data on policy emphases, detailed in Budge, Robertson and Hearl (1987), was used to estimate the policy priorities of the British parties, while post-electoral policy priorities were gauged by measuring the percentage of total financial outlays allocated to nine



broad areas of policy (Hofferbert and Budge 1992, 152). They used time-series regression models to look at the relationships between the two variables generated. They derived similar results to the U.S. in that British government actions were found to relate broadly to either a party's current manifesto emphases or its more enduring partisan emphases, but that there was variation across policy areas in the predictability of government action from manifesto emphases (Hofferbert and Budge 1992, 78).

The most comprehensive saliency study of the programme-to-policy linkage can be found in Klingemann, Hofferbert and Budge (1994). Scrutinising a variety of government formations, from majority single-party to minority governments, and from coalition formations to presidential systems, the authors seek to elucidate the programme-to-policy linkage using emphases derived from electoral documents from 10 countries. They suggest that if the priorities expressed in the larger parties' manifestos show pretty much the same ordering as financial priorities after the election, regardless of which party or parties enter office, then an agenda model is suggested (Klingemann, Hofferbert and Budge 1994, 36). A second question that they seek to answer is whether or not there is a significant difference between the translation of the winning party's ranked emphases into government policy and that of the opposition. Their expectations at the outset of the study were that the winning party in majoritarian parliamentary systems should find it easiest to translate its electoral policy stances into concrete action, whilst the constituent parties in a coalition should find it very difficult to get all their own partisan stances endorsed by the ensuing government. It was expected that presidential systems should fall somewhere in between these two extremes (Klingemann, Hofferbert and Budge 1994, 31-4). In order to test these expectations, they set up three models of alternate ways in which manifestos could feed into governments' policy priorities. The first model they claim is an agenda model as the determination of government policy is not reliant on the emphases of the governing party (Klingemann, Hofferbert and Budge 1994, 45). This model posits that policy priority will be determined by the emphases of all the significant parties in the system, regardless of which control(s) government. They do however allow that singular parties may have more influence over certain policy areas than others (Klingemann, Hofferbert and Budge 1994, 46). The "mandate model" looks at how each party's emphases are reflected in government policy, as in the agenda model. However in contrast to the previous model, the mandate model allows for the difference that one particular party's being in office over another makes to the reflection of all parties' emphases in subsequent government policy (Klingemann, Hofferbert and Budge 1994, 49). Klingemann, Budge and Hofferbert's final model (1994, 52), the "ideology model", posits that government policy may be predicted using the assumptions of the

previous two models and by taking “the lasting basis that constitutes standing differences between parties” into account.

By and large, their work supports the idea of a strong programme-to-policy linkage. Taking account of differences in legal codes, degrees of centralisation of power, presidential or parliamentary systems tends not to produce any better predictions of party accountability (Klingemann, Hofferbert and Budge 1994, 269). The authors claim that “on average about fifty percent of policy variance has been predicted – an uncommonly high figure in the social sciences” (Klingemann, Hofferbert and Budge 1994, 240). They find that the “mandate model” performs rather well in predicting the translation of party emphases into government policy, but that contrary to expectation, it works no better at predicting government policy in Westminster systems than it does anywhere else (Klingemann, Hofferbert and Budge 1994, 260). Instead they find that for Britain, Sweden and France, the “agenda model” seems to apply, whilst Canada, the US, Australia and the coalition systems of Austria and Germany conform better to the “mandate model”. In the cases of Canada, Germany and Austria, adding in the ideology component to the “mandate model” allows government policy to be more accurately predicted. For neither Belgium nor the Netherlands did any of the three models assist in predicting policy efficiently (Klingemann, Hofferbert and Budge 1994, 259-65). In fact, the authors discerned that the greater the number of parties in a system and the looser the coalition, the less accountable the parties in government (Klingemann, Hofferbert and Budge 1994, 269).

At a lower level of analysis, a number of policy areas were found to contain moderate concentrations of contradictions, in other words, where the relationships between emphasis and spending on a particular policy were negatively related; human services entitlements, public works, and administration of justice (Klingemann, Hofferbert and Budge 1994, 245). In seven out of the 10 countries studied, the linkage between left-right programmatic emphases and left-right policy trends (the latter measured through spending trends), failed to reach a regression co-efficient of 0.25 or greater, or had significant contradictions (Klingemann, Hofferbert and Budge 1994, 243). The authors explain that this result has emerged because the left-right generalisation is too crude a measure of policy implementation. Parties in government do not incur expenditure on broad policy areas such as defence or social welfare in levels that could be termed either “right-wing” or “left-wing” but rather differences may be discerned at more specific levels of policy – for example, levels at which the single mother’s allowance will be paid out. The authors also discovered that some parties were more likely to influence the direction of particular policy areas than other parties. In five out of the 10 countries studied, small left or liberal parties’ programmes

corresponded strongly with subsequent defence and foreign policy (Klingemann, Hofferbert and Budge 1994, 263).

Klingemann, Hofferbert and Budge's work (1994, 246) also found inferences for the programme-to-policy linkage as first espoused by Downs(1957): firstly, they claim to have found that leapfrogging of Left and Right rarely occurs, parties generally keeping their ideological distance. Leapfrogging was found to have occurred once each in Austria and in Australia and never in any of the other eight countries included in the study. Secondly, the authors do not endorse Downs' supposition that in multi-party systems, parties tend not to move as much on the ideological spectrum as in single-party systems (Klingemann, Hofferbert and Budge 1994, 247-9). They did find however that across types of system, parties on the right were less ideologically rigid than those on left, parties on the left tilted rightwards over time, and that none of the major parties tended to take rigid positions but moved marginally over elections (though the possibility cannot be discounted that these small movements were caused by measurement error).

### **2.2.2 Criticisms of Saliency Tests of the Programme-to-Policy Linkage**

A number of major criticisms exist of the studies exemplified above and the methodological approaches that are common to this type of study. Firstly, in all three of the most recent studies cited in section 2.2.1, the dependent variable, expenditure, takes set values that are then explained by suitable values of the independent variable, as selected by the authors. This means that out of the whole set of manifesto emphases recorded from a manifesto, only those issue areas that prove to match well with the expenditure data are utilised in the regression equations. As they explain – “the emphases selected to match up to expenditures were chosen, first on the basis of face validity as substantively relevant and second, on the basis of experimental computations” (Budge and Hofferbert 1990, 115). Royed (1996, 52) claims that this method of choosing categories of emphasis does not necessarily require that the selected emphases contain the most concrete policy statements, let alone that they are the set of emphases most clearly associated with expenditure. In fact, she claims that using the percentage of manifestos allocated to particular issue areas is a particularly poor indicator of government intentions in the first place because it tells us nothing about the numbers of concrete pledges made. In their scheme, pledges are given equal weighting with rhetoric.

In Budge and Hofferbert (1990, 128), it is acknowledged that in one issue area, “general government”, greater emphases actually inferred less spending rather than more. They therefore segregate the issue areas according to whether more sentences, or greater emphases, denote more spending or more sentences infer an intent to spend less. Royed (1996, 53) suggests that because the categories of emphasis are so broad, they could quite feasibly incorporate statements in favour of more spending and less spending, thus cancelling each other out to some extent. She posits that “this suggests that positive, negative or no correlations between platform emphasis and spending could all be quite consistent with mandate theory”, the latter being the term used to denote the programme-to-policy linkage.

The use of broad spending categories has also come in for criticism. In the first place, it is clear that not all a government does can be approximated by what it spends. Even if expenditure was a comprehensive measure of government action, by using aggregate figures, important spending changes may remain hidden. The example that Royed (1996) gives is that of a change in eligibility rules to some public programme. She claims that a simple upsurge in the economy could itself impact on those claiming from the programme and obscure the impact of the change in eligibility rules. Indeed, a downturn could increase spending on such areas as unemployment benefit.

King and Laver (King et al, 1993) replicate Budge and Hofferbert’s study of the US (1990) and, along with other criticisms, charge that the authors mis-specify their models, in that they fail to take into account the likely relationship that exists between spending in one year and the next. The argument is that since much of government spending in one year is correlated with the spending that occurred the year before, Budge and Hofferbert’s dependent variables are auto-correlated. As a result of the work done by King and Laver, whether or not the mandate has been tested by Budge and Hofferbert in the U.S. case is highly dubious, for when the problem of serial auto-correlation is corrected for, the R-squared in these models drops to being closer to zero (King et al 1993, 746-7). The same criticism might also be extended to the Hofferbert and Budge study of the U.K. in 1992, and the Klingemann, Hofferbert and Budge study of 1994, but also as Thomson (1999, 41) points out, to the many pledge studies, to be discussed in the next section.

## 2.3 Pledge Studies

Saliency studies of the programme-to-policy linkage, in aiming for parsimony in comparing across parties and countries, use broad categories of issue emphasis as their independent variable. However, when we talk about a party having a mandate to do such and such, we commonly mean a party being constrained by their mandate to enact promises or pledges from their manifestos (Rallings 1987, 1). Pledge studies of the programme-to-policy linkage, like saliency studies of the same, form a tight methodological grouping. However pledge studies are less numerous, tend to cover shorter time periods and fewer countries than do their saliency counterparts (Thomson 1999, 22). Thomson (1999) suggests the relative preponderance of saliency studies of the mandate may be due to their less labour-intensive nature. The key labour factor is that the MRG saliency data have already been collected and can easily be used. Pledge studies involve a complete re-reading of the original manifestos. The general process for pledge studies is as follows: selecting country and party cases, the investigator defines the sorts of pledges he/she is looking for. Coding for these in the manifestos and/or government programmes of the chosen parties, the investigator then seeks to find some evidence of their enactment in parliamentary legislation, or fulfilment via budgetary or other action. Where there is a high correspondence between what is pledged and what a government does, a strong programme-to-policy linkage is said to hold.

### 2.3.1 Definitions of Pledges

Pledges have been variously defined across the limited number of pledge studies that exist. Royed (1996, 79) and Royed and Borrelli (1999, 125) adopt the convention that a pledge should be divided into two parts: a phrase indicating commitment/support (*we will/we encourage /we oppose*, etc), which is referred to as the “hardness” of the statement, and the action or policy for which commitment is indicated, its “specificity.” The authors adopt the policy of distinguishing between “hard” (we will) and “soft” (we support) commitments, allowing the specificity of the statement to be the final arbiter of whether or not the statement should be regarded as a full pledge. Three categories of statement, grouped according to the levels of specificity attached to the proposed action to be taken or the outcome intended, are defined. The first is “definitive” action, where

definite action is pledged and its conduct/intended outcome can be easily gauged and the second, “difficult/definitive”, where definite action is promised but determining or testing whether or not it has been carried out or the outcome occurs is difficult. The last category of pledge, “judgemental/rhetorical”, arises when action has been promised but a determination on whether or not the pledge has been fulfilled relies on subjective judgement, e.g. “regulations will be made more ‘fair’” (Royed 1996, 79-80). In both studies, only the former two categories, “definitive action” and “difficult/definitive” are regarded as pledges, and these are then subdivided into “hard” and “soft” categories. Clearly, the expectation is that the fulfilment/non-fulfilment of “hard, definitive action” pledges should be most easily testable.

Pomper and Lederman (1980) are more liberal with their definition of a pledge, in terms of both specificity and hardness. They identify six sorts of pledges, the first two being “rhetorical” and “general”, in which action promised in the pledge is difficult for the reader to identify. They segregate clearer statements of intent into “pledges of continuity”, such as “we will continue our consistent support of Israel, including sufficient military and economic assistance to maintain Israel's strength in the region”, [...] and “expressions of goals and concern” like “increased part-time and flexible-hour work should be encouraged whenever feasible” (Pomper and Lederman 180, 134-135). A further distinction is made between “pledges of action”, exemplified by “we pledge to support effective voluntary family planning around the world, as well as at home, and to recognise officially the link between social and economic development and the willingness of the individual to limit family size” and finally, “detailed promises”, which are constituted by statements such as “we will seek repeal of section 14(b) of the Taft-Hartley Act which allows states to legislate the anti-union shop” (Pomper and Lederman 180, 134-135). Pomper and Lederman (1980, 237) veer very much towards the soft interpretation of a pledge, as statements of preference, including such verbs “press” and “strengthen”, are readily included as pledges, without a distinction being made between these and statements of firm intention.

Rallings (1987, 2) contends that a pledge should be taken as being “a specific commitment on behalf of the party to act in a certain area following a strategy also mentioned.” By this definition, “vague” statements, such as “we will continue to support the Atlantic Alliance” are omitted from the analysis. Rose (1984, 62) similarly separates “the wheat from the chaff” on the basis of whether or not the pledge’s redemption may be tested. Statements of vague or aspirational intent, containing little or no indication of what would constitute the pledge’s redemption, are therefore omitted from his analysis. The example given by Rose of such a vague statement is of a party declaring to “do our best for the nation’s troubled economy”. What he does

contend, however, is that the vast majority of pledges, given by the British parties, are “do-able”, and therefore hard and testable pledges constitute a large proportion of the pledges under his focus (Rose 1984, 64). Rallings (1987, 4) also rejects such soft statements of intent as constituting pledges, on the grounds that were a party to promise to try and achieve a certain objective, its failure to do so could not be viewed as non-fulfilment of a firm commitment.

Other authors such as Kalogeropoulou (1989) have borrowed Rallings’ comparatively strict definition of a pledge. The benefits of such a strict definition, such as that employed by Rallings or Royed, are clearly the ease with which *real* pledges may be enumerated, their fulfilment tested and cross-national comparisons by different authors made. Less determinate pledges, which have been theoretically justified, by Schedler (1998) and Kavanagh (1981) among others, as being just as important as the more concrete promises, tend to be defined, categorised and their fulfilment measured differently by each author, leaving records of fulfilment open to contest. Thomson (1999, 23), for example, commends Royed’s approach to segregating pledges according to their specificity and hardness. This commendation rests not only on the grounds that the numbers of firm pledges and their redemption (or not, as the case may be) may be compared across many of the party families and countries studied by the different authors, but also that replication studies may be performed. Thomson contrasts this approach with that of Pomper and Lederman, which fails to differentiate between hard and soft statements of intent to the detriment of a clear distinction between their categories of pledges. One result is that “[...] it is not entirely clear when the elaboration of a policy proposal is sufficient to qualify as, for example, a ‘Detailed Pledge’ as opposed to a ‘Pledge of Action’. Similarly, it is unclear whether or not a reliable distinction can be made between ‘Expressions of Goals and Outcomes’ and rhetorical statements, or ‘hot air’[...]” (Thomson 1999, 24).

Thomson (1999, 80) himself adopts a similarly rigorous approach to the definition and classification of election pledges to that of Royed (1996, 79) and Royed and Borrelli (1999, 125), with the exception that he only looks at pledges for government action and not outcome. However he combines this with the strict testability criterion of both Rose (1984, 62) and Rallings (1987, 4). Statements, in his analysis, were counted as pledges “if they contained unequivocal support for proposed government policy actions that are testable” (Thomson, 1999, 80). By “unequivocal support”, what is meant is that pledges are subdivided into hard and soft categories, hard pledges being “synonymous with promises or guarantees”, soft being denoted by verbs such as “we must”, “we should” or “we will strive for.” Thomson (1999, 81) justifies the inclusion of soft pledges on the grounds that it would be pedantry to

disregard statements showing unequivocal support for particular policies merely on the grounds that the manifesto writers did not use words that conformed to the author's definition of a hard pledge. He adds that because most of the pledges found in the Dutch party manifestos that he studied were "soft" rather than "hard", it would have been invalid to concentrate merely on the hard pledges. With regard to the "specificity" of the statements, Thomson requires that any statements of policy intent to be included as pledges must give some criterion, legislative or executive, on which the redemption or non-redemption of the pledge may be judged (Thomson 1999, 80).

An obvious artefact of the various definitions used is that the numbers of pledges found in manifestos will differ according to which definition is adopted. This is inferred from the few cases of overlap between studies, where the numbers of pledges contained in manifestos for the same parties, in the same countries, and in the same time period, radically differed. As Thomson (1999, 25) points out, two separate studies by Rallings and Rose of pledge fulfilment in the U.K., covering the election of 1970, estimate the Conservative Party's pledges to stand at 52 and 96 respectively. Regrettably, the Royed study of 1996, though focussing also on the U.K., covers elections that do not overlap with either of the other two authors. Both sets of authors, Pomper and Lederman and Royed and Borrelli, scrutinise pledges in the U.S. and for the one election which both sets of authors study, a discrepancy is found between the numbers of pledges the different authors derive from the Democratic and Republican platforms. Pomper and Lederman (1980, 143) counted a total of 599 pledges for the Democrats in 1976 as compared with 235 counted by Royed and Borrelli (1999, 118), while the corresponding figures for the Republicans were 542 and 219 respectively. Pomper and Lederman's (1980) broader definition of a pledge probably contributes to the higher count. While in and of itself counting more pledges is not necessarily a problem, Royed and Borrelli (1999, 119) assert that subsequent measures of pledge fulfilment are likely to be biased upwards.

### **2.3.2 The Nature of Pledges Given**

#### Numbers of Pledges

Despite likely differences in the numbers of pledges each pledge definition would produce if applied to the same country in the same election year, studies using these different definitions have discerned remarkable similarities between inter-temporal



trends in the numbers of pledges given across countries. Pomper and Lederman (1980, 138) found that the number of pledges contained in both the Republican and Democrat party platforms of the U.S. had risen consistently from the 1950s to the 1970s. Rallings (1987, 5) derived similar results for the U.K. and Canada, finding that the number of pledges had grown in the U.K. from 18 in 1945 to 57 in October 1974, and in Canada, from seven in 1945 to 39 in 1968. The decade of the 1980s however shows no clear trend for the numbers of pledges to rise across parties and countries. Royed (1996, 118) found that from 1976 to 1988, the number of Republican pledges in the U.S. fell rapidly until the 1988 election where a dramatic reversal could be observed, whereas the Democrat pledges fell consistently across the time period. The total number of pledges given by the two parties combined followed the pattern of Republican pledges. Similarly for the election years of 1979 and 1983 in the U.K., Royed (1966, 56) found that while the number of Conservative pledges had fallen marginally, the number of Labour's pledges had soared. Thomson (1999, 105) found no clear pattern across the Dutch parties for pledges to increase in number for the three election years 1986 to 1994. In fact the number of pledges for the system as a whole decreases over that same election period.

### The Import of Pledges

The Pomper and Lederman study (1980) of the U.S. 1944 -1976 covered nine elections from which three large-scale categories were drawn with regard to pledges – future actions, past performance, and rhetoric and fact. They found that, on average, 51% of the Democrats' platforms dealt with future performance but that, for the 1970s alone, the average had risen to 71%. The Republicans, by contrast, averaged 53% of their platforms given over to future actions, over the time period, but scored less in the 1970s than the Democrats (Pomper and Lederman 1980, 135). Within the sections of manifesto given over to future action, most of the pledges fell into specific categories but a substantial minority came under the “rhetorical and vague statements” category. Pomper and Lederman (1980, 140) found that the degree of specificity varied across issue areas, with labour, natural resources, social welfare policies and agriculture scoring high specificity, while foreign, defense, economic policy, government and civil rights pledges scored low. Pomper and Lederman (1980, 142) explain that greater specificity is required in the former cases as voters tend to be more knowledgeable about the “distributive” benefits that derive from these “narrower policies”. Rallings (1987, 14) concurs that clear or specific pledges to act in particular areas of the macro-

economic sphere seldom occur in either British or Canadian manifestos. Kalogeropoulou (1989, 290) suggests that this finding that parties make pledges which concentrate on “actions, areas and groups of limited significance” refines Downs’ theory of party competition in that rationality for office-seeking politicians may entail deflecting “attention away from central areas of policy-making”.

Rose (1984, 62-3), however, found “dozens of specific statements of policy intentions” in the Conservative and Labour party manifestos he scrutinised – in the 1970 elections, the Conservative Party gave 96 specific pledges as opposed to Labour’s 83, while the late 1974 election, the Conservatives scored 126, while Labour scored 104. As his definition of a pledge excludes both vague statements and by inference, soft statements of intent, the distribution of pledges across policy areas, given before, equates with the distribution of more specific pledges given by other authors. In other words, Rose found the concentration of specific pledges to be located in the economic policy sphere, closely followed by the environment, Home Office and Parliamentary Affairs and Health and Social Security. Kalogeropoulou (1989, 292) also found that the Greek party P.A.S.O.K. made very specific and clear statements of intent on central areas of policy. Thomson (1999, 103) produces the most convincing evidence that pledges are not confined to peripheral areas of policy. Correlating the frequency distribution of pledges with the distribution of emphases in Dutch manifestos, he finds a strong positive relationship. In other words, those areas that the parties emphasise the most, socio-economic policies in the Dutch case, coincide with those areas in which the preponderance of pledges can be found.

Rallings (1987, 3) does not differentiate between the importance attached to different sorts of pledges though he admits that some are clearly intrinsically weightier than others. He argues that justifying any categorisation of pledges according to their inferred weight or importance is fraught with difficulties and thus he does not attempt it. However he does suggest that it is likely that “manifestos which contain a high proportion of ‘large’ policy intentions will be less fully implemented than those which concentrate on smaller, but more readily achievable aims.” Kalogeropoulou (1989) looks at two separate indicators of what might constitute the importance of one pledge over another; opinion polls and the programmes themselves. She concludes that on the basis of the polls, the voters may be said to support very generally a reform package, while the evidence gleaned from the programmes suggests that the pledges were of equal weight – none were “obviously trivial or restricted to small sectional interests” (Kalogeropoulou 1989, 292). Kalogeropoulou highlights two dimensions to this idea that some pledges may be tested for greater importance than others. Some pledges may be designated as more important than others on the grounds that the general public

regards them as such, others on the basis that the manifesto or campaign writers add additional weight to these promises, such weight inferred either by language the pledges are embedded in or the amount of ink devoted to them. I shall return to this point in Chapter 4.

Thomson (1999, 88-9) tries to test the idea that some pledges are more important to a party than others, by looking at the saliency attached to individual pledges. An initial test involved looking at the “hardness” versus “softness” of pledges and whether or not they carried the same amount of emphasis. The expectation was that hard pledges, prefaced with “we will”, or the like, would carry greater emphasis than soft pledges, of the “we should” order. However Thomson found it to be the case that “the hardness of the wording [was] more of an editorial decision than an expression of saliency.” A second test proved more fruitful. Using the repetition of pledges across manifestos as an indicator of the saliency attached by party leaderships to certain pledges, Thomson found that indeed, pledges that had been referred to in any of three previous VVD (Volspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie) party election manifestos were “seven and a half times more likely to concern issues that were referred to in the core programme” of 1994, a mission statement for the party, than new issues.

#### Pledge Distribution Across Issue Areas

The distribution of pledges across policy areas is heavily weighted towards economic policy, in all of the countries studied, though other prominent categories do vary across countries. Pomper and Lederman (1980, 139) found that the parties in the U.S. focussed their pledges in the areas of foreign policy, economic policy and government, and social welfare in the 1970s. They found that there had been a gradual drift away from general economic policy and agriculture over the preceding two and half decades towards this new focus, their explanation being the decreasing importance of the ideological division between the two parties and the declining clout of the farming section of the electorate. Royed and Borrelli (1999, 119) derived similar results for the years 1976-1988 in the U.S., in that they found economic policy was the most salient area of policy for both parties in all years excepting 1988. In 1988, social welfare policy scored most emphasised by both Republicans and Democrats. Both Rose (1984, 63) and Rallings (1987, 5) found that the economy, whether sub-divided into inflation, employment or industrial relations, registered as the issue area with which the public was most concerned, Rallings identifying it as the issue area with consistently the

highest numbers of pledges in the U.K. since 1945. He also discerned a rising trend over the period for pledges in the areas of the environment, health and social security issues. With reference to Canada, Rallings found that while the economy was of dominating concern to the Canadian parties, perhaps because of their system of devolved government for the provinces, the number of pledges varied widely. Kalogeropoulou (1989, 293) confirms that the largest section of the 1981 manifesto of the Greek party P.A.S.O.K. was devoted to the economy (21.5%). In rank order of size, the next largest categories of the manifesto were Democracy and the Socialist Programme, Education and Quality of life and then Instruments of Change. Thomson (1999, 78) found that socio-economic policy issues accounted for on average over 50% of all pledges contained in the four Dutch parties' manifestos. Welfare services, health-care, housing, education, taxation, employment and business policy comprised socio-economic policy.

Pomper and Lederman (1980, 146) found there to be a difference between the two American parties in terms of the concentration of pledges across issue areas. The Republicans were more likely to concentrate pledges in the areas of defence and governmental issues while the Democrats emphasised Labor and welfare. Royed and Borrelli (1999, 119) by contrast, found that the Democrats tended to concentrate their pledges in the areas of labour and development policy while the Republicans pledges were more numerous in the areas of taxation, spending and deficits. Such discrepancies in results could be an artefact of the different coding schemes.

### Pledge Overlap Between Parties

Rose (1984, 68-9) contends that the British parties largely behave in the way hypothesised by saliency theory. He claims that, rather than fighting about policy on common ground, the parties tend to highlight their own priorities. However that is not to say that, where a conservative policy is proposing rapid expenditure on nuclear weapons, Labour will not oppose it. Policies can be partisan, as just described, or non-partisan, where it is unlikely that the opposition party will oppose the government's policy. An example of the latter would be where one party pledges greater financial assistance to the elderly. No party, eager to win or even maintain electoral support, would be likely to oppose such a measure. Rose analysed the numbers of partisan and non-partisan pledges in the manifestos of the two British parties, and found that almost 60% of all pledges were non-partisan, though a greater preponderance of these was

found in the government parties' manifestos. Royed (1996, 65) corroborates Rose's findings that direct agreement or disagreement between the British parties is rare. She finds that for the election years 1979 and 1983, only 13% of the total of Conservative and Labour pledges were in direct agreement or disagreement with each other. Thomson (1999, 104) also finds that the majority of pledges in individual party manifestos in the Netherlands are unrelated to pledges in any other party's manifesto, as do the Pomper and Lederman and Royed and Borrelli studies of the U.S. Royed and Borrelli (1999, 119-20) for example, found that agreed-upon pledges ranged from 5% in 1984 to 15% in 1980, while pledges in direct conflict with one another ranged from 7% to 10% over the same elections.

### Status Quo Pledges

Some authors have also found there to be a difference in the sort of pledges that are made depending on the status of a party in the run-up to an election. Pomper and Lederman (1980, 145) found that the party trailing in the opinion polls in the United States tended to emphasise future pledges rather than past performance or use rhetoric. They found the same pattern for the party commonly expected to lose the presidential election. The logic is that to do better in the polls, the party needs to be more concrete in their proposals while "the leading party needs only to protect its advantage, which can be done best by not antagonising any group and by holding to relatively ambiguous positions." Royed and Borrelli (1999, 121) hypothesised that the party holding the presidency would also produce a greater number of pledges given over to maintaining the status quo, yet they discerned no particular pattern in that regard. Status quo pledges might be expected to be redeemed more frequently than pledges to introduce some form of change as no specific action is required by the new government. They are easier pledges to fulfil.

### Pledges in Government Programmes

In some countries what a government actually does once elected draws more from a government programme than the manifesto or manifestos preceding it. This tends particularly to be the case in multi-party systems, in which coalitions predominate. Obviously parties that decide to form a government together will not want any single

party's manifesto to form the action plan for government, so therefore some form of a compromise document drawn from the set of negotiating parties' manifestos is necessitated. This is the government programme. Both manifestos and government programmes should therefore be included in the analysis of countries where such programmes are relevant, in order to establish how these government programmes affect the manifesto to policy relationship. Thomson's comparisons of manifestos to government programmes shows that far from government programmes' being derivative from the negotiating parties' manifestos, between 58% and 76% of pledges contained in their manifestos were subsequently ignored by the government programmes (1999, 114). He also found that the government parties only had a marginal advantage over the opposition in getting their pledges into the government programme (Thomson 1999, 117). Another finding was that pledges on which the prospective partners disagreed were no more or less likely to be contained in the agreement than those upon which there was no explicit dissent (Thomson 1999, 119). Furthermore, he found no evidence to suggest that partisan control of a ministerial portfolio assisted the party in getting more of its manifesto pledges in that policy area adopted in the government programme (Thomson 1999, 124).

A second type of government programme is evident in the Greek system. Here government programmes are plans of government intent, but may be issued by single party governments on their outset in office. Clearly, it cannot be inferred that deviation from a manifesto is necessitated by either coalition or minority status in a government. Kalogeropoulou (1989, 295), studying one such single-party majority government, found 149 pledges in P.A.S.O.K.'s 1981 manifesto yet only 111 in their subsequent Government Programme. One hundred pledges of the 111 in the Government Programme were directly drawn from the 1981 manifesto.

### **2.3.3 Measures of Government Output**

#### Judging Redemption.

Once the type and nature of the pledges contained in various sets of manifestos have been discerned, the next step is to decide on the measure of government output to be used, such that the fulfilment of pledges may be gauged. Thomson (1999, 32) contends that the method by which pledge fulfilment is measured, by the different authors, is largely dependent on the sort of pledge being scrutinised. Broadly speaking, pledges

that propose policy action are tested by scrutiny of legislative action or executive orders, those that intend particular outputs, such as higher spending on health, are gauged according to quantitative statistics published by government agencies, and the redemption of pledges that promise outcomes such as decreased inflation is judged according to evidence found in socio-economic statistics publications. Thomson (1999, 83) himself accords with his generalisation, measuring government output by searching through legislative action and executive orders. Adopting the convention of Rose and Royed, he tests for the full enactment and partial enactment of pledges (Thomson, 1999, 84). Rallings (1987, 3-4) estimates government output by scrutinising “throne speeches, Acts of Parliament, economic statistics and executive action.” The justification he gives for looking at these items rather than more in-depth studies of spending patterns or policy implementation is that “that is the limit to which a Government’s (or party’s) responsibility can run.” Where pledges are concerned with reducing the inflation rate, for example, and the government does not reach its target figure pledged, the author would be forced by expediency and parsimony to regard the pledge as unenacted (Rallings 1987, 11). Rallings only considers actions taken or not taken, as the case may be, by governments during their terms of office.

Pomper and Lederman (1980, 159-60) similarly regard the full realisation of the pledge as the only qualification for government action, not merely partial redemption. They state that in the American system, pledge fulfilment may occur in any one of four ways; full action, i.e., the passing of a bill which mirrors the original pledge, executive action by the president, similar actions as taken by Congress and negative fulfilment, where a party pledges to maintain the status quo and not interfere. By corollary, they regard a pledge as having been unfulfilled where a bill is defeated in parliament, or vetoed by the President, where no action is taken, and where policy U-turns occur. For both judgements of fulfilment and non-fulfilment, the time-frame allowed by Pomper and Lederman is four years after the publication of the platform. Thomson (1999, 31) illustrates the difficulties that Pomper and Lederman get themselves into in trying to determine fulfilment on account of their broad definition of pledges. He takes an example of a pledge that they give; “to aggressively involve Black Americans in foreign policy decisions affecting African interests” (Pomper and Lederman 1980, 160). Pomper and Lederman suggest that fulfilment of this pledge is by executive action, where “the appointment of Andrew Young as U.S. ambassador to the U.N.” is achieved. Thomson (1999, 31) contends that this appointment is only one of many actions that could have been taken to fulfil this pledge. He argues that because the method of pledge fulfilment was left indeterminate in the manifesto *and* Pomper and

Lederman still categorised it as a pledge, the criteria upon which fulfilment is decided is subject only to the investigators' determination and not that of the manifesto writers.

Royed and Borrelli (1999) use Congressional Quarterly publications as the main source of evidence for the fulfilment of pledges in the U.S., but also rely on federal budgets and quantitative publications. Only those actions that were carried out in the immediately following parliamentary term qualified as part of the mandate's fulfilment. In the U.S., the period under consideration was the four-year presidential term following the platform in which the pledge appeared. Royed and Borrelli (1999, 126) explain that for pledges which involved deficits or other economic indicators, the four-year average of the indicator in the current presidential term was compared with that for the previous term whilst for pledges involving expenditure, annual real changes were compared between presidential administrations.

Kalogeropoulou (1989) uses a more varied array of output measures than the authors mentioned so far. She looks at official sources such as the budget, manifestos, party literature and newspaper articles. The redemption of pledges was then measured by whatever legislative action, administrative decisions or changes in government expenditure were evidenced in the sources listed. The time-frame in which government action was permitted as "pledge redemption" was the P.A.S.O.K. Government's term of office, 1981-1985.

Rose (1984, 64), similarly, suggests fulfilment is determined by the enactment of legislation, "administrative discretion" and spending patterns. Actions by Government in parliament are divided into four; pledges acted upon, ambiguously acted upon, not acted upon, and the opposite of the pledge being enacted. Like Rallings (1987), Rose only considers pledge redemption that occurs within the subsequent term of office.

### **2.3.4 The Programme-to-Policy Linkage - Single Party systems**

#### U.K.

The verdict on whether or not most pledges are redeemed by parties in different political systems is unanimous; the vast majority of pledges do seem to be redeemed. Variations do however occur across countries and parties with regard to the nature and general substance of the pledges redeemed. Rallings (1987, 11) found that pledges in the area of social welfare and promises to negate ideologically unpopular policies effected by the previous administration were almost always kept by the parties in the



U.K. He estimated that 64% of government party pledges were redeemed in the U.K. from 1945-1979, more, if three short-lived cabinets were excluded (Rallings 1987, 11), which emerges as impressive given the strictness of his pledge definition (Thomson, 1999, 34). He discerned no obvious pattern for more pledges to be implemented in the later years of his study. Such a finding might be taken as an indicator that manifesto-writers and parties regard pledges as no more important in the present day than they did in the early days of manifesto writing. He suggests that minor legislative changes, such as creating a new ministry, are easily redeemed but that more weighty legislation, if too numerous, may well be more difficult to redeem in the period of the government (Rallings 1987, 13).

Rose (1984, 65-67) also claims that both Conservative and Labour governments largely redeem their manifesto promises, rarely acting “in complete contradiction to their manifesto pledges.” His argument is that the two parties accomplish most of their economic pledges because they ensure, when writing the manifesto, that what is pledged is easily “do-able”. However with regard to the redemption of pledges in other areas, Labour emerges as very much the *poor relation*, failing to redeem 27% of its pledges in the 1974-79 period as compared with the Conservatives’ paltry 9% not redeemed. Rose explains Labour’s performance with reference to the international economic situation of the time. He explains the overall lack of U-turns by reference to the seriousness with which the two British parties regard policy promises and then the canniness of political operators who, on foreseeing difficulties with a particular policy pledge, phrase it with a loophole included. Where a pledge is not redeemed by the British parties, the explanation that dominates is inaction. For the Conservative and Labour Governments of 1970-1974 and 1974-1979 respectively, pledges upon which no determination could be made as to whether or not they had been enacted reached 10% for the Conservatives and 19% for Labour (Rose 1984, 65).

### Canada

For Canada, Rallings (1987, 13) discovered that those pledges not redeemed were often those whose passage through parliament could not be ensured, or would take substantial amounts from the exchequer’s coffers for little electoral gain. However an impressive 71.5% of all pledges, by his measurement, were kept. Such a high average figure for Canada relative to the U.K. figure of 63.7%, for roughly the same period, Rallings finds surprising in that Canadian governments tended to be more short-lived

and possess smaller majorities. The reason for this, it is suggested, is that Canadian manifestos contain more vague statements, which are not then contained in the analysis, and those statements that do fall within the ambit of the study tend to be more “modest” than those of their U.K. counterparts.

### U.S.

Royed and Borrelli (1999, 121-5) and Pomper and Lederman (1980, 161) found that the vast majority of pledges were fulfilled in the U.S. Royed and Borrelli discovered that in some policy areas, a particular party would have a clear advantage over its opponent in terms of getting its pledges fulfilled; the Democrats had a clear advantage with regard to taxes, and spending/deficit, while the Republicans dominated transport pledges. They also found that control of more institutions contributed to the greater fulfilment of economic policy pledges. Control of the presidency alone could not guarantee any better chances of success for the party’s pledges except when it also controls the Senate or House of Representatives. They also suggest a number of other factors which they suggest may assist a party in getting its pledges redeemed; the type of personal presidential ideology and leadership skills that a president possesses, the realism or feasibility of the commitments themselves and the economic situation prevailing.

Pomper and Lederman (1980, 161-6) discerned that for the first two decades of their study of the U.S., more than 50% of the pledges fulfilled were enacted by direct congressional or executive action, while for the 1970s, only 30% were met this way. Fulfilment of pledges in this latter decade was more often via similar action, i.e. not the exact action specified in the pledge. Pledges were also more likely to be fulfilled where partisan agreement in the platforms existed. In fact, even that party not controlling the presidency was found to redeem over half its pledges where such bi-partisan agreement was present. Apart from the elections of 1944 and 1968, the pledges of the presidential party were more likely to be found redeemed than those of the out-party, the party not holding the presidency, a trend that grew weaker into the 1970s. Policy areas could also be differentiated according to redemption rates. In the 1944-66 period, pledge redemption was lowest in the policy areas of labour, government and civil rights, even where bi-partisan accord was present, while in the 1970s, only labour policy persisted as a low redemption policy area. While the party in the White House seemed to have a general advantage in getting pledges redeemed, by the 1970s, the obverse was the case with regard to a number of specific policy areas, defence and agriculture, with the out-party’s record of fulfilment being better.

## Greece

Kalogeropoulou (1989) found that P.A.S.O.K. translated the vast majority of its manifesto appeals into Government programme appeals, the economy proving dominant in both documents. In those 49 cases where manifesto appeals did not make it as far as the programme for government, she found that 32 were discernible by measures of government output anyway. She estimated that P.A.S.O.K. in the years 1981-1985, fulfilled 70.5% of their pledges given in the manifesto and 74.1% of the pledges contained in the government programme (Kalogeropoulou 1989, 297). Reasoning that because the redemption figures for the two documents are so similar, and incorporation in the government programme is not a necessity for a manifesto pledge to appear as an output of government, Kalogeropoulou proceeds with her analysis on the basis of manifestos alone. Ranking the sections of the manifesto by percentages of pledges redeemed, she found that 78.1% of economic pledges were redeemed, 76.9% of the socialist programme pledges, the lowest category, "Instruments of Change", still having 47.8% of its pledges fulfilled (Kalogeropoulou 1989, 295-6). 16.8% of pledges were deemed not implemented and a further 9.4% as ambiguous. She found that there was a higher probability that pledges in the manifesto that were duplicated by the Government Programme would be implemented, on the basis of evidence from 1981-85 (Kalogeropoulou 1989, 297).

### **2.3.5 The Programme-to-Policy Linkage – Multi-Party systems**

#### The Netherlands

With a number of exceptions, and using a couple of different methods, Thomson (1999, 200) found that parties that gained control of government office were more likely to enact their own programme pledges than those of parties which took to the opposition benches. However those parties that went on to form coalition governments in the Netherlands were less likely to enact as many pledges as those parties that formed single party administrations in the United Kingdom (Thomson 1999, 202). A number of other factors were seen to be significant in getting manifesto pledges in the Netherlands redeemed: control of the relevant ministerial portfolio, the pledge's inclusion in the government agreement, where the pledge was the subject of consensus

between governing and opposition parties and finally, where the pledge's content related to maintaining the status quo rather than to change (Thomson 1999, 204-8).

Drawing together these findings, it is clear that the programme-to-policy link operates to differing degrees across countries and parties within those countries. Clearly, cross-national institutional differences are not the only explanation behind variations in pledge fulfilment. For example, Royed (1996, 77) found that the Conservative Party in the U.K. fulfilled a greater percentage of their pledges than did the Republicans in the U.S. over the same time period. She explains this with reference to the existence of divided government in the U.S., under the Reagan administration, where Congress was controlled by the Democrats. However Royed and Borrelli (1999, 121) found stark differences in the ability of the two national American parties to get pledges in different policy areas redeemed. It is also clear from Thomson's work (1999) that for a party to get its manifesto pledges redeemed in a multi-party system, in the Netherlands at the very least, it helps to have some access to systemic resources; portfolios, the government agreement and the like.

### **2.3.6 Criticisms of Pledge Studies**

Pledge studies have been faulted on a number of fronts. Individually, each has its limitations. The Pomper and Lederman study, for example, suffers from having a "broad scope (all policy areas)", and "huge timespan" which results in "a lack of attention to policy substance and to causes of variation in relative party pledge fulfilment" (Royed and Borrelli 1999, 117-9). Rose (1984), Pomper and Lederman (1980) and others could also be criticised for failing to differentiate between intrinsically important pledges and their more mundane brethren, as was discussed in the previous section (Kalogeropoulou 1989, 292).

Thomson (1999, 36) criticises the Rose (1984), Rallings (1987), Kalogeropoulou (1989) and Royed (1992) studies of European states on the grounds that, on one particular point, they do not constitute tests of the operation of a party mandate (by which he is referring to the programme-to-policy linkage in which government parties' manifestos dominate policy more than opposition parties'). In each of the above studies, the authors claim varying but strong relationships between pledges contained in the party manifesto and the subsequent government policy of that party. However, these authors, as Thomson points out, fail to check that there isn't also a high congruence between the policies of the subsequent opposition parties and government policy. For the operation of a mandate to even be suggested, it must be shown that the

policies of the government party are more likely to be redeemed in government policy than those of parties not in government (see requirement 4, Section 2.1).

As a whole, however, pledge studies fall foul of the criticism that they concentrate too much on the specific, looking only at promises that fit easily into the investigators' coding schemes. Ideally all those statements which may be unambiguously interpreted as statements of parties' intentions should be included in the studies, not just those whose vocabulary conforms to that envisaged in the coding scheme. Despite a tendency towards over-specificity and hardness in the identification of pledges in the studies, criticisms also centre on the fact that nearly all of the writers in this area devised their own definitions of the specificity and/or hardness of the pledge and of its fulfilment (Royed 1996, 51). As was shown in the review of these studies, this can make cross-study comparisons awkward and inexact. By and large, however, while the definitions of both pledge and fulfilment may deviate, many of the findings are so uniform across countries that we cannot fail to accept that variations in definition amount merely to tweaking the numbers of pledges found in different categories or classifications, and not to changing common patterns in pledges and their fulfilment.

Budge (1999) questions the concentration of pledge studies on pledges as *policy*. Noting a dearth of action pledges in manifestos, he wonders at the length of policy discussions in manifestos and suggests that too much of the manifesto is ignored using the pledge approach. He asserts that "it seems most plausible initially to take the document at face-value as what the party says it is – a complete statement of policy for the next term of office – not subjectively picking out bits here and there as constituting their 'real' preferences" (Budge 1999, 7 – emphasis added by cited author). The counter-argument of course is simple. Take the following few sentences –

Being prepared to govern may involve shunning the easy way. Our actions will be taken in the national interest: not designed purely to please any one group or based on short-term expediency (Fine Gael 1981).

The problems that really matter multiply and intensify. But there is no national leadership to guide us through this crisis. There is no sense of national purpose. Instead the nation's mood is one of disillusionment, almost despair (The Labour Party 1981)

Three things are clear about Fianna Fáil: they do not recognise the validity of democratic debate, but are an increasingly arrogant government; they have failed

to understand and profit from the creative forces now at work in Irish politics as a result of Fine Gael's New Politics; they cannot be trusted to act properly, consistently or imaginatively in the interests of the Irish people (Fine Gael 1989).

None of these sentences, or even if split into quasi-sentences as the MRG does, give a clear indication of what exactly the speech-writers' parties will do if elected. These sentences are really empty of action or indeed of defining image. There is an "empty" category in the MRG scheme but the "general rule is that sentences should be coded if at all possible" (Volkens 2002, 8). On average between 1977 and 1997, marginally greater than 1% of all quasi-sentences were uncoded for Ireland. In fact for 13 manifestos over the period, all quasi-sentences were coded. The problem here is that sentences of little substance may be pushed by coding procedure into a category of some substance (Budge et al 2001, CD-ROM – Ireland). This will result in the variables generated reporting what is in effect a *diluted* version of party policy, making it less likely that any statistical analyses will produce meaningful results.

A final consideration with regard to pledge studies relates to measures of fulfilment. As Pomper and Lederman (1980, 167) pose – "What does this degree of fulfilment indicate? Is it significant that two-thirds or three-fourths of all pledges are kept in some way? Or is it more significant that over a quarter to a third of all pledges are not redeemed?" The point of the pledge exercise is rather more to look at relative patterns in the types of promises made and then those fulfilled according to the circumstances of government, than to enumerate the percentage fulfilled. Pledge studies are only really meaningful if they are comparative. However, as illustrated earlier in "Criticisms of Pledge Studies", difficulties of comparison abound, whether for reasons of definition or measures of redemption.

#### **2.4 A Hybrid study – Saliency and Pledge**

Stokes (2001, 22) is essentially concerned with explaining why Latin American politicians violate their pre-election commitments, whether this is driven by a desire to do their best for their constituents or whether it is driven by the desire to reap benefits from office, which are against the interests of the public that put them there. In order to identify which presidents switched economic policies from campaign to office, she selects 44 Latin American Presidential elections and codes their campaign pronouncements, as measured by newspapers, speeches and manifestos, as "efficiency-

oriented, security-oriented or too vague to create any expectations as to the direction of future policy” (Stokes 2001, 28). “Efficiency-oriented” policy statements are those that support greater market competition whilst “security-oriented” statements denote support for greater state intervention in the policy area (Stokes 2001, 2). To test for their fulfilment, she interviewed a number of government officials but largely relied on secondary sources. She discerned that, where a pronouncement had been clear at the outset (ie, either efficiency or security-oriented), c.69% of presidents held true in terms of output (Stokes 2001, 27), while the remaining 31% switched focus from security to efficiency. Her explanation for such switches in Latin America suggests the switches occur because a President wants to remain in office (thereby campaigning on a security-oriented platform) yet needs to appease markets once in office (thereby switching to efficiency-oriented actions) (Stokes 2001, 93). It is suggested that, where parties are weak, pronouncements may be more likely to be at odds with later actions. Voter punishment of the presidents who switched policies is only unevenly apparent, but by and large politicians who remained faithful to their pre-campaign announcements were less likely to lose votes at the subsequent election than “switchers” (Stokes 2001, 151-2 & 165).

Stokes’ study tends to differ in three respects from the saliency and pledge studies discussed earlier. Firstly, there is no clear identification of either units of emphasis or pledges in the study. Rather, she relies on a categorisation of economic policies into efficiency-related or security-oriented or neither. Secondly, as her number of cases is just 44, this is a qualitative study in which judging campaign policy fulfilment is more directly related to perception and the media than in the other two types of study. However, as her focus is really on identifying and explaining those cases where politicians did not do what their campaigns indicated they would, the methodology serves the purpose well. Finally, she does what none of the other studies did, which is to look at whether or not parties deviating from their pre-election pronouncements get punished by voters or not.

## **2.5 Conclusion**

Tests of the programme-to-policy linkage using saliency measures focus on the weight given to broad categories of policy. Some authors, such as Kavanagh (1981) and Finer (1975b) support a conception of party competition in which voters base the direction of their ballots on their perceptions of what the parties stand broadly for. In making such

a decision, long-standing perceptions of the party's ideologies will play a big role. For others of the saliency school (such as Hofferbert and Budge 1990 and Klingemann, Hofferbert and Budge 1994) it is because the parties themselves compete for those votes on the basis of broad policy appeals, that saliency measures are the appropriate test of mandate theory. By contrast, students of the pledge approach concentrate on very specific references to policy, on the basis that promises constitute the only true policy intent in manifestos, for which parties may be held accountable. The pledge approach, as we shall see in the ensuing chapters, is particularly apposite where manifestos perform a greater role than just as campaign fodder, in other words, when they are used in deliberations for the formation of government. Despite differences in their conceptions and measurement of party competition, however, some similarities between tests made and findings drawn may be identified from the three sets of studies.

In the introduction to this chapter I stated that for the connection to be shown between voter choice, party pledges and government performance (as provided by the partisan conception of representative democracy but with the added rationale for government faithfulness to pre-election party pledges coming from Downs), we needed more than just evidence of a programme-to-policy linkage. I identified seven specific requirements for such a test (detailed again in Table 2.1 below).

**Table 2.1** Partisan Effect Test Requirements using the Programme-to-Policy Linkage

Requirements
parties may be differentiated according to policy
voters are aware of these different policies,
voters cast their ballots on the basis of these different policy agendas on offer
policy promises of government parties are more likely to be redeemed than those of the opposition
parties getting into government generally redeem their policy promises
when parties do not remain faithful to their pre-election promises, the voters punish them at the following election
Actions promoted in manifestos account for the vast majority of later government actions.

Few programme-to-policy linkage studies of both the pledge and saliency variety have not set out specifically to show that parties have a differential impact on public policy. It is clearly crucial for the argument that party leaderships will remain faithful to their manifestos over their term in office that it can be shown that they are afraid of voter punishment for non-compliance with their promises, that is, unless it is more valid to assume that they are motivated by honour or policy. However for this faithfulness to translate into *redeeming a mandate*, it must also be shown that voters are sufficiently aware of and concerned about policy for them to reward or punish parties



for such consistency. If voters are clearly ignorant of and apathetic towards policy choices, then it should not be expected that they would vote on this basis. Therefore party leaderships have little to fear by ignoring pre-election promises.

Why do tests of the programme-to-policy linkage generally not deal with the question of whether the general public is aware of policy differences between the parties, and whether they vote on the basis of such policy differences? In one instance, no recent opinion polls had been taken which would indicate the importance of various issue areas to the electorate (Kalogeropoulou 1989, 292). In the majority of studies, voter awareness of policy differences between the parties, or the determinants of their votes, is simply assumed. The idea in these is simply to check programme-to-policy congruence, within the context of the broader thesis that it is through such congruence that representative democracy is seen by many to operate.

By and large, where it was tested for, the parties in government were shown to have an advantage over the opposition parties in terms of pledge redemption, although in Britain, France and Sweden in one study, other models than the “mandate model” were shown to be better predictors of government action (Klingemann, Hofferbert and Budge 1994, 261).

Parties that get into government have generally been shown by different versions of pledge analysis to be relatively faithful to their pre-elections promises – certainly on average more faithful than not.

In the one study that looked at voter punishment of errant parties, it was found that punishment did not uniformly occur where parties had deviated from their pre-election pronouncements, but that presidents who did switch policies mid-term were more likely to be punished electorally than presidents who had remained faithful (Stokes 2001, 151-2 & 165). Thomson (1999, 65) has pointed out that what matters for pledges to be redeemed is the *party perception* of such a threat of punishment and not its reality. Obviously, though, without any evidence whatsoever of voter interest in pledges or their redemption over time, it might be expected that that party perception of the threat of punishment for non-redemption of pledges would be very low and therefore that few pledges would be redeemed.

Finally, do manifestos anticipate government action or is most government action unrelated to manifestos? Evidence from Rose (1984) suggests the latter for the U.K. He claims that the more than 75% of all of the legislation that a government produces is derivative of the ongoing processes of the civil service rather than the manifesto (Rose 1984, 70).

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## Endnotes

1 It should be noted that Sullivan and O'Connor (1972) are looking at the popular control of policy as mediated by candidates for and incumbents of the U.S. House of Representatives as opposed to political parties per se.

2 Those categories for which pro and con divisions were included are as follows; Foreign special relationships: Positive, Negative; Military: Positive, Negative; Internationalism: Positive, Negative; European Community: Positive, Negative; Constitutionalism: Positive, Negative; Decentralisation Positive, Negative; Free Enterprise – Controlled Economy; Keynesian Demand Management – Economic Orthodoxy; Protectionism: Positive, Negative; Productivity – Environmental Protection; Social services Expansion: Positive, Negative; Education: Pro- expansion, Anti- Expansion; Defence of National way of life; Positive, Negative; Traditional Morality: Positive, Negative; Multiculturalism: Positive, Negative; Labour Groups: Positive, Negative. Source of coupling: Budge 1999, Table 7.

**CHAPTER 3**  
**THE FIRST THREE REQUIREMENTS FOR A TEST OF PARTISAN**  
**THEORY**

**3.1 Introduction**

This chapter is structured in such a way as to test for the existence in Ireland of the first three conditions of the partisan theory of democracy using the programme-to-policy linkage (See Table 3.1).

**Table 3.1** Partisan Effect Test Requirements using the Programme-to-Policy Linkage

Requirements
parties may be differentiated according to policy
voters are aware of these different policies,
voters cast their ballots on the basis of these different policy agendas on offer
policy promises of government parties are more likely to be redeemed than those of the opposition
parties getting into government generally redeem their policy promises
where parties do not remain faithful to their pre-election promises, the voters punish them at the following election
actions promoted in manifestos account for the vast majority of later government actions

In the first section of the chapter, it asks – Do the parties present the voters with any real policy choice? This is followed up by an attempt to answer the question – Do voters perceive these policy differences between the parties? In the third section, I seek to establish whether or not Irish voters are motivated by policy and party above candidate, when making their electoral choices.

**3.2 Do the Irish Parties Offer Policy Choice?**

Mary-Clare O’Sullivan (2002, 287), conducting interviews with Irish TDs (members of the Dáil) found that c.18% of TDs claimed that their primary goal on entering politics was to have an impact on particular policies. Laver and Hunt (1992, 71-2 and 123) conducted

a survey of 36 specialists in Irish politics in 1992 and asked them to rate the extent to which politicians valued cabinet portfolios as rewards of office or as a means to affect policy. They found that on a scale of payoffs from one to nine, where one was “policy” and nine was “office”, the experts scored the Irish politicians at 6.56 with a standard deviation of 1.69 (Laver and Hunt 1992, 214). A similar exercise was performed for 17 other systems, with politicians in only three other countries, Japan, Italy and Greece, being less interested in policy than those in Ireland (See Table 3.2). Interestingly, in the Netherlands, the only other country in which coalition government is the norm *and* for which a study of pledge fulfilment has been conducted, politicians were ranked third highest, of those in all countries studied, in valuing policy over office.

**Table 3.2** Cabinet Portfolios as Policy Payoffs (1) or Office Payoffs (2)

Country	Mean Scores	Country	Mean Scores
Norway	2.75	Australia	5.81
Sweden	2.84	Portugal	5.86
Netherlands	3.20	Britain	5.94
Denmark	3.67	Belgium	6.00
Germany	4.53	Iceland	6.00
Finland	4.64	France	6.07
Spain	4.75	Austria	6.15
Luxembourg	5.00	Israel	6.44
New Zealand	5.00	Ireland	6.56
Canada	5.32	Japan	6.60
Malta	5.43	Italy	7.75
USA	5.47	Greece	8.00

*Source: Laver and Hunt 1992, 71, Table 4.1.*

The Irish specialists were also then asked to rate the leaders of each of the Irish parties on a twenty point scale according to the following question; “Forced to make a choice, would party leaders give up policy objectives in order to get into government, or would they sacrifice a place in the government in order to maintain policy objectives?” Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael, the Progressive Democrats and Labour Party were all rated as balancing office and policy, whilst the strongly left-wing parties of the Workers’ Party, Sinn Féin and the Democratic Socialist Party (DSP) were all rated as being more interested in policy than office.

That the larger parties were not primarily policy-oriented is a contention backed up by interview evidence gleaned from the writers of their manifestos in 1997 (Garry and

Mansergh 1999). Their unanimous claim was that, up until the mid-1980s, manifesto creation was done on an ad hoc basis. As one writer described it – “when the election was called it was a case of ‘Oh God, we’ve no manifesto!’ and someone scrambled one together almost overnight” (Garry and Mansergh 1999, 84). There were no national party conventions called to allow members to have a last-minute policy input, and few parliamentary members outside the Cabinet were consulted. As Carty (1988, 227) put it – “neither of the major parties has the capacity to develop and discuss policy or programme in any detailed way, nor is there much internal demand that they do so.” O’Halpin (1992, 168) contends that much of what Irish parties do once in office is largely reactive anyway whatever the pledges contained in their party manifestos. Once in government, managing existing policy areas rather than implementing new policies tends to take up much of a minister’s time. Laver and Hunt (1992, 74) concluded that, by and large, the mainstream parties in the vast proportion of countries studied are not driven by “an intrinsic desire to influence policy” but rather use policy as a means of getting into office.

By all accounts, this is no longer wholly the case in Ireland. Each manifesto writer in 1997 claimed that party policy formulation is a serious process, worked on throughout the period between elections, whether the party is in office or opposition, with position papers on the different policy areas being published at intervals. Of course, in the vast majority of party cases, policy development is still done with an eye on trying to get into government next time around. To that end, the publication of these papers accelerates as the election draws closer (Garry and Mansergh 1999, 84).

Politicians from the Irish political parties use manifestos to give their policies credibility (Garry and Mansergh 1999, 83). If a policy is written down, they may assume it is seen to be less ephemeral than if just bandied about by word of mouth in the public arena. A politician will resort to his/her manifesto as a prop, either using it to demonstrate that the party is in accord with what he or she is saying or to give a policy weight. Of course, an individual politician may also find the manifesto useful in helping to disown responsibility for a particular promise that sits uncomfortably with his/her constituents. Manifestos are perhaps most useful to politicians, in particular the leaderships of political parties, in the context of post-election coalition bargaining. Where no party wins an election outright or is willing to govern alone as a minority administration, some coalition of parties will have to govern. Which combination of parties forms the administration is a matter of which sets of parties can provide their prospective partners with the most mutually desirable deals. These deals tend to revolve around two issues: the distribution of portfolios and the content of the programme for government, the policy agenda for the administration. All of the manifesto writers in the 1997 Irish election agreed that the foundations for and content of the programme for government are drawn from the

respective partners' manifestos. The success or failure of a negotiating party to the agreement is judged according to how much of their manifesto, and which policy areas, get into the programme for government. Once in government the manifesto will still play a role however. It will still be in each constituent party's interests to get more of their pre-electoral policies implemented than the other – whether those policies were or were not included in the government programme. It is clear that whatever policies have made it into the manifestos, particularly in more recent times, have been inserted following a great deal of deliberation and consideration.

Laver and Budge (1992, 43) declare that “the lack of a strong left-right dimension and the role of traditional loyalties in determining patterns of party support have meant that intense ideological competition has rarely been presented as the basic motivation of Irish politicians.” “Traditional loyalties”, so-called, date back to the early years after Independence. The split in Sinn Féin in the 1920s over whether or not to accept the Treaty of Independence, culminated in the formation of two parties, Fianna Fáil, which had been the anti-Treaty faction and Fine Gael, the pro-Treaty faction. The Labour Party, whose origins predate both of these other parties, failed to take up a party position on the issue of the acceptance or rejection of the Treaty. The nationalist cleavage, it is claimed, has permeated Irish politics up to the present day, and has led to the diminution of the importance of the more common European division between left and right-wing economics. Typically when criticised for providing little policy choice, the Irish system is implicitly or explicitly being compared to our European neighbours in party family terms or left-right economic policies. However that the party system produces policies that are relatively consensual (Mair 1999, 147) is partly a reflection of the consensual nature of Irish society and the absence of any major class divide. As Mair (1999, 129) observes, an average of c.80% of the vote in Dáil elections in the 1980s and 1990s went to parties of the centre-right as against an average of c.40% for all of the other West European countries.

Laver and Higgins (1986, 183) explain that “on the face of it, [...] there are three dimensions of very modest policy difference between the two big parties, each of which relates more to image than to reality. On these dimensions, Fianna Fáil tends to be portrayed as more republican, more Keynesian and more socially conservative than Fine Gael.” Labour, the third largest party, on the other hand, is “a social democratic party”, characterised by more Keynesian policies and more of a socially reformist zeal than Fianna Fáil would ever entertain. The authors contend that what differentiates Labour the most from the other parties is not its policy stances per se “but the much more intense motivation at certain levels in the party towards the implementation of certain policies as opposed to the simple gaining of power. [...]”, (although this is not evidenced at an aggregate level in the Laver and Hunt analysis (1992)).

“Policy difference” between parties may be divided up into two separate ideas. The first is policy emphasis, the amount of time or document space devoted to various policy areas. Garry and Mansergh (1999, 95-6), studying the emphases placed on different policy concerns by the different parties in their 1997 General Election manifestos, found that for Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael and the Progressive Democrats, the policy category that was most emphasised was the “Economy”, each party devoting over a quarter of its manifesto to this domain. For the Labour Party and Democratic Left, concern for “Welfare (ie, the welfare state) and Quality of Life” predominated in their manifestos but, for both, the economy came a close second. An expert survey conducted in 1997 by Laver (1998, 3) supports the findings that the economy is an important area of policy emphasis for each party but also finds that, for this particular election, both the issues of Northern Ireland and European policy were strongly salient. Taking the pledges identified for this thesis by party over the period 1977-1997, and categorising them according to the seven broad MRG categories (External Relations, Freedom and Democracy, Political System, Economy, Welfare and Quality of Life, Fabric of Society and Social Groups – Budge et al. 2001, Appendix), the importance of the economy and quality of life issues for most of the parties is also apparent (See Table 3.3).

**Table 3.3** Pledge Concentration by Issue Area by Irish Party 1977-1997

	FF	FG	Lab	PDs	WP	DL	NC	GP
External relations	1.6	2.9	2.6	3.5	3.2	3.1	0.0	6.5
Freedom and Democracy	1.8	3.6	8.1	7.5	4.1	3.1	7.9	10.8
Political System	8.3	13.4	9.0	16.0	10.4	6.3	2.6	14.0
Economy	35.2	30.6	32.7	25.0	26.2	25.0	31.6	8.6
Welfare and Quality of Life	28.1	22.1	26.3	21.0	34.8	42.2	42.1	39.8
Fabric of Society	12.8	9.2	10.7	14.0	8.6	9.4	7.9	12.9
Social Groups	12.1	18.1	10.5	13.0	12.7	10.9	7.9	7.5

The second interpretation of “policy difference” is policy position, the particular stance taken by a party on a particular issue, for example, whether in favour of increasing residential property tax or decreasing it. Laver’s expert survey (1998, 6) documents that on eight policy scales, ranging from 1-20, in five cases, there was a clear 10-point differential between the two parties at the furthest extremes. On foreign policy, for example, the scale defined as “Promote more distant relationship with NATO and WEU (low) *versus* Promote closer relationship with NATO and WEU (high)”, with “low” and “high” referring to points on the 1-20 scale, the parties were clearly distinguishable in their positions (Laver 1998, 9). The smaller less-established parties of Sinn Féin, the Green Party and Democratic Left were all clearly against closer ties with these two organisations whilst the larger four – The Labour Party, Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael and the Progressive

Democrats – ranged from being neutral on the issue to being very much in favour of a closer relationship (Laver 1998, 6). On the Northern Ireland scale, “Oppose permanent British presence in Northern Ireland (low) versus Defend permanent British presence in Northern Ireland (high)”, Sinn Féin and Fianna Fáil emerged as strongly Republican, while most of the other parties took up fairly centrist positions (Laver 1998, 6&9). Focussing on two key policy dimensions, economic policy and Northern Ireland, Laver (1998, 6) found that the parties’ positions on these two dimensions across elections were fairly stable. Garry and Mansergh (1999, 101), deriving party policy positions from their content analysis of Irish manifestos 1948-1997, corroborate Laver’s (1998, 6) line up of the larger Irish parties positions from economic left-right in the following order: Labour, FF, FG and the PDs.

What emerges from this section is a picture of party policy competition in Ireland driven largely by the parties’ desires to gain access to government office rather than any inherent commitments to particular policy prescriptions. Whether measured in terms of the relative concentration of pledges across issue areas, the relative saliency of various dimensions for the parties or expert surveys, however, this competition has resulted in discernible policy differences between the parties.

### **3.3 Does the General Public Perceive these Policy Differences?**

Denver and Hands (1992, 176) contend that for an issue or issues to exert an influence on the voting behaviour of electors, two requirements must be met. The first is that voters must be shown to hold opinions on certain issues and to regard them as important. The second is that voters must be able to perceive party differences on these issues, “with the elector judging the relative chance of achieving certain values if one or if the other comes to power.”

#### **3.3.1 Do Voters Hold Opinions on Issues and are these Issues Salient to Them?**

Looking at these stipulations in order; do voters hold opinions on policies or issues at election time? When asked in the run-up to different elections to say what they thought the main issue(s) that parties should fight on, the responses did indicate that some issues were important to a large minority of people at the very least. Perceptions of what exactly



comprised the set of important issues were not consistent over the years (Sinnott 1995, 169-180). In 1987, when asked what the most important issue at the election was, unemployment was proffered by more people than taxation, the reduction of government spending and other issues. In that year, when asked how important unemployment was to them, 97% of respondents said “very important”, 3% fairly important and no-one had no opinion, or thought it was unimportant to some degree or another.<sup>1</sup> In 1989, health policy was deemed the most important concern, followed by unemployment and taxation, whilst in 1992, the order was unemployment, tax and health. About 86% of people surveyed felt health cuts to be very important in 1989, and 96% felt unemployment was very important in 1992.<sup>2</sup> In 1997, interviewees were prompted to suggest what they believed to be the main issues (as opposed to single issue of earlier surveys) that the parties should fight on at the election.<sup>3</sup> At this election it was crime, law and order and justice which were mentioned most (41% of respondents), with unemployment coming a close second (40%), followed by drugs (22%). By 2002, the single most important issue to emerge from a survey, where again people were asked about the most important issues that would influence their vote at the forthcoming election, was the health service and hospitals, with crime, law and order and drugs following closely (Garry et al. 2003, 126).

We can say that unemployment has been ranked as the first or second most important issue at all elections 1977-1997 and tax has consistently ranked highly in recent years. Sinnott (1995, 180) cautions however that “the evidence suggests that a generalised assessment of the parties’ performance on the economy may have been more important than precise preferences on particular economic issues.” In other words, it may be the case that voters cast their ballots not on the basis of exact policy positions but rather on each party’s perceived competence to handle issues that might arise within particular policy areas. These two possible interpretations unfortunately cannot be separated using this data, but will be discussed in Chapter 10.

### **3.3.2 Do Voters Perceive Party Differences on Salient Issues?**

Going back to Denver and Hands’ (1992) second requirement for issue voting, do voters actually perceive party differences on the issues that they feel to be important? Survey data from the 2002 election, analysed by Garry et al (2003, 133) certainly suggests that some parties benefit more from the saliency of particular issue areas than do others. For example, at that election, c.52% of those who stated that the management of the economy was an important determinant of their vote, voted for Fianna Fáil. Another c.18% voted

for Fine Gael, c.11% for Labour, and for each of the other parties, less than 6%. Similarly, c.34% of those who viewed honesty as important voted Fine Gael, as compared with c.24% for Fianna Fáil and c.15% for Labour. Support for Labour was indicated where health and housing were viewed as salient, whilst 30% of those who mentioned the environment voted Green Party (c.3% of those polled). Clearly, a strong distinction between the different parties on some issues is perceived by the voters.

A second approach to testing for the perception of different party positions on issues can be drawn from expert surveys. Laver's expert survey published in 1998, referred to in Section 3.2, shows that the Irish parties' positions may be differentiated on the eight most salient policy scales discerned for the election. Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael and the Progressive Democrats are all judged to be more right-wing with regard to economic policy, more proactive vis-à-vis foreign policy, more growth-oriented than environmentally-conscious and more pro-European than any of the other parties (Laver 1998, 4). Regarding social values, Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael and Sinn Féin cluster together as conservatives while the others are judged to be liberal. Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael and the Progressive Democrats are more against decentralisation, Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael more against increasing public access to freedom of information and Fine Gael, the Progressive Democrats and Democratic Left more in favour of a continuing British presence in Northern Ireland than the others. It is not my intention to claim that just because the experts can *measure* in some sense the differences, real or unreal, between the parties that therefore the general public must also see these same differences. Rather, it is assumed that the experts did not pull their opinions out of thin air and that there are degrees of overlapping consensus between experts and the general public on the broad policy positions of the parties – that most people will see the Progressive Democrats to the right of all of the other parties on economic issues and Democratic Left and Labour to the left. The *experts*, 48 political scientists largely working in Ireland, may not necessarily be experts on party policy. Further, they are not inured against the popular media portrayals of and slants on the Irish political parties (Mair 2001, 25).

Can the Voter Judge “the Relative Chance of Achieving Certain Values if One [Party] or if the Other Comes to Power” (Denver and Hands 1992, 176)?

Denver and Hands' second claim about issue voting is that voters should be able to perceive party differences on these issues, “*with the elector judging the relative chance of achieving certain values if one or if the other comes to power.*” Is the latter a valid

assumption in the case of Irish voters? Do voters assess the relative chances of getting their various policy preferences implemented? A sample of Irish voters at the June 1997 election were given the following question. "During this election campaign, politicians of all parties have made numerous promises as to what they will do if they are elected. Do you personally believe that our politicians, if elected, will deliver on the promises they made during the election campaign or not?" Only 21% believed that they would deliver, a percentage repeated when the same question was asked again at the 2002 election.<sup>4</sup> The most sceptical among the interviewees in 1997 were those voters intending to vote for the Green Party, only 3% of whom believed the party elected would be faithful to their electoral pledges. Presumably, these respondents had already discounted the chances of the Green Party gaining access to government office. Those who said that they intended to vote for Fine Gael were marginally more hopeful, with c.28% of them believing the politicians next into office would redeem their pledges. Three months later interviewees were asked whether or not they felt that the newly-installed Fianna Fáil/Progressive Democrats government had delivered on its promises with regard to Sellafield, zero tolerance on crime, cabinet confidentiality, mandatory reporting of sex abuse and improved funding for local authorities.<sup>5</sup> In each case, barring that of the reporting of sex abuse, many more interviewees believed that the government had backed down on their promises than believed it had adhered to them. There are two points to make about this. Firstly, the interviewees correctly saw that the government was talking a lot about suspected child sex abuse, although the reporting that was being mooted in October 1997 was not mandatory (as had been pledged by Fianna Fáil) but rather through agreed procedures with professionals dealing with children (O'Morain, 1997). Secondly, despite the fact that the survey was carried out in October 1997, four months after the general election, and only within the first month of the Dáil being reconvened after the summer recess, the interviewees felt able to say that the government was already "backing down on pre-election promises." They were not prepared to wait potentially another four and a half years.

In 1981, when asked in a poll to "agree with the statement that people will vote for the party which makes the most promises before the next general election", 32% agreed and 14% strongly agreed.<sup>6</sup> Albeit 38% disagreed, 10% strongly disagreed and 7% had no opinion but essentially 46% of those interviewed expressed the view that the general electorate votes on the basis of promises made by the Irish political parties. Another question which respondents were asked in that 1981 survey was "Agree with the statement that the next general election should not be fought on promises." An overwhelming 82% agreed.

To sum up therefore, c.50% of those surveyed believe that people vote for the set of most salient promises made by the various parties, though they do not believe that these are good grounds for making a voting decision nor do many people generally believe that the various parties will deliver should they get into government. This was not the interpretation made by Fine Gael in 1987, when the leadership decided that an appropriate pledge for insertion in its manifesto, was to get all parties' pledges costed before an election such that parties' unrealistic promises were highlighted to the public for what they were (Fine Gael 1987). It clearly seemed to be Fine Gael's contention that they, as a party, would be the least likely to suffer from institutional constraints on what they might promise. Thus their manifesto contained the following promise:

Ireland has suffered from the fact that politicians, in the short space of an election campaign, frequently make promises to the electorate that they are incapable of keeping. The result is severe disillusionment with politics and democracy on the part of the electorate.

Fine Gael believes that there should be a mechanism to check the cost, and consistency with economic reality, of promises made by parties at elections. Such a system has operated, with success, in the Netherlands since the last war.

Fine Gael will in the course of its next term in office establish an independent mechanism for undertaking validation of Party promises. This will be underpinned in a new law concerning registered political parties. There will be a consultation with Opposition parties and economic institutions on the details of such a scheme.

The party never got the chance to fulfil this promise – Fine Gael joined the ranks of the opposition benches.

In this section, I looked at the second stipulation for a test of the partisan theory of democracy. It was found that indeed Irish voters can and do hold various issues to be salient and can perceive party differences on many of these issues. What has gone before, however, tells us little about the extent to which voters rate the different parties as better or worse in terms of the redemption of their manifestos. A generalised assessment would clearly say that many more believe the promises of government parties will be left unfulfilled than fulfilled regardless of who holds office.

### 3.4 Does the Irish Electorate Vote on the Basis of Policy Preferences?

#### 3.4.1 The Electoral System: Militates towards Candidate-Oriented Voting?

Lijphart (1984, xiii) identified two ideal types of democracy in his book *Democracies*; Majoritarian and Consensus. He pointed to a number of features of the Irish political system that would locate Ireland towards the majoritarian end of the spectrum, the other end being “consensus”. Chief among these was the fact that single party governments or minimal winning coalitions have been the norm (or minority governments in 1997-2002 case), no oversized coalitions ever having formed (Lijphart 1984, 61). Additionally, he pointed to the dominance of the Irish cabinet over the Dáil or parliament, and then the dominance of the Dáil over the second chamber, the Seanad (Lijphart 1984, 83-99). A final characteristic of majoritarian systems present in the Irish system was that of centralised and unitary government (Lijphart 1984, 178). Although many other features of majoritarian systems are absent from the Irish system, having a two-party system in which competition centres on one dimension, for example, or having a plurality electoral system, Lijphart (1984, 219) designates Ireland as a second-order majoritarian category, along with Sweden and Luxembourg. An update of this study in 1999 had shifted Ireland to being marginally more consensual than previously depicted, making it neither clearly majoritarian nor clearly consensual (Lijphart 1999, 248-55).

While Ireland may not have a plurality electoral system, it is questionable as to whether or not classifying the Single Transferable Vote system with other P.R. systems is appropriate. P.R.-S.T.V. fulfils the desideratum of a relatively high correspondence between the distribution of support for different parties in terms of votes and the distribution of subsequent Dáil seats between the parties (Constitution Review Group 1996, 52). The Report of the Constitution Review Group cites the levels of proportionality achieved in 1992 – where Fianna Fáil with 39.1% of the vote received 41% of the seats, Fine Gael with 24.5% of votes got 27.1% of seats and Labour, who won 19.3% of votes and 19.9% of seats. Katz (1984, 135), however, claims that “the defining characteristic of P.R. systems is [the] allocation of mandates based on a party’s total vote in a constituency.” S.T.V. does not conform to this characteristic as voters must choose candidates on their ballot sheets, whether or not they belong to political parties, “and at no point in an S.T.V. election do party totals ever need to be computed” (Katz 1984, 135). While voters may indeed base their choice on preferred party (indicated through the rank ordering of candidates on their ballot papers), “as is the case for all of the majority

systems, but for none of the ordinary PR systems, it is possible to conduct S.T.V. elections without parties or other combinations of candidates at all.”

S.T.V. has been targeted for criticism on precisely these grounds. Where candidates from the same party are competing in the same constituency, as is common for candidates of the larger parties, they cannot differentiate themselves according to national policy, because both must endorse the same national policy to remain within party ranks. Instead, it is suggested, running mates compete on their record or promises of constituency work, which means that if elected, they must maintain or build such a record of hard constituency work to better their chances of re-election (Carty 1981, 134). Brokerage, according to some, comes at the cost of these deputies making policy (see Carty 1981, 134; Katz 1984, 144). On the other hand, there is little hard evidence to suggest that successful candidates of the smaller parties in the Dáil, where generally only one candidate of the party per constituency is run, are any more oriented towards policy-making and away from constituency work than the candidates of the larger parties (Gallagher 1987).

### **3.4.2 Party Identification**

Carty (1981, 126) claims that, by their very nature, the national and local appeals of the parties are at odds with each other. His assertion is that the national campaign will highlight national issues, the competence of the party in government or its able leadership or its economic policy, in a bid to win over other parties’ supporters while “the local candidates, though making cross-party appeals on a friends-and-neighbours basis, [will be] more concerned with mobilising and reinforcing existing partisanship.” “Partisanship”, in this sense, should only very guardedly be assumed as meaning persisting allegiance to a party rather than a personal vote for the candidate. Katz (1984, 143) cites the Eurobarometer party identification measures, in which Ireland “consistently ranks near the bottom in partisanship” as evidence of the importance of personalism, over and above party or policy, in determining voter choice. He suggests that this is surprising as it might be expected for Ireland to have higher levels of partisanship than other West European States in that democracy has never been suspended (Converse, 1969), and the social or religious divisions necessary to make partisanship redundant do not exist (Shively, 1977). More recent surveys (1997) indicate that on average slightly more than 50% of voters feel at least “fairly strong allegiance” to one party or another, with Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael voters likely to show stronger allegiance than any of the smaller parties’ voters.<sup>7</sup>

Party identification has been defined as “an underlying affective attachment to political parties, independent of voting intention” (Newell 1992, 3). There are five main propositions associated with this model: that loyalty to a party is inherited from the family at an early age; that party identification strengthens the longer it is held; that perceptions of candidates and policies will be indirectly influenced by this loyalty; that while a voter may deviate in his short-term voting behaviour from his long-term pre-disposition for a particular party(ies), he will return to his longer-term favourite at later elections; and finally, that at elections where no short-term factors are seen to sway the electorate’s vote away from the parties that they identify with, they will vote for those parties (Newell 1992, 4-5).

Laver puts forward strong counter-evidence to Katz’s claim that party identification is not a strong motivator in the Irish context. Laver’s (1987, 123-4) research on the 1987 election indicates that voters who have a right-wing view on issues such as taxation and spending are as likely to vote for Fianna Fáil or Fine Gael as people who have left-wing views on such issues. Furthermore, both left-wing and right-wing think *their* party has the best policy on the issues, suggesting that party identification causes policy evaluation rather than vice versa. This finding suggests that party identification has an influence on Irish voters’ perceptions of which party has the policies they like the best. Mair (1995, 44) suggests however that identification with Irish parties is on the wane. Not only are the numbers identifying themselves as loyal supporters decreasing, but those who do still retain an identification with a party, identify with them less strongly than previously. In Ireland, those reporting any sense of identification with any of the parties fell from just over 72% in 1981 to just 40% in 1989, to 22.8% in 2002 (final statistic from Marsh 2003, Table 3).<sup>8</sup>

The conclusion to be drawn from Section 3.4.2 is that the Irish electoral system allows voters to cast their ballots on grounds other than party choice, and that increasingly voters do not see the purpose of their vote as being to choose their preferred party for government. By implication, if voters do not order their ballot preferences in terms of party, where available, then they are also not wholeheartedly endorsing specific party programmes. I now turn to see if there is empirical evidence to support this conclusion.

### **3.4.3 Empirical Tests of the Motivations of Irish voters**

Typically, we need to find that some voters, when deciding how to vote, are motivated by policy concerns for a test of partisan theory, as detailed in Table 3.1, to be valid. Being

motivated to vote according to partisan allegiance or preference, it could be argued, also allows for a testing of partisan theory. The argument runs that partisanship may allow for a test of partisan theory because the voter could have been motivated to form his allegiance to a particular party because of strongly-held policy views that he perceived to be best-reflected by that party over a period longer than just one election. In other words, it could be suggested that a vote for a party is endorsement of its current policy agenda as reflecting that party's ideology. As Sinnott (1995, 180) most eloquently puts it – we cannot be sure “whether particular issues determine party choice, or whether prior party choice determines issue positions.” However where it can be shown that the candidate, as an individual rather than as a representative of the party, is the motivator of choice, then testing for the operation of partisan democracy, as I have outlined (See Table 3.1), is erroneous. Parties may still feel the need to fulfil their pledges purely because they lack information about the exact motivations of voters, but if voters only care about which candidate gets in, then what we are talking about is endowing the candidates with a generalised licence to do as they see fit. In other words, we may still identify a programme-to-policy linkage but it has not been mandated by the people in any sense.

There are two methods by which the motivations of voters when casting their ballots may be estimated. The first method, permitted because of the peculiarity of the Irish electoral system, is to look at the pattern of transfers between candidates. The second is to look at mass survey results, both those based on the long-term pre-dispositions of voters to support a particular party and those based on the more short-term declarations of voting intention at specific elections. Studies applied to the Irish case using each method shall be looked at in turn, starting with those focussing on transfer patterns.

### Transfer Patterns

When an elector sets about marking his ballot in an S.T.V. election, he must make choices in terms of his rank ordering of candidates, with his most favoured candidate ranked first (assuming no strategic voting). Since 1963, the partisan status of candidates has been printed clearly beside their names on the ballot paper (Gallagher 1988, 119). The expectation would be that if party was not important in structuring voter choice, then it would be unlikely, for example, that all Fianna Fáil candidates would be ranked highest, then all Fine Gael, then all Labour and so on. Rather, such findings would suggest that voters are ordering their choices on the basis of party preference or national policy preference.



The proportion of transfers received by candidates of the same party as the transferring candidate is referred to as “internal party solidarity” (Gallagher 1978, 3). While each party candidate will urge voters on doorsteps to give him/her their first preference, most candidates will follow the party line and also cajole them into “voting the full ticket”. In other words, “voters are encouraged to award their next highest preferences to candidates of the same party as the candidate to whom they awarded their first preference. So under such conditions, a voter will select his or her preferred party, say Party A, and then rank order that party’s candidates, such that  $a_1 > a_2 > a_3$  (where ‘>’ means ‘is preferred to’)” (Kennedy 2000, 3). If voters do not follow this route, than transfers may leak to different parties’ candidates.

Gallagher (1978, 3-7) performed a study of transfer patterns for the elections between 1922 and 1977, finding that for all those cases where there was a co-partisan available to transfer to, a Fianna Fáil candidate received over 80% of the transferring Fianna Fáil candidate’s votes, a Fine Gael candidate procured about three-quarters of his co-partisan’s transfers, while a Labour candidate managed to get two thirds, on average, of his/her co-partisans transfers. Kennedy (2000) up-dated the study for the years 1987 to 1997, and found that internal party solidarity is on the wane, a finding corroborated for the 1997 election by Gallagher (1999b, 138) and corroborated from electronic voting data from the 2002 election (Laver 2003). From a high of 81% of transfers going to a co-partisan over the period 1922-1977, Fianna Fáil candidates available to receive such transfers were only able to garner, on average, 73% into the 1990s, Fine Gael only managing 65% in the 1997 General Election, while Labour candidates have slumped to receiving only 49% of their co-partisans’ transferring votes (Kennedy 2000, 8). The Progressive Democrats, a party only relevant for the period covered by the Kennedy study, found a large proportion of their candidates transferring to a co-partisan where one was available (which was not typical), such that in 1997, 63% of transfers went to a co-partisan. In the most recent election of 2002, Gallagher found that for Fianna Fáil, the intra-party transfer rate had fallen to c.63%, Fine Gael’s to c.64% and Labour’s to c.48% (Gallagher 2003, 106). This was not a finding backed up by another study of transfer patterns in 2002, performed by Laver, using the published full electronic ballots of three constituencies. In this case, he found that on average only 48.5% of Fianna Fáil first preferences would have gone to another Fianna Fáil candidate if transferred, whilst a lower average inter-party transfer rate of 40.7% was suggested for Fine Gael (Laver 2003, 25). To summarise: using data from all constituencies, but only a subset of election ballots, Gallagher (1978) and Kennedy (2000) suggest that voters cast their ballots often with preferred party or policy foremost in their minds. Using all of the ballot papers from three constituencies, Laver (2003) suggests that it is less reasonable than previously assumed

“that supporters of both Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael rank order parties before rank ordering candidates”(Kennedy 2000, 7-8). Undoubtedly, a clearer picture of intra-party voting will emerge at the next election in Ireland when all voting will be executed electronically, thereby rendering a nationwide set of full ballots.

Clearly all of the parties are experiencing a diminishing party solidarity among their voters, though some of the parties started off at less heady heights than others, e.g. the Labour Party. Instead, voters seem to be casting their ballots on some other basis than pure party allegiance. One explanation for this decline in solidaristic voting may be that candidate voting is on an upward curve (Marsh and Sinnott 1999, 152). Another explanation for this may be that in an era of multiparty government (the last single-party majority government being in 1977), voters recognise that, in all likelihood, their favoured party will have to coalesce to enter government. In such circumstances, voters might feel more willing to order the two parties' candidates in order of preference rather than preferred party candidates first and then its likely and/or preferred partners. Although this hypothesis has not been tested, there is evidence to suggest that where a party elite indicates before an election that lower preferences should be awarded to another particular party, that many voters at least follow such cues (Kennedy 2002, 290-1). This implies that voters may order candidates of that potential coalition along other lines than just party affiliation. Laver (1992, 47) suggests that where parties can persuade voters that if elected they will form a coalition with a specified other parties, there can be strong electoral payoffs. The record of success since 1977 has however shown that pre-electoral pact announcements do not always reap the rewards expected. Pre-electoral coalitions were announced explicitly in 1977, 1989 and 1997, on both early occasions losing. In 1997, all the main parties melded into two opposing coalitions, and one did form the government. However one analysis of transfer patterns does suggest that where a favourable relationship between party elites with a view to potential coalition is publicly signalled, “the proportion of transfers flowing from one party to the other is significantly greater than when relations are ‘unfavourable’” (Kennedy 2000, 292).

In summary, large numbers of Irish voters do seem to be motivated still by party preference when it comes to ordering their preferences on the ballot paper. There is some evidence to suggest that party is maybe less important as a determinant than previously. One suggestion proffered for this is that the norm of coalition government has allowed for the breaking down of the rigid pattern of voting for just the candidates of one party followed by those of another, and so on. To see if there is corroborative evidence of party/policy being a relatively strong motivator of choice for voters, I now turn to mass survey evidence.

## Mass Survey Measures

Another source of evidence for the motivations of voters may be derived from the opinion polls. I argued earlier that it is difficult to tell whether a voter chooses a party because he/she likes its policies or chooses his party and then adopts his/her policy preferences. Furthermore, question marks must also be put against voters' responses which suggest that either of choice of Taoiseach or preferred set of Ministers are what they primarily base their voting decision on, as their responses will already factor in party preference (Sinnott 1995, 169). In other words, where voting decision is professed to be based on choice of policy, Taoiseach or cabinet, it can safely be assumed that this equates to a vote on the criterion of party.

Using survey evidence cited in Sinnott, voters' responses to the question of "what is the most important criterion in making up your mind how to vote in the General Election" in the elections 1977-1992 may be condensed as follows (Sinnott 1995, 168);

**Table 3.4** Survey Findings 1977-1992 of Voter Motivations

	1977	1981	1982F	1982N	1987	1989	1992
Party Choice Indicator	47%	56%	64%	59%	62%	38%	59%
Candidate Preference	46%	42%	35%	41%	38%	56%	37%
Don't know	7%	3%	1%	0%	0%	12%	5%

Table derived from data in Sinnott 1995, 169

By and large, the responses would seem to indicate that party is a strong motivator of electoral choice. The aberrant result for 1989 may reflect both an aberrant election and the result of a change in survey question format, where "choosing a candidate who will perform well on national issues in the Dáil" was added to the usual list of options (Sinnott 1995, 169).<sup>9</sup> These options were: choosing a Taoiseach, choosing the Cabinet, choosing between party policies and choosing a TD to look after local concerns.

In 2002, a poll carried out by the IMS for the Sunday Independent indicated the motivations had shifted a little: 51% of those surveyed said they would vote on the basis of choosing a candidate for the constituency, 45% on the basis of party-choice motivations (20% said that they would vote on the basis of preferred policies, 13% on choice of Cabinet and 12% on the basis of preferred Taoiseach) and 3% didn't know how they would determine their vote.<sup>10</sup>

In conclusion to Section 3.4.3, empirical evidence from studies of transfer patterns and mass surveys of voter motivations suggest that voters are fairly evenly split between

party choice and preferred candidate as the determinant of their vote. Obviously some of those who profess to vote according to choice of party may like their preferred party best on the basis of the policy choices that they have offered in the past, and through which the voter's identification with the party grew, or on the basis of current policies. On the basis of the evidence given here, Ireland may be designated as a political system in which many voters may be inferred as caring about policy, and therefore which party gets into government, while almost as many just want to see their preferred local candidate get his seat. On these grounds, alone, it may be concluded that evidence from the Irish political system does not resoundingly support the operation of partisan democracy, as described in Section 1.1 of Chapter 1.

### **3.5 Conclusion**

In this chapter, I checked to see if the first three stipulations with regard to the test of partisan theory outlined in Table 3.1 were present in the Irish context. Differences in party positions and policy emphasis were discerned through a number of measures. The manifesto, as the aggregated set of policies that a party endorses, was shown to be important to parties for various reasons. Voters were indeed shown to hold opinions on the relative importance of various issues and, using proxies, it was also suggested that they were likely to be able to perceive party differences on the important issues, at the very least. Using two empirical, national level, measures of voter motivation, it was found that voters appeared equally concerned with choosing their preferred party and their preferred candidate. These findings are important for the tests of the programme-to-policy linkage that occur in Chapters 7, 8 and 9. If Irish voters were to be shown to be entirely unconcerned with party and policy, then their votes could only tenuously be interpreted as endowing national policy mandates through their local candidates.

Having said all of that, little belief was found that the parties would follow through and act on their policy stances. There would appear to be some incongruence between the perception of voters that parties are not likely to fulfil their promises, while parties claim that their policies are increasingly well-thought out and therefore, once in office, it should just be a matter of pushing the legislation through. In the next chapter, I shall set out my expectations regarding the factors that will impact on the ability of political parties to translate pre-election promises into action.

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## Endnotes

- 1 MRBI/3510/87 was carried out on 22/01/87 - 23/01/87 for Irish Times.
- 2 MRBI/3780/89) was carried out on 09/06/89 - 09/06/89 for Irish Times, MRBI/4090/92) was carried out on 09/11/92 - 09/11/92 for Irish Times.
- 3 MRBI/4510/97 carried out on 26/03/97 – 27/03/97 for Irish Times. The precise wording of the question was “As you probably know, there will be a General Election this year. In your opinion, what are the main issues on which the parties should fight the election campaign.”
- 4 IMS survey CMC/SOS/Id.7s-318 commissioned by the Irish Independent 03/06/97; also Millward Brown IMS Survey for the Irish Independent, prepared 14/05/2002.
- 5 IMS survey CBC/SOS/id/7S-575 25/20/97 for The Irish Independent.
- 6 MRBI/2056/81 carried out 20/03/81-27/03/81 for Fine Gael.
- 7 See IMS Surveys CMC/SOS/Id/J.7s-318 03/06/1997 for the Irish Independent, CMC/SOS/Id/J.7S-316 26/10/97 carried out for the Irish Independent, CMC/SOS/Id/J.7S-263 14/03/97 for the Irish Independent and CMC/SOS/Id/J.7S-317 29/05/97 for the Sunday Independent.
- 8 Data originally sourced from Irish National Election Study 2002.
- 9 The options for respondents to choose between were amended in 1992, to include only choosing the individual who would be beneficial for the respondent’s area, choosing the party whose policies the respondent felt closest to and choosing the party that could able stable government.
- 10 IMS Poll for Sunday Independent, 12/05/02 as cited in O’Malley, 2002.

## CHAPTER 4 MAKING AND FULFILLING PLEDGES: THE THREE MODELS

### 4.1 Introduction

I ended Chapter 2 by asserting that this thesis would deal with all seven requirements of the programme-to-policy test of the partisan theory of democracy, as outlined in Section 2.1. The first three requirements were dealt with in Chapter 3. It was found that the Irish parties could be differentiated according to policy and that voters could perceive such differences on the more salient issues at each election for which there was survey evidence. It was also found that party (and by inference, policy) and candidate were equally-important as drivers of the vote. The next two requirements of the tests imply that parties that get into government are better at redeeming their pledges than parties that, after the election, enter the opposition and, secondly, that parties, if given the opportunity, redeem their pre-election promises. In this chapter, I shall set out the factors that I believe will impact on the likelihood of these two requirements, being found in any political system, and in particular in that of Ireland.

I set up three models of this programme-to-policy linkage. The first, termed *The Baseline Model*, predicts pledge redemption for parties in government as opposed to parties that, after an election, enter the opposition benches. In this Baseline Model, I set out to test, at a generic level, whether parties compete on the basis of policy.

A political party commits to an agenda of action before an election. This agenda (manifesto) is not only an appeal to voters for their support but also a roadmap for what the party will do if and when it gets into office, or a negotiating basis for a programme for government. As such, the commitments in the manifesto should broadly reflect both the priorities of large numbers of voters and many of the realities of what a government is required to do once in office. It should therefore be expected that commitments to action (pledges) are concentrated in important areas of policy. We should expect that in multi-party systems parties will share more common positions on issues than in two-party systems. One reason for this expectation is that it might be expected that manifestos are used strategically by political parties in multi-party systems to position themselves closer to their most favoured prospective coalition colleague.

After an election, either one party on its own musters sufficient seats and/or external support to provide a viable administration, or a coalition agreement needs to be hammered out amongst a number of parties. If the latter is the case, then negotiations for the new roadmap, the programme for government, will commence. In the Baseline Model, it is expected that only the manifestos of the parties negotiating to work together in a new government will be relevant to the negotiation of the programme for government. Elements of the negotiating parties' manifestos will be inserted into this programme for government and it is anticipated that the programme for government resembles these manifestos more closely than any other non-negotiating parties' manifestos. It would not be anticipated that the political parties would see the post-electoral coalition bargaining phase as an opportunity to introduce many wholly-new pledges, although clearly some new pledges will represent compromise on various issues between the two partners.

For both types of government formation, single party and coalition, the parties that form the governments are expected to have an advantage in terms of getting their own manifesto pledges redeemed over their opposition colleagues. These parties are in control of the various arms of power – the bureaucracy, the parliament, and so on – and therefore should have little difficulty in getting their pledges through. One element that will work against the redemption of party pledges is if the government falls at a relatively early stage in the electoral cycle. The basic hypotheses of the Baseline Model are set out in Table 4.1.

**Table 4.1** Hypotheses Tested in the Baseline Model

<b>Dependent Variable:</b>	<b>Independent Variable</b>
<b>Pledge Included in Govt. Programme</b>	Negotiating Party to Agreement/Not
<b>Redemption of Pledge</b>	In Government/Not Duration of Government

The Baseline Model is a very simple model of how we might expect party pledges to get fulfilled. However it is clear that institutional, systemic and political factors will have an impact on both how likely it is that the government party's pledges are fulfilled and secondly, on how likely it is that the parties in government will cast their eyes on the opposition's policy proposals with a view to adopting some of them.

The second model, The Government Party Model, concentrates exclusively on factors that are likely to enhance the chances of government party manifesto pledges' being fulfilled. This model is tested in Chapter 8. In this model, it is anticipated that where a pledge is contained in at least two prospective coalition partners' manifestos, or at least is not the subject of contention between them, that the pledge is more likely to be inserted into the programme for government than pledges that are either not explicitly

agreed upon by the prospective partners or are explicitly the subject of disagreement. Single party administrations are anticipated to encounter fewer obstacles to manifesto pledge redemption than coalition administrations, for the obvious reason that, in such circumstances, two or more manifestos will inform government policy rather than just one. Governments which control a majority of seats in parliament are similarly expected to be able to redeem more party manifesto pledges than governments with a minority of seats, given fewer parliamentary impediments. Support for the pledge in the government programme, control of the relevant portfolio and the pledge's also being contained in one or more of the opposition parties' manifestos are also factors expected to be important to the realisation of pledges. Finally it is suggested that if the pledge is made in the area of the economy, it is more likely to be fulfilled as this issue area is typically more salient than most.

**Table 4.2** Hypotheses Tested in the Government Party Model

<b>Dependent Variable:</b>	<b>Independent Variable</b>
<b>Pledge Included in Government Programme</b>	Strong Commitment to Pledge/Not Pledge Given by More than One Coalition Partner/Not Pledge not Dissensual between Coalition Partners/ Contentious
<b>Redemption of Pledge</b>	Single Party Administration/Coalition Majority Administration/Minority Government Party Pledge Shared with Opposition Party/ Not Pledge in Issue Area of Economy/Not Pledge Supported in Government Programme Relevant Portfolio Held by Party Minister/Not Pledge Given by More than One Coalition Partner/Not Pledge Not Dissensual between Coalition Partners/ Contentious

The third and final model (Table 4.3) to be looked at concentrates exclusively on factors that might be thought to enhance the likelihood of the fulfilment of the manifesto pledges of parties that, subsequent to the election, enter the opposition. It is posited that an election pledge of an opposition party, where this is also contained in the manifesto of at least one government party, is more likely to be included in the programme for government than a pledge without such common support. An opposition party pledge which is at least not directly opposed by a pledge in a government party manifesto is also suggested as being more likely to be included in the programme for government than a pledge upon which the opposition party and at least one government party are dissensual. A third factor posited by this model as important for the inclusion of an opposition party's manifesto pledges into the government programme is whether or not that opposition



party's support is anticipated as being required in the new parliament for the passing of government legislation.

With regard to opposition party pledge redemption, five factors are posited as being important. Firstly, where a pledge has been supported in the government programme, this support is suggested as an aiding factor to its redemption, as is the opposition party pledge also being contained in the manifesto of one of the government parties, or at least not being dissensual with a pledge contained in the manifesto of one of the government parties. Where an opposition party's support is required in the new parliament, it is suggested that this endows the opposition with some bargaining power with regard to getting the government to adopt some of their pledges. Finally, I posit in the Opposition Party Model, that where the opposition is united on a pledge (i.e., at least two opposition parties have independently included the pledge in each of their manifestos), that the government is more likely to try to diffuse their stance by adopting the pledge themselves than by ignoring it.

**Table 4.3** Hypotheses Tested in the Opposition Party Model

<b>Dependent Variable:</b>	<b>Independent Variable</b>
<b>Pledge Incl. in Govt. Programme</b>	Opposition Pledge Shared with Party in Negotiations/Not Opposition Pledge Not Dissensual with Pledge of Party in Negotiations/Dissensual Prospective Minority Administration/Not
<b>Redemption of Pledge</b>	Pledge Supported in Government Programme/Not Pledge Shared with Another party in Opposition/Not Opposition Pledge Shared with Party in Government/Not Opposition Pledge Not Dissensual with Pledge of Party in Government/Dissensual Minority Administration in Office/Not

The outline of this chapter runs as follows. In Section 4.2, I discuss each of the hypotheses to be tested in the Baseline Model, as detailed in Table 4.1. In addition, I look to set the political scene that the Irish parties are operating in, in terms of the import of manifesto pledges that parties typically make, the extent to which the parties in the system are broadly in agreement on policy aims and finally the role which the programme for government plays in the Irish system. In Section 4.3, I detail the grounds for the hypotheses drawn from the Government Party Model, while in Section 4.4, I do the same for the Opposition Party Model.

## 4.2 The Baseline Model

### 4.2.1 Manifesto Content

#### Hypothesis 1: Pledges are concentrated in important areas of policy

Advocates of the saliency approach to the testing of the party mandate invariably refer to and sometimes misquote an empirical finding of Rallings (1987) in defence of their approach. His own stated finding was that “clear pledges to act in particular areas of macro-economic policy are rare”, yet this has mistakenly been taken to encompass all areas of policy, in other texts (Rallings 1987, 14). Budge and Hofferbert (1990, 112), for example, translate this statement into “pledges are usually made in peripheral policy areas.” Proponents of the saliency approach infer that pledges are poor indicators of what a party intends to do once in office, and suggest that measures of emphasis mark an improvement in that area. Rallings (1987, 5), despite the claim that “clear pledges to act in particular areas of macro-economic policy are rare” finds it “interesting that the distribution of pledges by subject is roughly equivalent to the overall distribution of themes and emphases measured in Chapters 3 and 4 [...of Budge, Robertson and Hearl, 1987]. Parties clearly feel under some obligation to make promises of action on those matters to which they have given general prominence in their election manifestos.” Evidently, while the numbers of “clear pledges” in the economic field may be scant, relative to the numbers of pledges in other policy areas, the importance of the economic policy area for parties in Britain and Canada cannot be underestimated.

In Chapter 2, studies by Thomson (1999, 102), Kalogeropoulou (1989, 292), Royed (1996, 76) and Rose (1984, 62) adopting the pledge approach were referred to, all of whom found evidence contradicting the assertions of the saliency proponents. Indeed, not only did Thomson find that pledges were made in *important* areas of policy, according to his own definition of *important*,<sup>1</sup> but also that the concentration of manifesto pledges across policy categories correlated positively with a saliency interpretation of most important policy areas, i.e., those policy areas that were most emphasised. Thomson’s finding emphatically shows that, in the Netherlands at the very least, pledges do not predominate in lesser policy areas covered by the manifestos.

For comparative purposes, I shall also test for a positive correlation between the distribution of pledges across policy themes and the distribution of emphases across manifesto policy areas, within the Irish context. There were two possible databases of

saliency scores for the Irish political parties that I could have used. The first is the well-known MRG database (see “Saliency Theory” in Chapter 2), which provides saliency scores for all of the Irish parties 1977-1997, expertly coded in the aftermath of each election. The second database to hand is the Laver and Garry codings for the Irish parties, which can provide both saliency and positional scores (2000). However in this case their published expert codes only go from 1992 to 1997, so on the grounds of availability of data, I chose to use the MRG scheme.

I coded my pledges according to most appropriate MRG category and then looked at the correlation, for each party at each election year, between the saliency of issue areas in the MRG dataset, published on CD-Rom by Budge et al. (2001), and the concentration of pledges in those categories. The version of the coding scheme on the CD-Rom is slightly amended from that described in Section 2.2, as two new economic categories, “Marxist Analysis” and “Anti-Growth Economy” were subsequently added to the 1987 coding scheme. These were only available to coders of the Irish manifestos for the elections after 1981. This will be the first of two tests of the first hypothesis.

*Test 1: There is a higher frequency of pledges in policy areas with a greater relative emphasis (Thomson 1999, 47)*

There is a second possible test of this hypothesis. Saliency indicators measure what the parties regard as the most important/most marketable issues in the election. Ideally, a measure of issue importance independent of the political parties should be used to correlate with saliency indicators, as reliance on the manifesto for evidence of issue importance in elections is less than perfect.

As an illustration of this point, take the issue of Northern Ireland. Voters in 1997 who voiced the importance of this issue in surveys were more likely to vote Fianna Fáil than any other major political party (Marsh and Sinnott 1999, 174). In spite of this, as with the other parties’ manifestos, the issue’s appearance in the Fianna Fáil manifesto has been cursory, to say the least. Measuring the importance of issues by how many lines are devoted to them in one manifesto, as in the saliency approach, would designate Northern Ireland as peripheral. But it is clear that the issue is also extremely important to Fianna Fáil and its supporters.<sup>2</sup>

One such independent measure is opinion polls eliciting the electorate’s most important issue areas by way of asking the respondents what issues they think are the most important at any particular election. I searched the Irish Opinion Poll Archive ([www.tcd.ie/Political\\_Science/cgi/](http://www.tcd.ie/Political_Science/cgi/)) for “issues”. In each of the election years 1987 to 1997, the MRBI polling company in Ireland conducted surveys for one of the leading

broad-sheet daily newspapers in Ireland, asking respondents what in their views the main issues at the election for the political parties should be.<sup>3</sup> This question was only asked from 1987 onwards so it means only applying the test to four elections.

I expect to see a strong relationship between the concentration of manifesto pledges in these issue areas evidenced in opinion polls to be important for the public and the saliency concentrations in manifestos of the same issue areas. Market research has been heavily used by both Fine Gael and Fianna Fáil since the late 1970s and has been used to “draw up campaign themes and slogans, to segment the electoral market and to facilitate constituency vote/management strategies” (Farrell 1994(b), 222). While the smaller parties do not necessarily have the same funds to conduct their own research, the polls being used in testing this hypothesis were freely available to all parties, as published in *The Irish Times*.

*Test 2: “There is a higher frequency of **important** pledges in more emphasised policy areas (derived from Thomson 1999, 47)*

Hypothesis 2: Two or more parties are less likely to promote the same issue areas in systems of single party government than in systems where multi-party government is the norm (Thomson 1999, 107)

Downs (1957) contends that parties compete to win a majority of votes by offering policy packages to voters, policy packages which accord to a greater or lesser extent with policy packages and party behaviour that has gone before. In a multi-party system, where a single-party majority government is unlikely to emerge, maximising vote share is still the primary goal of the party as the greater the vote they garner, the greater the bargaining power in negotiations to form a coalition with another party. In a two-party system with voters normally distributed along the left-right dimension, parties are hypothesised by Downs to converge on the middle ground. Movement away from each other towards the extremes is only likely when the threat of new party entrants on the ideological wings is perceived. In a multi-party system, parties may be able to locate competitors both to the left and to the right of their own positions on the left-right dimension. Movement along the dimension in either direction is likely therefore to be restricted by the fear of losing more votes than the party wins. Downs therefore hypothesised that “party ideologies and policies in multi-party systems are more sharply defined than in two-party systems” (Downs 1957, 143).

Thomson (1999, 48) suggests a further couple of reasons why parties in multi-party systems might be more direct in their confrontation and less prone to “talking past each other” than parties in a two-party system. One reason he proffers is that in multi-party systems, who gets into government is often not directly determined by the election result, but rather by what incentives can be given to and taken from potential coalition partners to cut a deal for office-sharing. As a result, parties in such a system have an eye on what sorts of policies prospective partners are promoting, and may try to manoeuvre themselves into attractive positions vis-à-vis those partners. An “attractive position vis-à-vis another partner” would entail few mutually exclusive policies, large numbers of issue areas on which broad policy agreement exists, and ideally, a few areas of policy important to each party but not to the other partner. The last is important such that each party can claim a few policy areas as their own party’s successful direction of government. The calculation by individual party leaderships as to the likely future electoral costs of any particular governmental formation, of which they became a part, would clearly rely on the scrutiny of prospective partners’ manifestos in the search for policies that are at stark variance with their own.

The idea is that manifesto writers would tend to be more strategic in their phrasing of policy intentions where participation in a coalition is likely. In attempting to woo a particular partner, a party might emphasise its common policy positions with the partner (Thomson 1999, 48), whilst also highlighting its own positions on the few sticking points with the other party’s agenda. Not only will the parties want to have concrete proposals to draw upon once the negotiations start but they may need to return to the manifesto also to reinforce the claim of the importance of the issue area to them.

While Ireland in the 1990s could be characterised as having a multi-party system, its previous incarnation was that of a two-and-a-half party system. Before 1989, Fianna Fáil would not share office with any other party, alone managing to procure an average of 46% of the national vote and somewhere close to 49% of seats in the Dáil over the period 1948-1987 (Laver and Budge 1992, 41). Up until 1977, it had managed on a number of occasions to secure an overall legislative majority. In 1986, two commentators went as far as to conclude that as Fianna Fáil would not share government with any other party, “Ireland is not really a coalition system at all” (Laver and Higgins 1986, 196).

In looking at the Irish case, therefore, we should see a tendency over time for parties “talking past each other” (Rose 1984) to diminish and for policy intentions across parties both to overlap more and, in certain issue areas, to be more confrontational, according to the rationales given by Downs (1957) and Thomson (1999). When comparing with the results from other countries, we should expect the Irish parties to be both less consensual and less confrontational than the Netherlands, as they have no recent experience of single-

party governments, yet more so than any of the two-party systems, such as the U.S. or U.K. Obviously when there are several other parties in a system, such as in Ireland, the probability that one pledge is related to no other party must be much less than in a system where the numbers of parties is lower. We should therefore expect the UK and US unrelated figure to be higher just because there are fewer parties. In this instance, I do not conduct a formal statistical test but merely compare the average percentage of Irish parties' shared pledges pre-1989 and post-1989 with the norms observed in other countries.

#### **4.2.2 Content of the Programme for Government**

Hypothesis 3: Election pledges of the parties that agree to form a government are more likely to be supported in the government agreement than those of parties that form the opposition (Thomson 1999, 115)

It has been assumed that the only sorts of pledges to be included in the government programme are those of the negotiating parties (Editorial, 2002). Formal negotiations may or may not include supporting parties. At one extreme, a minority government in the making may attempt formally to include an opposition party and/or individual deputies in its negotiations of the programme for government, thereby securing at least a modicum of support in parliament for the government's intended policies. An example of this would be the formation of the Fianna Fáil – Progressive Democrat coalition in 1997, where the support of four Independent T.D.s (members of the Dáil) was secured at the cost of spending commitments in each of their constituencies and other pledges (see Mitchell 1999). At the other extreme, no discussions may take place yet a small party may be taken by the government to give its support tacitly on a large number of policy issues. This might occur where a party is ideologically stranded on one side of the government while the rest of the opposition lies on the other side (Warwick 1994, 31). In such a scenario, the stranded party is presumably going to be more likely to support government policies than those of the opposition. The government therefore will have little need to concede policy rights to the stranded party as it can assume that the party is giving its support of its own accord.

The programme for government is often seen as an aid to getting party pledges adopted onto the government agenda (Thomson 1999, 115). Interviews conducted with

the manifesto writers of the main Irish political parties after the 1997 Irish election endorse this view (Garry and Mansergh 1999, 90-1). Those who had been involved in coalition negotiations in both that election and previous were united in the view that “manifestos are the raw material from which the government programme is drawn. A government programme, [...], is the fusion of the platforms of the coalescing parties. Indeed, if the party did not have a manifesto, it would need to invent one for the coalition bargaining stage. Manifestos can fairly be seen as simply detailed shopping lists for government. This is particularly true now that all parties are likely to be involved in post-election coalition bargaining” (Garry and Mansergh 1999, 90).

However, it may also be that the programme for government is less an intervening variable between a manifesto pledge being made and its redemption and more an opportunity for negotiating parties to introduce new pledges, as posited by Hofferbert and Klingemann’s “Government Model” (1990, 283). After all it could be the case that parties negotiating an agreement are quite glad of the chance to jettison pledges from their manifestos. Where parliamentary parties’ policies are beholden to national congresses and members have a right to insert policies into manifestos, the parliamentary representatives may be pleased to blame the loss of those pledges on their partners in negotiations (this does assume, of course, that the programme for government does not require approval by each party congress/conference). It could be the case that specific pledges are included by the party leadership in its manifesto in the sure knowledge that they can be dropped once it comes to coalition negotiations. It is also possible that various pledges of the opposition look attractive to the negotiators, for whatever reason. While a potential government that robs the policy clothes of the opposition for insertion into the programme for government runs the risk of being charged with doing so by the opposition and/or media, if the pledge is fulfilled, it is likely to remain associated with the government of the day rather than the opposition who first proposed it.

It is to be expected on the whole that negotiating parties to a coalition will pay less attention to the policy pledges of future opposition parties, even if these opposition parties are intending to be supportive of the administration, than to their own policy pledges. This is on the grounds that they are technically negotiating to become the holders of office and are likely to want to reap the gains from office themselves rather than risk having to share it with outside parties (assuming, as Downs does, that parties are purely office-seeking and not policy-instrumental). While undoubtedly the party that implements the pledge is likely to be accredited with the implementation of the pledge, the party that originally pledged the action may be seen as a better innovator, a charge that the party in government might find hard to countenance.

Hypothesis 4: Pledges contained in the programmes for government are more likely to derive from the government parties' manifestos than from opposition parties' manifestos (Hofferbert and Klingemann 1990, 283)

Programmes for government are used in many multi-party systems to set out what the government will do once it gets into office, though there are variations as to how vague or specific the commitments in these documents may be. Most of these are written after the election, with all parties to the programme aware of the other parties' recent performances and seats won. Manifestos, by contrast, are always written and published before the election day. Where the programmes are written prior to the election, they have tended to be in the stead of party manifestos (e.g. National Coalition Programme 1977). Ultimately we would expect both variations on a government programme to contain more of its constituent negotiators' pledges than pledges from the opposition. The reasons for this are both practical. The manifestos are an easy source of ideas for action at a point in which time is at a premium, i.e. when parties initially enter government. Secondly, parties going into government need to protect their reputations. While party members and the public might understand if one party out-negotiated another and got more of its pledges endorsed, one may assume that they are unlikely to understand if an opposition party's pledges (or for that matter, pledges plucked from thin air) are suddenly introduced across the board of policy areas.

In order to test this hypothesis, I identified pledges in the parties' manifestos which were consensual with pledges in the government programmes. In a number of cases, two or more parties' pledges were consensual with a pledge contained in the government programme. For example, two negotiating parties and one non-negotiating party made the same pledge to ban under-age drinking. All I want to know is whether or not government party pledges are more likely to inform the programme for government than opposition party pledges. It is immaterial which parties in the government ranks actually made the pledge.

In operational terms, where two parties negotiating the programme made the same pledge, that pledge was therefore only counted once as a source from which a pledge in the programme came. Where a non-negotiating party's pledge was consensual with that of a negotiating party, only that of the negotiating party was counted. The reason for this is that I assumed that if a government party had also made the pledge, its inclusion in the programme for government was probably more attributable to the government party's negotiating power than that on the part of the opposition party. Obviously, the same single count procedure was also applied to pledges that were shared by non-negotiating parties to the agreement.



### 4.2.3 Pledge Redemption

Hypothesis 5: “Election Pledges made by parties that enter government office after elections are more likely to be [redeemed] than those made by parties that enter the opposition after elections” (Thomson 1999, 49)

We would clearly expect that those parties that get into government are more likely to see their pledges redeemed than those of the parties filling the opposition benches. We suggest this hypothesis on the grounds of the following logic. All parliamentary parties are assumed to desire re-election with larger seat shares than their current allocation. Voters are deemed to value reliability and responsibility with regard to policy concerns. Parties’ leaderships may themselves not be oblivious to the sort of policy agenda they would like to implement. With a majority of seats (assuming proportionality), or even a minority with external support, the government has a clear road through to pledge redemption provided that the ranks of government/support do not splinter. By corollary, opposition parties should have little prospect of getting their pledges adopted by the government, unless they are pledges that are shared with a party/parties of government or have been hijacked. The latter occurrences would not be expected to be frequent.

In Ireland, the parliament’s powers vis-à-vis cabinet are weak. Parliament is envisaged in the Westminster system as having three main roles; that of appointing and dismissing governments (Articles 13.1 and 28.10 of Bunreacht na hEireann), that of making policy (Articles 15-27) and finally, scrutinising government behaviour (Gallagher 1999(a), 177). De facto, the reality is that the government makes the key decisions and informs parliament. When making laws, however, parliamentary approval is needed. The role of parliament for the opposition is reduced to an arena in which alternative ideas may be aired, and more often than not, where the *mistakes* of the government may be brought to public light. The aim of the Westminster model in policy-making is really just to use parliament as a debating arena, for virtually all government and no opposition bills get through the Dáil. Occasionally a government bill is defeated but usually only where a significant split in government ranks occurs. In 1989, the first private member’s bill for over 40 years was passed, although this procedure has been used more regularly since then (Coakley and Gallagher 1999, 188; [www.gallaghershatter.ie/legislative.html](http://www.gallaghershatter.ie/legislative.html)). Such a bill may be used purely to spur the government into action on a particular issue, as frequently these bills are taken over by the government. However, in such a role, it is unlikely to be regarded as an opposition party’s pledge redeemed unless their input has been seen to make a difference.

There are essentially five stages to the passing of a legislative bill: introduction, general debate, committee stage, report stage and finally, the formal passing of a bill through Parliament. At the third stage, the bill is examined in detail by the Dáil members of the committee (in 2003, 11 specialist T.D.s: the four/six senators may not take part at this juncture).<sup>4</sup> It is at this stage that the opposition ranks have the potential to have an input into the specifics rather than nature of the bill (Gallagher 1999(a), 188). However, the odds in the committee itself are stacked against them. Six T.D.s from the government party (ies) plus the vote of the relevant minister ensure that no amendments need be taken on board (assuming full attendance).<sup>5</sup> If by some misfortune, a bill emerged from the committee which was overtly against the wishes of the government parties, the bill may be altered at the fourth stage or defeated at the fifth in the Dáil chamber. In summary, opposition input into the formulation of a government bill is possible though unlikely to be heeded unless of minor importance.

In Ireland party discipline is usually very strong, with T.D.s rarely ever abstaining from the vote at the fifth stage (Komito 1985, ch.4). According to O'Sullivan (2002, 182), more than 99% of votes taken in the Dáil are in accordance with the party whip. The reasons for such high levels of solidaristic voting in Ireland are three (Gallagher 1999a, 179). First, the government must maintain the constant support of T.D.s to prevent them from being voted out of office given very slender parliamentary majorities; party discipline is the key to relations between government and parliament. Second it is in the self-interest of individual T.D.s to toe the party line as rebellion can harm their chances of re-selection or promotion. Third, it protects T.D.s from constituency pressures or pressures associated with interest group funding. In the case specifically of Fianna Fáil, it is also claimed that "the party has operated in a tradition of unquestioning loyalty to the leader, and a belief that discipline is the primary political virtue" (Carty 1988, 228). It may therefore be taken to be the general rule that if the government has a majority of the seats in parliament, it will get virtually all of its proposed legislation passed. By corollary, the opposition parties will get little of their own legislation passed, and are likely to have only a modicum of influence over government bills that get through. The size of that influence will depend on a multitude of factors such as the Dáil or committee turn-out on the day, the political or non-partisan nature of the bill and so on.

When it comes to statutory instruments, the opposition parties fare even worse vis-à-vis the government parties; "secondary legislation, in the form of statutory instruments, is governed by the Statutory Instruments Act 1947" (The Irish Statute Book). Statutory instruments include orders, regulations, rules, bye-laws and schemes. These instruments are not fulfilled by the Oireachtas (Houses of Parliament) "but allow persons or bodies to whom legislative power has been delegated by statute to legislate in relation to detailed

day-to-day matters arising from the operation of relevant primary legislation.” (<http://193.120.124.98/about.html>. Website of the Office of the Attorney General). Several hundred instruments are used every year but the *persons* to whom the powers are ceded in the Dáil are specified government ministers.

In summary, there is virtually no legislative constraint on governments’, in Ireland being able to do what they want. It should therefore be anticipated that the election pledges of the Irish parties entering government are redeemed more frequently than those of the parties in opposition.

That is not to say that we should not expect some opposition party pledges to be redeemed by the government of the day. Parties in government might look to an external party’s pledges when the government is in a minority position and may wish to come up with policies that the opposition will find it difficult to oppose. A second possible reason, mentioned earlier, is that, in coalition cases, the parties in government are located ideologically on either side of an opposition party/parties on a number of major dimensions so that the opposition’s pledges are a natural compromise point between the government parties. A third potential reason is that the opposition may produce a more practicable, and in some cases more popular set of policies than the party/parties in government and therefore it makes perfect sense for the government party/parties now to adopt these.

A final potential explanation rests on the idea that government action is often, by its nature, slow and ponderous, requiring a great deal of time and effort to get a momentum going. What one set of parties in government may start in motion may only be delivered upon in the next government period (Blais, Blake and Dion 1993, 42). Even if comprising an entirely new set of parties, the next government may decide to follow through on half-passed legislation or spending commitments made by its predecessor(s). This is presumably more likely to occur where the bill or spending commitment is relatively uncontentious and/or had been agreed upon by the social partners. Certainly, of the seven bills initiated in 1997 under the Rainbow Government and not signed into law prior to the election, four were fulfilled by the following government ([www.gov.ie/oireachtas/frame.htm](http://www.gov.ie/oireachtas/frame.htm)). One related to the delegation of new powers to the Commissioners of Irish Lights and was taken over wholesale by the new government. Another was for the ratification of two protocols to the Geneva Convention, agreed back in 1977. A third bill to become law under the Fianna Fáil /Progressive Democrats coalition but which had been presented by the preceding Rainbow Government resulted in the Children Act (2001). Amendments were however made by the new Government to the original bill. Finally the fourth bill enacted by the following government proposed the 17<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendment, dealing with cabinet confidentiality. In this last case however,

the Progressive Democrats had pledged in their 1997 manifesto that they would “legislate to ensure that [the ban on cabinet confidentiality] can be lifted where disclosure is clearly in the public interest” (Progressive Democrats 1997). Both the Labour Party and Green Party also made such a pledge. In other words, despite the fact that the bill was already in motion at the time of manifesto writing, a number of parties tried to take ownership of it by supporting it in their manifestos.

Hypothesis 6: The longer a government remains in office, the greater the proportion of party pledges it will fulfil (Adapted from Hofferbert and Budge 1992, 163)

As we can calculate from Table 4.4, depending on the type of government formation and whether it is a minority or majority formation, there can be large differences in the average duration of terms of governments.

**Table 4.4** Number and Duration of Governments in Ireland, 1923-1997

	1923-1997			1948-1997		
	Number of gov'ts	Days in office	% of total days in office	Number of gov'ts	Days in office	% of total days in office
Majority 1-party	8	12,198	45.3	4	6,026	33.4
Minority 1-party	9	6,232	23.1	4	3,488	19.4
Majority Coalition	6	7,041	26.1	6	7,041	39.1
Minority Coalition	2	1,463	5.4	2	1,463	8.1
Majority Gov'ts	14	19,239	71.4	10	13,067	72.5
Minority Gov'ts	11	7,695	28.6	6	4,951	27.5
Total	25	26,934	100.00	16	18,018	100.00

*Source: Coakley and Gallagher 1999, 181.*

The patterns in Table 4.4 are repeated in other jurisdictions. Katz (1997) studied eight hundred national elections in 70 countries up to 1985. His findings were that “the average duration of single-party cabinets in these data was 881.5 days and for multi-party cabinets, only 618.1 days; the average duration of cabinets including parties that between them control a majority of the legislative seats was 849.0 days, nearly twice the average of 436.8 days recorded by minority cabinets” (Katz 1997, 164). Warwick’s (1994, 37)

findings for 16 parliamentary democracies from 1945-1989, corroborate the finding that majority governments tend to be associated with longer terms of office than minority governments.

It seems an obvious point, but clearly how long a government is in office is going to affect its ability to push through legislation. Clearly, it is to be expected that time in office will be a strong factor in helping to determine the likelihood of pledges being fulfilled. Hofferbert and Budge (1992, 163) suggest that a government's legislative and expenditure cycle is usually arranged on an annual basis. It might be assumed therefore that the maximum amount of time required to redeem a pledge is 12 months, depending on when in the cycle the new government enters office. Certainly it would be expected that pledges which were easier to fulfil, would be fulfilled early on in the new government's term. However, it is also clear that the manifesto is written with a view to governing for a number of years and therefore it should not be expected, however efficient a government is, that many pledges are redeemed or indeed redeemable over the first couple of years. It may take a while for the machinery of government to get going so we should rather expect that pledge redemption would be loaded onto the middle-to-end section of any term of office. Indeed, parties, concerned to maximise their votes at the next election, might deliberately weight pledge redemption towards the end of their term when voters' minds are freshest. On balance, we should expect that the longer a party is in office, the greater the proportion of pledges given it will redeem.

### **4.3 Government Parties: The Model**

All parliamentary parties are assumed to desire re-election with larger seat shares while voters are deemed to value party faithfulness to earlier promises. With a majority of seats (assuming proportionality), or even a minority with external support, the government should be capable of pushing through its promises. By contrast, opposition parties should have little prospect of getting their pledges adopted by the government of the day. It is widely acknowledged that it is the government's role and not that of the opposition to introduce legislation into the Houses of Parliament. However not all government parties manage to get equal proportions of their manifestos redeemed. Estimating which factors are important to getting just the government parties' pledges fulfilled is one of the central tasks of this thesis.

Eight of the 11 broad hypotheses generated by this model are directly drawn from Thomson's thesis on the reliability and responsibility of political parties in the

Netherlands. Given similar research methodologies, this allows for direct comparison between studies. Many of the 11 hypotheses are drawn directly from Downs (1957) and other writers on party competition while others are based on logical inferences that can be drawn from their work. Downs (1957, 145) explains that, in building his theory, he chose to “ignore most of the problems caused by inter-party negotiations within the legislature, since they are both too complex and too empirical.” This chapter will thus concentrate on this same area, its contribution being to evaluate an extrapolation of Downs’ theory, applied specifically to multi-party governments.

### **4.3.1 Content of the Government Programme**

#### Hypothesis 7: Soft pledges are more likely to be included in the government programme than Hard pledges

Many view government programmes as the lowest common denominator of policy between parties going into government together (see for example Laver and Higgins 1986, Laver and Schofield 1990, Laver 1992, Bowler, Farrell and Katz 1999 and Schmidt 1996). Bowler, Farrell and Katz (1999, 272) contend that “some items that are included are almost entirely aspirational and have little prospect of even being attempted, while conversely other key areas of outstanding policy dispute may be omitted altogether in order to de-emphasise discord.” Mitchell (2000, 145) contends that the programme for government is, by its very nature, a highly strategic document but argues “that it increasingly incorporates fairly detailed commitments in a wide range of policy areas.” Party leaderships may attempt to include their key policies “as insurance” against reneging partners in coalition (Mitchell 2000, 142). This author suggests that programmes for government are indeed strategic and that the logic of their determination is that it is more likely for pledges on which a soft commitment has been made to be included in the government programme than hard pledges. The reasoning behind this argument is as follows.

Parties will clearly not be much helped by their manifesto in wooing voters if their policy intentions are peripheral and/or badly spelt-out, particularly in relation to issues that are salient for voters. Parties must define their policy positions in such a way as to win rather than alienate votes and “voters place great weight on competence and trustworthiness, and thus they value policy coherence and consistency and punish policies that appear to be indecisive, devious and manipulative” (Weatherford 1993, 214). This is certainly behaviour that Rose (1984, 62-4) could discern for the two largest parties in the

UK in the 1970s. He claims that “both the Conservative and Labour manifestos are full of dozens of specific statements of policy intentions [and that they] concentrate on ‘do-able’ pledges, that is, actions immediately within the control of the government.”

There is a difficulty of course with regard to the multi-party case, where no single programme is likely to be fulfilled by the government. Two or more manifestos will be co-ordinated to provide a programme for government (Downs 1957, 155). In the multi-party government case, it may be assumed that manifestos are written in the expectation that the document may be useful should a post-electoral bargaining context arise. With such an expectation, there are two countervailing pressures on parties with regard to the definition of each party’s policy stance. Even if the election result brings the two closest parties, in terms of policy positions, into negotiations for government, these parties are each still likely to find sticking points or issues of contention in the other’s document. The question for each party is how a particular policy proposal should be phrased to ensure that the other party takes that position as a serious demand, without at the same time destroying the pledging party’s chances of bargaining its way into office? Some issues are clearly more important for some parties than others, whether because they are core to the party’s ideology, or integral to the party’s recent campaign, or both. Therefore, parties will be less keen to concede on those issues. By defining clearly the strength of feeling associated with each course of action in its manifesto, a party seeks to make it indirectly more difficult for its negotiating partner (which could be opposed to that action), to whittle more important proposals down (Sjoblom 1970, 274). This is because the pledging party, in phrasing its pledges, tries to make it more difficult for itself to concede its own commitment strategy in negotiations.

When forming a coalition, therefore, “party strategy is a mixture of agenda setting, selective emphasis and position taking on matters about which actors disagree” (Van der Brug 2001, 118). This implies that pledges in the manifesto which are soft, *we will try to ...*, *we should...*, indicate scope for negotiation whilst hard pledges, *we will* and the like, indicate the opposite. If there is discord on a policy area between two or more coalition partners, a soft pledge is more likely to be included in the programme for government as no party loses face, while a hard pledge will be put aside, to be battled out in the course of government rather than in the flashlights of the media as the negotiations pursue. Another reason why we should expect that most political parties, in negotiating the content of the programme for government, will be more willing to include the soft pledges of the other negotiating parties than their hard pledges is that soft pledges are safer for the government as a whole. A government can more easily explain the non-redemption of a pledge if it only loosely committed itself to a particular action than if the phraseology used firmly committed the government to it.

Hypothesis 8: Election pledges on issues on which the prospective coalition parties agree are more likely to be mentioned in the Government agreement than those on which there is no explicit agreement (Thomson 1999, 123)

The wholesale inclusion of pledges from one party's manifesto in the programme for government is likely to depend on the other party's policy positions vis-à-vis the same policies. Where the nature and importance attributed to the pledges are the same for each of the parties, then their inclusion in the programme for government should be assured.

Hypothesis 9: Election pledges on issues on which the prospective coalition parties do not disagree are more likely to be mentioned in the government agreement than those on which there is explicit disagreement (Thomson 1999, 118)

Preferences may be deemed "divergent" "when two parties focus on different issues but advocate mutually exclusive preferences or focus on the same issue and advocate directionally incompatible preferences" (Luebbert 1986, 63). Luebbert explains that where some of the two parties' preferences are divergent or dissensual, a compromise will have to be reached on those policy areas such that they can progress on to governing together. This compromise may be either implicit or explicit. Evidence of implicit compromise may be that the parties agree not to mention the issue in the government programme. However hard a party tries to get the importance of a particular set of pledges across to its potential coalition partner in the negotiations, that partner may refuse to accept its inclusion in the government programme. This may be the case for a number of reasons, but primary among them, would be that the party leadership would be seen either by voters or party members or both as going against their own policies on the same issues, and hence being unreliable and irresponsible. Rather than touching on the policy issue upon which the two parties have mutually exclusive preferences, the parties may decide that the best policy for the coalition is to issue "an extensive statement of their lowest common denominator of purposes" (Groennings 1970, 461). Alternatives are for the potential partners to agree to allow a free vote on the issue, should it arise in the legislature, or to agree to the setting up of a cabinet committee on the issue area, once in government (Bogdanor 1983, 255). In this hypothesis, it is suggested that parties are more interested in getting into government than implementing policy.



### 4.3.2 Pledge Redemption – All Government Parties

Hypothesis 10: “Election Pledges made by parties entering single-party government are more likely to be fulfilled than parties entering coalition governments” (Thomson 1999, 202)

Hypothesis 11: “Election Pledges made by parties comprising majority governments are more likely to be fulfilled than parties forming minority governments (Klingemann, Hofferbert and Budge 1994, 34-5)

Hypothesis 12: “Government Party pledges (members of both minority and majority governments) that are the subject of consensus with opposition parties are more likely to be fulfilled than pledges that are not” (Thomson 1999, 208)

Single-party governments with a majority will experience few parliamentary impediments to bills introduced being passed into legislation (as long as the party sticks together) and therefore need consult no other party on what policies to pursue. They may still face constitutional and financial impediments though, as discussed later in this chapter. We should expect that their manifesto is their basic blueprint for government and that the party, afraid of the electorate’s recriminations next time around, will follow its plan, if this can in practice be implemented. Parties in coalition governments cannot expect their manifestos to be translated wholesale into the programme for government. Compromise between the coalition parties on whose policies to include in the programme for government is to be expected.

This lies behind a political argument that coalitions are somehow *weak* or *unstable* or *ineffectual*. Take for example the following few lines from the Fianna Fáil manifesto of 1987:

The last few years have proved that coalitions do not work in an Irish context. They have brought economic collapse; unemployment is at a quarter of a million, 100,000 of our young people have emigrated; economic growth has been negative, taxation and interest rates are at an all-time high; the national debt has doubled, mainly because of record current budget deficits. There has been no coherent leadership – no vision, no sense of direction. The basic requirement for

recovery is the election of a single-party Government that only Fianna Fáil can provide.

In Hypothesis 10, we test the validity of the claim that coalition governments are in some way less effective than single party governments, interpreting effectiveness in terms of the ability to redeem party pledges.

Minority governments find themselves in a different strategic situation, whether they comprise a single-party or a coalition of parties. The policies that these governments are likely to try to push through parliament will only be a subset of what, ideally under majority circumstances, they might be able to pursue. This is because, without a majority of seats, the government's best bet in getting policies through is to ensure that only those policies go forward that are espoused by sufficient numbers of the opposition parties to make up a majority. The relative stability of the 1997 minority administration in Ireland, which lasted a full-term of five years, can be attributed to a number of factors, not least being the fact that neither party had a strong enough incentive to jump ship, but two others are of particular note. The first is the strength of voting in the Dáil along party lines, largely explained by the importance of the party label to T.D.s' chances of election (Gallagher 1988, 133). Both Fianna Fáil and the Progressive Democrats could rely on their deputies to vote *the right way*, if required. Secondly, Fianna Fáil did not in 1997 choose to entertain talks with a third party, rather relying on Independents to make up the numbers for an effective majority. These four Independents were Fianna Fáil sympathisers.

A second reason for pushing to fulfil pledges shared with an opposition party, I would propose, is that parties in government, if able to fulfil those pledges which the opposition had also promised, manage to steal some of the opposition's thunder. At worst for the government, an opposition party will find it difficult to criticise them for the policy pledges fulfilled that they themselves had proposed. To do so, would be to expose the opposition to charges of *opposition for opposition's sake* and lacking policy consistency and vision. At best, a government that manages to fulfil many of its shared pledges with opposition parties may manage to win over some of the opposition's less committed voters.

I shall test each of these three hypotheses in turn, using difference of means tests.

Hypothesis 13: Pledges made in the issue area of the economy are more likely to be fulfilled than pledges made in any other issue area

There is ample evidence from writers in the field of pledge studies that the economy is a very salient area of policy for the general public. The reasons given in support of viewing economic issues as the most important range from surveys (See Section 3.3.1), to evidence and assumptions made in the literature (see for example Downs 1957, Laver and Hunt 1992, Thomson 1999). Within the Irish context it is abundantly clear that all of the parties devote large numbers of pledges to this issue area, in most cases more so to this area than to any other (See Table 3.3, Chapter 3). In testing this hypothesis, I want to see whether pledges made in the area of the economy are more likely to be fulfilled than pledges in all other areas of public activity.

#### **4.3.3 Pledge Redemption – Coalition Parties**

Hypothesis 14: “Election pledges are more likely to be acted upon if they are supported in the government agreement than if they are not” (Thomson 1999, 53)

Government programmes have been discussed as both an intervening factor in the process of getting a pledge fulfilled (“The Cabinet Model”) and a potential source of new pledges (“The Government Model”), “new” in the sense that they do not derive from either of the negotiating parties manifestos (Hofferbert and Klingemann 1990, 282). In the former sense, Hofferbert and Klingemann suggest that the value to parties of getting their pledges incorporated in the programme for government, is that it heightens the likelihood that these pledges will be fulfilled. Once in the programme, they form part of the action plan for government and are monitored for implementation by their respective party *owners*. The original party manifestos, while not perhaps forgotten by their originators, are put on the back-burner for the first few years of office at least, until new plans are required.

The Republic of Ireland 15 years ago could be compared with Norway and Sweden in that they had all experienced alternating single-party and coalition governments (Laver and Higgins 1986, 171). However, in one regard, Ireland was also very different from these two countries. The single-party government in Ireland was always composed of one particular party, Fianna Fáil, a centre party with a Republican image. This party’s refusal to share centre stage with any other party meant that in order to build a viable alternative government to it, a number of other parties had to agree to coalesce, despite considerable

policy differences. This meant that, “the coalitions that [...formed] to replace it in office, unlike those in Norway and Sweden, [...] always needed to span the entire ideological range of Irish politics. Some might argue that desire for office overcame whatever policy differences Fine Gael and the Labour might have had” (McCullagh 1998, 4-5).

Since 1989, the situation in Ireland has changed. Fianna Fáil, in 1989, failed to get an overall majority and, rather than going it alone in a minority government, they formed an agreement with the Progressive Democrats as a junior coalition partner. With all of the major political parties now willing to participate in multi-party government, “the processes of government formation are likely to prove much more protracted than in the past, with post-election bargaining becoming the principal determinant of which parties end up holding office” (Mair 1999, 148). Concomitant, however, with a newly-changed situation in which all Irish parties must sacrifice some party policies to get into office, is the development of the programme manager system, associated with the experiences of small parties in coalition (O’Halpin 1997, 79). A programme manager, as described by O’Halpin (1997, 81), is nominally employed to monitor and progress the implementation of the agreed programme for government.

Labour on its entry into negotiations for government with Fianna Fáil in 1993 vowed to get more out of government than their junior partner predecessors, the Progressive Democrats, in 1989-1992. In particular, they were determined to get more of their party’s policies both included in government policy and implemented. As O’Halpin (1997, 80-82) explains – “Labour was not content simply with a decent share of cabinet portfolios, the establishment of an “Office of the Tanaiste”, and a comprehensive programme for government; the party also demanded an agreed means of ensuring that all policy proposals outlined in the “Fianna Fáil and Labour Programme for a Partnership Government 1993-1997”, their pre-nuptial agreement with Fianna Fáil, would be subject to informed and detailed tracking, fine-tuning and review by trusted officials.” To the end of stamping their mark on government policy, Labour appointed seven programme managers to Fianna Fáil’s nine.

Those on the Labour side claimed success with the system after the Fianna Fáil led-coalition had broken up. This success, measured by the 74 bills to pass through parliament in two years, was put down to the programme manager system (Morgan, 1995 cited in O’Halpin 1997, 86), though O’Halpin declares the number to be unexceptional. Civil servants have attributed any Labour success to the more flexible and less organised approach taken by Fianna Fáil to getting their policy aims delivered on in government (O’Halpin 1997, 85). This innovation was carried on in the ensuing “Rainbow Government” of Fine Gael, Labour and Democratic Left in 1994 (O’Halpin 1997, 88), and again by Fianna Fáil and the Progressive Democrats in 1997 (See

[www.irlgov.ie/debates-99/23mar99/sect1.htm](http://www.irlgov.ie/debates-99/23mar99/sect1.htm) – question from Deputy Quinn to An Taoiseach with regard to Departmental Staff). No particular claims to overall policy success by one party over another were made after the last period of government (1997-2002).

It is likely that programme managers have led to the greater monitoring of pledges in the government programme and that as a result the programme for government has become a more important document or blueprint for action vis-à-vis manifestos. It should therefore be expected that where pledges are included in the programme for government that they have a greater chance of being redeemed than those party pledges which were omitted.

Hypothesis 15: “Election pledges are more likely to be fulfilled if a representative of the party that made them receives ministerial responsibility for the relevant policy area” (Thomson 1999, 204)

Negotiations for government will of course not only be based on getting enough of your own party’s pledges included in the programme for government. Muller and Strom (2000, 562) contend, that while the formation of a government may result from bargaining between prospective coalition partners on issues that may be placed on the left-right spectrum, more dimensions are likely to be relevant to the on-going bargaining of the parties in government. The left-right dimension is likely to be the most important area of negotiation in Ireland, given that the economy tends to be the most salient issue area for parties and public alike, as discussed in Chapter 3. What is clear is that if certain issue areas are relatively more likely to be found in the programme for government, other issue areas must be relatively less likely. A party must secure a method of getting at least some of its policies on these less-mentioned policy dimensions fulfilled or redeemed once in office, whether or not these policies were included in the programme for government. Parties, once in government, will want to push their own agendas. As Bowler, Farrell and Katz (1999, 276) explain; “it is almost always in the interests of an incumbent party to try to drag government policy toward party policy (the limit being the extent that would cause coalition break-up).” What is at issue is how a party can achieve this result.

It is commonly assumed that the best way for a party to ensure that its policies are given priority once in government, even given support for the pledge in the programme for government, is for it to hold the relevant ministerial portfolios. These portfolios give the individual ministers the jobs of initiating and implementing policies (Laver and Shepsle 1990, 874; see also Laver and Shepsle 1994). Indeed it is generally accepted that “it is

very difficult to implement policy in the face of active opposition from the relevant minister or even to develop a detailed policy alternative” (Laver and Shepsle 1990, 874). The primary route therefore by which a certain manifesto pledge’s fulfilment may be secured once in office is party possession of the relevant ministerial portfolio.

The conclusion that possession of a specific portfolio will always help the party to secure its policy aims in this field must be tempered. Farrell (1994(a), 77) cites a cross-national study co-ordinated by Jean Blondel in which ministers were asked “in matters relating to your own department, what kind of decisions did you not feel able to take on your own?” Irish ministers identified four such areas: cost-issues, innovation, co-ordination and politically-sensitive matters. By and large, in Ireland in any case, ministers will always seek cabinet endorsement of their policy endeavours. Success for any minister in pushing through his party’s concerns may indeed be crucially dependent on partisan control of the finance portfolio and office of Prime Minister (Coakley and Gallagher 1999, 255; Farrell 1994(a), 77-9). For a party not holding the relevant ministerial portfolio, the best that can be hoped for is that they secure the junior ministry position. With the junior portfolio, a minimum check is held on the lead minister and his endeavours to implement his own party’s policy agenda (Muller and Strom 2000, 144; Thies 2001, 593). The hope for the junior minister is that his presence may at least make the redemption of government programme policies in the area more likely. Since 1992 in Ireland, coalition parties have also had another check on ministers to hand; programme managers, as detailed in the discussion of Hypothesis 14. Where a party’s own policy with regard to a particular issue is in conflict with or deviates from the pledge contained in the programme for government, the programme manager will see to it that the minister sticks to the pledge in the agreed programme, unless presumably, the Cabinet decides otherwise.

In order to test the hypothesis that control of the relevant portfolio assists a party in redeeming its pledges, I coded the complete dataset of coalition party pledges according to the party controlling the relevant portfolio. In most cases this was straightforward. In cases where it was unclear as to which portfolio a pledge related to, I searched in the Irish government’s database of parliamentary debates and questions to see which minister was speaking on the area the most. Where inter-party cabinet reshuffles occurred in the course of government, it was deemed that both parties holding a particular portfolio during the course of government would have the opportunity to redeem their pledges.

Hypothesis 16: “Election pledges that are the subject of consensus between coalition parties are more likely to be fulfilled than those that are not” (Thomson 1999, 208)

Hypothesis 17: “Election pledges on which the prospective coalition parties do not disagree are more likely to be acted on than those on which there is explicit disagreement” (Thomson 1999, 211)

It was hypothesised earlier (Hypotheses 8 & 9) that pledges upon which two or more coalition partners agreed were more likely to be included in the programme for government than either pledges upon which there was no explicit disagreement or there was explicit disagreement. Clearly if it is thought that agreement between parties will motivate them to include a certain pledge in a programme then it also should follow that that agreement should propel the parties into fulfilling the pledge. A pledge upon which the two or more negotiating parties disagreed is thought unlikely to be redeemed. The reason for this is that due to the doctrine of collective cabinet responsibility, ministers of all the coalition parties are obliged to defend all cabinet decisions in public (Mitchell 2000, 138) so manifesto pledges upon which the parties disagree, if brought to cabinet, could cause major rifts between the partners. Bringing such issues to the cabinet table may be a calculated risk that parties from time to time run, but we should not expect their occurrence to be frequent.

In the case of the 1994 data for each of the three coalition parties, a pledge was coded as consensual if at least one other party manifesto had contained the same pledge.

#### **4.4 Opposition Parties: The Model**

In this section, I set out to identify the factors that make it more likely for opposition party pledges to be fulfilled by the government of the day. The reason that opposition party pledges need to be looked at is that the evidence from another multi-party system, the Netherlands, has suggested that while pledges of parties in government after an election were more likely to be fulfilled than pledges of parties that entered the opposition, large numbers of opposition pledges were still fulfilled by the government of the day (Thomson 1999, 198). Why would parties getting into government pay any attention to what their opposition colleagues had promised before the election? In Section 4.4.1, I look at predictors of the inclusion of opposition party pledges in the programme for government,

the programme for government being hypothesised as an aid to the redemption of party pledges. In the latter part of Section 4.4, I look at predictors of the redemption of opposition party pledges.

#### **4.4.1 Content of the Programme for Government**

Hypothesis 18: Election pledges of the prospective opposition parties are more likely to be supported in the government agreement if shared with a party involved in the negotiations than if not (adapted from Thomson 1999, 115)

Where a party is left on the sidelines of the negotiations for a new programme for Government, it should not be expected that many of its pledges will find their way into that programme. The reason we might expect this is the party was not invited into the negotiations, we could infer that the party is not crucial to the formation of the next government. As such, the parties negotiating the programme need not heed the policy agenda of that party. There is one clear exception however with regard to that expectation. Where a pledge made by an opposition party in its manifesto was also mirrored in one of the negotiating parties' manifestos, then it should be expected that those shared pledges have a greater likelihood of getting into the programme for government than opposition pledges upon which no such agreement exists.

Hypothesis 19: Election pledges of the prospective opposition parties are more likely to be supported in the government agreement if not dissensual with a party involved in the negotiations than if dissensual (adapted from Thomson 1999, 115)

Obviously, we should expect that pledges upon which an opposition party has directly opposing and mutually exclusive stances to those of a government party would have less chance of being included in the programme for government than pledges upon which no such direct conflict exists.



Hypothesis 20: Parties negotiating a minority coalition are more likely to include pledges of parties outside of government in their government programmes than are parties negotiating majority formations

Many election pledges are redeemable without legislation or parliamentary approval. Examples of such pledges are those dealing with the establishment of non-statutory bodies, committees and the like. However other pledges, especially those committing the government to expenditure, often require parliamentary discussion and approval. Parties forming a minority coalition must have some sort of plan as to how they are going to get necessary legislation through parliament.

One scenario is that the opposition is so divided on most issues that the negotiating parties can bet on getting sufficient support from at least one other party or section of parliament in getting bills through without the incumbents' having to reward payoffs. This has occurred in Ireland at least once since 1977, when the Fine Gael-Labour coalition government of 1981 got sufficient support from like-minded Independents to form an operable administration.

The alternative scenario is that in return for the support of a non-government party/individuals, some sort of a return to them has to be made. Both the February 1982 Fianna Fáil administration and the 1997 Fianna Fáil/Progressive Democrats coalition fall into this category. In the former administration, Independent TD Tony Gregory pledged his support in return for money programmes specific to his constituency and, in the latter, the administration pledged to hold another referendum on abortion. In Denmark, the preponderance of minority governments has meant a much stronger role for parliamentary as opposed to governmental decision-making and hence a greater role for the opposition in determining the policies of minority governments. Those returns are most commonly in the form of policies and/or policy-making (Schou and Hearl 1992, 151). The point is, some of these payoffs may be included in the programme for government.

#### **4.4.2 Pledge Redemption**

Hypothesis 21: Opposition pledges that are the subject of consensus with government parties are more likely to be fulfilled than those that are not (Thomson 1999, 208)

A measure of the degree of consensus that exists in a party system is the extent to which government pledges which are the subject of consensus with opposition parties are more

likely to be fulfilled than government party pledges on which no such consensus exists. We might expect this to be the case as the parties in opposition can hardly be expected to produce vociferous arguments against policies that they themselves stood for. Thus parties in government should manage to pass such consensual bills through parliament more easily than those bills for which no consensus exists. For that very reason, we should expect that pledges of parties in opposition are more likely to be fulfilled where they are shared with at least one party in government than when they are not.

Hypothesis 22: Opposition pledges that are not the subject of dissensus with government parties are more likely to be fulfilled than pledges that are (Thomson 1999, 208)

It should also be anticipated that pledges, upon which exists no explicit disagreement between the opposition party and at least one party in government, should be more likely to be adopted by government parties and fulfilled than those pledges upon which explicit disagreement between government and opposition exists.

Hypothesis 23: "Election pledges that are the subject of consensus between opposition parties are more likely to be fulfilled than those that are not" (Thomson 1999, 208)

Parties that enter government, especially if they are in a minority position, will be more alert to issues upon which the opposition appears to be united than areas upon which disagreement is registered. One possible reason for a government's adoption of opposition pledges that are not already consensual with pledges in the government parties' manifestos is that the government parties did not cover the policy areas in their manifestos themselves. A second reason for this is that if the opposition is united on an issue upon which the government has a different stance, and the position taken by the opposition gains popular approval, the government's stance or legitimacy on the issue is threatened. A government, faced with such a scenario, has a number of routes open to it. One route would be to ignore the issue and hope that the opposition fails to keep the issue buoyant in the press. Another possible option for the government is to adopt the opposition's more popular stance in the stead of its own, and claim any kudos for being able to fulfil the policy.

Hypothesis 24: “Opposition party election pledges are more likely to be acted upon if they are supported in the government agreement than if they are not” (Thomson 1999, 44)

Parties that find themselves in opposition may find that the parties in government adopted some of their pledges in the programme for government. The two reasons given in Hypotheses 18 and 20 for negotiating parties’ including opposition pledges in the programmes for government were firstly, that the pledge was also given by a party negotiating the programme for government and secondly, that the negotiating parties were thereby hoping to secure the support of the opposition parties for measures to come during their minority administration. An obvious corollary of the latter rationale is that for the government parties to retain that crucial non-governmental support, they must actually redeem some of those other groupings’/individuals’ pledges. If the opposition party’s pledge was included in the programme for government, we should expect that that pledge has a greater chance of being fulfilled than a pledge without such support.

Hypothesis 25: Parties forming a minority coalition are more likely to fulfil pledges of parties outside government than are majority governments.

It should be expected that opposition party pledges are adopted more frequently by parties in minority governments, who need their support, than by parties in majority governments. Obviously if policy commitments had to be made by the party(ies) in a minority government to various members/parties on the opposition benches in return for their support in other areas, then government action on such commitments will be necessary for logrolling to sustain the viability of government beyond a limited period of time.

#### **4.5 Other Potential Factors in the Realisation of Policies**

I do not look at the universe of possible constraints and influences that impact on the members of Irish parties and governments in terms of their being able to redeem their promises by way of policy output. As explained in Chapter 2, *output* refers to definite actions taken by political parties to redeem their promises. In particular, there are four factors identified in the literature which may impinge on government action: the general state of the economy (Thomson, 1999), constraints deriving from the intransigence or

other agendas of the civil service and other interest groups, constitutional constraints and constraints deriving from membership of international organisations.

#### **4.5.1 The Economy**

The first major factor which may impact on what a party can do with regard to the redemption of its pre-election pledges is the level of available economic resources it has to hand (Thomson 1999, 57). Many pledges and promises that parties typically make require financial outlays. The theory of representative democracy (as outlined in Section 1.1) assumes that parties have the resources to carry through those promises that they have made. This is clearly not always the case. Obviously when the economy is booming, the currency stable and inflation contained, the current account in surplus, national debt and repayments thereon low, the government deficit below EU stability pact requirements (c.3% of GDP), and receipts flooding in, many pledges will be easily redeemed. When any or all of these factors are absent, redeeming pledges with costly implications will be more difficult.

It is unrealistic to expect that political parties will forecast the growth of GDP or revenues or general government deficits with perfect accuracy. It is also unrealistic to expect that the political parties will be able to predict accurately international economic factors that will impinge on a small open economy like Ireland's. However, economic developments – GDP growth, inflation, debt repayments, government revenues and outlays, and so on – do tend to have broad trend lines. A political party is unlikely to be entirely unaware of these when it is setting out its policy stall and, if unaware, is liable to be held responsible for such ignorance. Further, given that manifesto-promised actions may only be a subset of the sum of government actions, it is not clear why the manifesto-derived actions should be those curtailed. In other words, the government could always restrict non-manifesto-pledged expenditure or indeed boost revenues through non-manifesto-originated actions. By and large, therefore, the deteriorating state of an economy does not typically serve as a plausible excuse for parties to renege on their promises.

Rather the economy should serve as an initial constraint on the lavish promises that parties like to make at election times. The reason for this is two-fold. In the first place, if the general public does not view the economic future in the same rosy hues as the party making the pledges they are not likely to take their pledges seriously. Parties wishing to avert losing such confidence will try to make realistic promises. Some evidence is given

for this at the most recent election in 2002 where one analyst (Collins 2003, 24) reported with relation to Fianna Fáil's manifesto that "the low-key nature of the manifesto was carefully calculated to fit in with the public mood which was one of low expectations. Fear that the boom could be squandered meant that the public was wary of any proposed spending programmes and Fianna Fáil played to that mood." That same analyst attributes part of the exceptionally poor performance of Fine Gael at that election to the fact that they did not pursue the same tactic (Collins 2003, 29). The second reason why parties will not make rash pledges is that if they fail to redeem them, they may fear electoral retribution at the following election. This latter hypothesis I shall discuss in Chapter 10.

The economy is not regarded in this project as an independent factor in the realisation of pledges. Rather, it is seen as an influence on the types and scope of policies made by the parties in the run-up to the election. Where parties either judge their future available resources wildly inaccurately or indeed just ignore them in their efforts to win voters, then they should expect to lose votes at the next election (Downs 1957).

#### **4.5.2 The Civil Service and Other Interest Groups**

Another factor to be taken into account when discussing government policy is the so-called intransigence of the civil service. Connolly and O'Halpin (1999, 264) explain that "the position of the senior officials in the department allows them, should they choose, both to block policy with which they disagree and to promote policy of which they are in favour." Indeed, other interest groups may also seek to influence the government's agenda and output, though much of this lobbying may be difficult for outsiders to observe or measure, in any sense. As such, while obviously these groups of actors will affect to some extent what party promises are formulated and the likelihood of their redemption, analysis of this influence is beyond the scope of this thesis.

#### **4.5.3 Pledges that Prove to be Unconstitutional**

A policy pledged may be found by the High Court in Ireland to run counter to the provisions of the constitution. Under judicial review, the High Court may cancel any law or any part of a law that breaches the Constitution ([www.oasis.gov.ie/government\\_in\\_ireland/the\\_constitution/unconstitutional\\_legislation\\_and\\_decisions.html?search=judicial+review](http://www.oasis.gov.ie/government_in_ireland/the_constitution/unconstitutional_legislation_and_decisions.html?search=judicial+review)). In order to incur judicial review proceedings

either the Irish President must refer a bill (if initiated this way, referred to the Supreme Court) or an individual must bring the case showing that they are in some way harmed by the proposed legislation. Between January 1992 and March 1999, 47 bills were challenged either partially or wholly and just four bills were referred by the President to the Supreme Court.<sup>6</sup> Of the 47 challenged, only seven were held by the High Court/Supreme Court to be unconstitutional. Of the four bills referred by the President, three were held to be unconstitutional by the Supreme Court. I treat this factor in my analysis such that if a pledged bill does not become law because of a constitutional impediment rather than lack of effort on the part of the government, it is still counted as “not redeemed”.

#### 4.5.4 External Constraints

Ireland acceded to the E.E.C. on 1<sup>st</sup> January 1973, and on four separate occasions since then, in 1987, 1992, 1998 and 2002, the Irish public has endorsed the incremental deepening of that integration.<sup>7</sup> Since Ireland is a constituent member of a supranational organisation, policy-making is no longer purely sovereign. On 10<sup>th</sup> May 1972, a referendum to bring existing and future European law into the Irish Constitution was passed by 82%, with a turnout of 71% (Dooney and O’Toole 1998, 255), through the following provision:

*No provision of this constitution invalidates laws fulfilled, acts done or measures adopted by the State necessitated by the obligations of membership of the Communities or prevents laws fulfilled, acts done or measures adopted by the Communities, or institutions thereof, from having the force of law in the State.*  
(Article 29.4 3°).

The Commission and Council of Ministers have three basic tools to oblige member states to implement community decisions: regulations, directives and decisions. Most E.U. law is transposed into Irish law via statutory instruments, operated by ministers. Ireland has a good record of compliance, the European Commission’s 12<sup>th</sup> Annual Report placing Ireland second in terms of compliance with environmental objectives (Dooney and O’Toole 1998, 259). In terms of compliance with EU directives across all policy areas, as of end August 2003, Ireland ranked seventh with 97.82% of directives implemented (European Commission, 2003). Therefore, policy offerings and redemptions by Irish parties are circumscribed by the need not only to comply with existing EU law but are also

constrained, to the extent that developmental issues within some policy areas (such as agricultural policy or environmental policy) are also the province of the European Union.

Membership of other organisations such as the United Nations and the World Trade Organisation may also prove to be external constraints on what Irish parties may realistically propose and what they may do. In this study, however, I do not account for this factor, assuming instead that all Irish parties propose policies that do not run counter to the policies and rules of the organisations of which Ireland is a member. This may be legitimately assumed for the vast majority of pledges given, as rarely do the political parties stipulate in their manifestos that various of their pledges are subject to EU sanction. Pledges that do rely on external sanction and are flagged as such in the parties' manifestos are treated as *conditional* pledges at first. In other words, if EU sanction was not forthcoming, then the pledges were eliminated from the study. Pledges which rely on such sanction but which were not flagged as such in the manifestos are treated as *false advertising* in this study, and not distinguished from other unredeemed pledges.

#### 4.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have set out my expectations with regard to factors that may impinge on parties' abilities to redeem pledges. Three models are established dealing with these expectations. The Baseline Model, which anticipates pledge redemption for all parties, is tested in Chapter 7. In Chapter 8, pledge redemption by government parties only is elucidated. Finally, in Chapter 9, the Opposition Party Model is tested. Before that, however, in Chapter 5, I explain the derivation of my data and the methodology I employ for testing the models. In Chapter 6, I show, with reference to one policy area, what sorts of manifesto statements were identified as pledges or deemed fulfilled, among other things.

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## Endnotes

1 The measure of importance of themes used by Thomson is derived by applying the 54 category MRG 'Standard Coding Frame' and the 20 category revised framework to all of the parties' manifestos, and measuring the salience of the different themes across the board. He then calculates the importance of each theme to each particular party.

2 For a discussion of its centrality to the Fianna Fáil party, see Collins, 2000 and in particular, page 15.

3 MRBI/3520/87 for The Irish Times, MRBI/3770/89 for The Irish Times, MRBI 4091/92 for The Irish Times and MRBI/4510/97 for The Irish Times.

4 There are 60 members of the Seanad, 43 of which are elected from five quasi-vocational panels, six elected by university graduates and another eleven who are appointed by the Taoiseach. Its main power with regard to policy-making derives from Article 23.1 of the Constitution, which permits the Seanad to postpone money bills for up to 90 days.

5 See Parliamentary Committees 29th Dail, 22nd Seanad, 2002 – Members, Staff and Contact Details on [www.irlgov.ie/oireachtas/frame.htm](http://www.irlgov.ie/oireachtas/frame.htm) [2003, December 6]

6 See Dail Eireann, Vol.502. 23rd March 1999. Written Answers. Challenges to Acts of the Oireachtas.

7 Once also rejected – 29th March 2001.



## CHAPTER 5

### DATA AND METHODOLOGY

#### 5.1 Introduction

As stated in Chapter 2, there are seven conditions for the complete fulfilment of a test for the suggestion of the operation of partisan democracy, when we explore the programme-to-policy linkage. In this thesis I intend to address all seven. The first three conditions – whether parties stand for different policies, whether voters are aware of these differences and whether they cast their ballots on the basis of them – were reviewed for Ireland in Chapter 3, largely on the basis of secondary sources. In Chapter 4, I set out the three models through which I intend to investigate various factors believed to be important for the existence of the next two requirements, that is, whether parties in office redeem more of their pledges than do parties that enter the opposition benches after an election and whether parties that get into government redeem more of their pledges than not.

As I explained in Chapter 4, I am particularly interested in discerning whether governing parties have an advantage over their counterparts in opposition in terms of redeeming their pledges and to what extent government party pledge fulfilment typically occurs (The Baseline Model). Secondly, I want to know whether parties governing alone or parties governing as constituent members of coalitions are more faithful to their pre-election policies and the reasons why (The Government Party Model). A third interest is in the sorts of factors that make opposition pledges more likely to be redeemed by the government of the day (The Opposition Party Model). In pursuit of answers to these questions, the larger question of whether or not parties make a difference to the sorts of policies that governments pursue is being addressed. The main modelling, data specification and analysis concern the fourth and fifth conditions and form the basis of this chapter.

The remainder of this chapter is split into five core sections. In the first section, I detail my case selection criteria for the models. In the second section, I describe the organisation of my data. In the third and fourth sections, I briefly describe my dependent variables and independent variables respectively. In the fifth and final section, I describe

the methodology I use to test the various models, borrowing again largely from Thomson (1999).

## 5.2 Case Selection Criteria

### 5.2.1 Country

As was mentioned in Section 2.3.6 of Chapter 2, one of the major problems with pledge studies of the programme-to-policy linkage is that the significance of each individual contribution is strongly tied in to whether or not comparisons across countries are possible. The Irish system was chosen as that upon which to test the programme-to-policy linkage for one main reason. Most pledge studies have been studies of two-party majoritarian systems with the exception of one case study of a multi-party system, that of the Netherlands. Thomson (1999), studying the Netherlands, does attempt to compare and contrast his findings on pledges in multi-party government systems with those of other authors focussing on single-party government systems. The Netherlands does not have recent experience of single-party government. His study therefore cannot be directly compared with the results from single-party government systems. Ireland, by contrast, in the period 1977 to 1997, has had experience of both single-party and multi-party governments. Not only that, but it has also had experience of both minority and majority governments, single-party and coalition. For this reason, a pledge study as applied to Ireland would bring together the two strands of prior research. This is a robust justification for focussing the study on Ireland.

### 5.2.2 Parties

In testing hypotheses about the types of pledges made and the circumstances under which these are more likely to be fulfilled in the Irish party system, we clearly need some sort of principle upon which to decide which parties are *in* and which parties are *out* of the study. Should all political parties in the system be included? It makes sense to focus exclusively on parties elected to the Dáil and in particular on those parties that are the raw material from which governments are formed. Given the models, it is obvious that the manifestos of both parties of government and parties of opposition need to be scrutinised at each

election. I am however only selecting those parties with a minimum of two T.D.s (members of the Dáil). The justification for this is that Downs' theory sees competition between *parties for office* as the all-important driver for pledges to be redeemed. That a lone independent T.D. or even a one-seat party member has not joined a larger party, would indicate that the T.D.'s concerns are perhaps more policy/locally-focused than geared towards the attainment of government office. Thus the parties selected for analysis are Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael, Labour, The Workers' Party, The Progressive Democrats, Democratic Left and the Green Party. In 1977, Labour and the Fine Gael party contested the election under the banner of "The National Coalition", publishing a joint manifesto for that year. This election coalition is also treated as if it was a party for the purposes of my analysis.

### **5.2.3 Time period 1977-2002**

The time period that is studied in this thesis runs from the start of the 21<sup>st</sup> Dáil (parliament) in July 1977 to the start of the 29<sup>th</sup> Dáil in June 2002. The 1977 Irish parliamentary election could be seen as a watershed in the development of comprehensive party platforms. Prior to this election, "Irish electioneering could be summarised as consisting primarily of four elements: short-termism, localism, voluntarism and machine politics" (Farrell 1994(b), 221-2). Although both Labour and Fine Gael had been publishing manifestos for decades, 1977 was the first time that Fianna Fáil issued one of its own. In contrast to the type of campaign and manifesto seen previously, Fianna Fáil's conduct in 1977 was both professional and nationalistic (in the sense of showing pride in the country) in focus (Farrell and Manning 1978, 154) and "by the mid-1980's 'political marketing' had fully taken root, with professional, national campaigns being mounted by all the parties which could afford it" (Farrell 1984(b), 221-2). An initial reason therefore for looking at the period 1977 to 2002, is that it is a period in which party manifestos policies were, ostensibly at least, taken seriously by all of the party leaderships as an aid to winning or maintaining vote share, with a view to getting into government.

A second rationale for taking 1977 as the starting year for analysis concerns the form of government that took office after the election. This was the last occasion upon which a single party, Fianna Fáil, managed to gain an overall majority of seats in the Dáil. For the purposes of comparing and contrasting the impact of a coalition as opposed to a single party government on the link between government output and party policies, including this case is crucial for the analysis.

Justifying why the analysis stops at the last election of 2002 is more straightforward. There was an election held in 2002 and the outgoing Dáil was the most recent in which parties could possibly have fulfilled their manifesto promises. Furthermore, up until the point at which a new government was installed (6 June), it was still possible for the parties that formed the government in 1997 to redeem their 1997 manifesto pledges.

## 5.2.4 Pledges

### Sources of Pledges

I identified pledges from selected political parties by coding their election manifestos, with a couple of exceptions. For a political party to be included in this study, as stated earlier, it needed to have at least two deputies elected to Dáil Éireann. In addition to manifestos, other documents were used for the elections of February 1982 and November 1982. In the first case, Fine Gael did not publish a manifesto but instead fought the campaign on the basis of its recently-defeated budget. I therefore used a speech given in defence of that budget by the then Taoiseach, Garret FitzGerald, to Galway Chamber of Commerce. This was first used by the M.R.G. as a proxy manifesto. Fianna Fáil in November 1982 did not produce a manifesto as such. *The Way Forward*, an economic strategy document, was published in that same year but was clearly not written in the form needed for an election campaign. Thus I used the same surrogate manifesto document as the M.R.G. for Fianna Fáil at the November 1982 election. This was an article in the *Irish Times* written by the party leader just before the election (Haughey 1982). In addition to analysing manifestos, I also coded the government programmes available for each of the coalition governments that formed. All of the documents analysed are listed in Appendix 1.

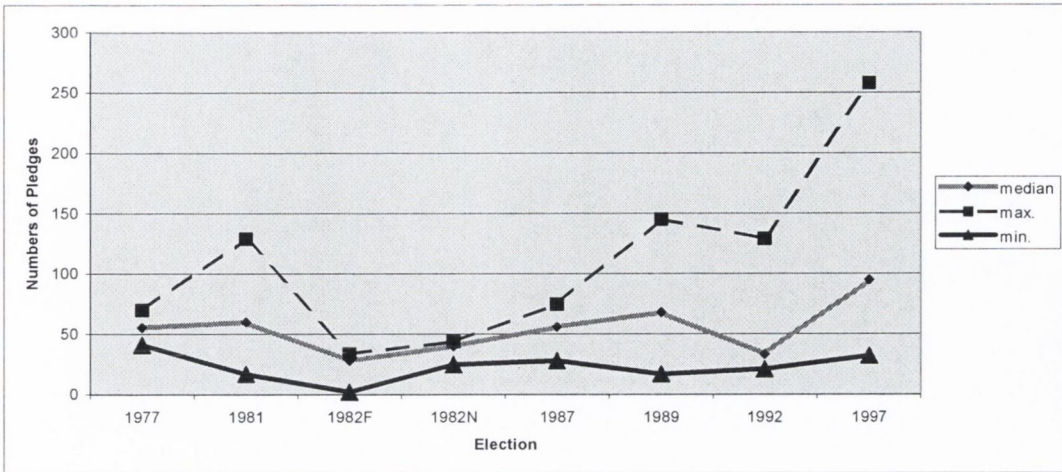
### Operationalisation

I adopted Thomson's definition of a pledge. This was for two reasons. Firstly, comparability of the two sets of results is enhanced by using the same definition. It is important that both sets of results are comparable, for they are currently the only two studies of pledge fulfilment in multi-party systems. Secondly, his definition seemed to me to be the most appropriate of all of the definitions in the literature. I thus identified statements in party manifestos and government programmes as pledges "if they contained

*unequivocal support for proposed government policy actions that are testable*" (Thomson 1999, 80).

In identifying pledges, I looked first for commitment to action in the pledge and second at how strong that commitment was. Each pledge was coded on the basis of the extent to which the commitment was either hard or soft. A third coding category was added at the outset, coding pledges that were conditional. In cases where the actions promised were conditional on some external development, then that statement was only coded as a pledge once it had been ascertained that that conditional event had taken place (Thomson 1999, 231) and that the pledge was therefore capable of fulfilment. Others of Thomson's conventions were also adopted. Where a number of potential pledges were each dependent on one single pledge's occurring before they could be redeemed, the statements were collapsed into one pledge. An example would be Labour's proposal in November 1982 to establish a National Development Corporation to consolidate the state's existing holdings in state enterprises. Rather than including supplementary statements regarding the amount of money to be put into this enterprise and what department would be responsible for it, I subsumed these under the original. After all, if the National Development Corporation is not created then the minister has nothing to be responsible for. A third convention, also shared with Thomson, relates to pledges that are repeated in a given manifesto. In some cases, a pledge may be repeated in separate sections of the document. For example, a pledge to give more money to women's refuges might appear under a heading dealing with crime and again under "Women's Affairs" or "Voluntary Agencies." The procedure in such cases was to take that pledge which was the most detailed of the various versions. A more detailed description of the coding procedures can be found in Appendix 2.

Figure 5.1 shows that the median, maximum and minimum number of manifesto pledges given by the set of parties at each election has not been consistent across years. From a high in 1981, with a median of 60 pledges, it took another eight years or so for the median number of pledges to surpass that level and then again another eight years. This is not really explicable in terms of the state of unpreparedness in which many of the parties found themselves when elections were called unexpectedly, though most of the elections in the intervening sixteen years between 1981 and 1997 were called suddenly. Also observable from Figure 5.1 is the trend for some parties to make more pledges in recent years (max. trend line). However the maximum figures relating to the 1989, 1992 and 1997 elections relate to different parties each time (Fine Gael, Labour and Fianna Fáil respectively). When the mean number of pledges given at each election was correlated against the mean number of words per manifesto across parties at each election, a 0.96 correlation was found. Clearly, when manifestos are longer, pledges are more numerous.



**Figure 5.1** Median, Maximum and Minimum Number of Pledges Given by the Parties at Each Election 1977-1997

In total, Thomson included 1004 socio-economic pledges in his analysis of pledge redemption by Dutch parties over three elections, of a total number of 2031 identified across all issue areas (Thomson 1999, 78). In this thesis on pledge redemption by the Irish parties 1977-1997, a total of 2013 manifesto pledges were identified. A further 559 were found in the government programmes that were coded.

To test the reliability of my coding of pledges, a fellow doctoral student coded 10% of the manifestos and government programmes after me, on the basis of a set of coding instructions (contained in Appendix 2) based mainly on Thomson's description of his coding procedures. One core difference between Thomson's coding procedures and those used in this study was that, in the Dutch study, support given to setting up committees or study groups to investigate policy options were not coded as pledges, whereas in the Irish case they were. The reason for including them in the Irish case is that they promise actions that can indeed be realised. However I accept Thomson's argument that these may be more easily redeemed than other types of pledges. A second difference between the Dutch and Irish coding procedures relates to so-called *status quo* pledges. These were coded in the Dutch and Irish cases but subsequently dropped from the Irish analysis. The idea of a pledge to sustain the status quo is complicated. This relates to the fact that if the status quo before an election is sustained during the life of the following government, one cannot tell whether this is due to failure on the part of the government to act, on the one hand, or indeed on the other hand, due to the result of a costly and vigorously-fought defence of the status quo.

The result of the reliability test for the Irish study (including status quo pledges) was that the two coders were in agreement with each other in 68% of cases, that is 68% of pledges identified by the principal coder were also identified by the secondary coder. This

compares with reported reliability measure of c.88% for Thomson (1999, 233) and 84% for Royed and Borrelli (1999, 125).

Thomson, the author of the Dutch study and deviser of the pledge coding scheme used in this study, also kindly coded nine pages of manifesto text (c.1% of total number of pages in all of the manifestos). On those nine pages, I identified nine pledges. Thomson identified eight of those nine pledges, and one other that I had not identified.

### **5.2.5 Deciding whether Pledges are Redeemed**

To provide for consistency and hence comparability of results between this study and Thomson's, the measurement of pledge redemption was also conducted according to his methodology. For a pledge to be regarded as being fulfilled, action must have been taken on it in the subsequent parliamentary term. A pledge was regarded as having been either fully-redeemed, partially-redeemed or not redeemed at all. The distinction between the first and the second being that for a pledge to be deemed "partially-redeemed", a movement in the right direction was deemed to suffice. This distinction was first used by Rose (1984), with his "ambiguous" category of enactment and developed by Royed (1992). Royed (1992, 376) gave a number of examples in her appendix of what might constitute partial fulfilment of a pledge. The introduction of a bill of a nature promised in the preceding manifesto, which was subsequently defeated in parliament, would constitute such a partial redemption. With regard to financial indicators, she explained, that "pledges to 'strengthen' particular programmes were given a 'yes' [fully-redeemed] if budget figures specific to that programme showed an increase in the relevant term, or when secondary sources suggested that such programmes were 'strengthened'. Pledges to 'continue' particular programmes were rated as 'partially' fulfilled if the progress continued but funds were cut." The sense in which Thomson (1999) identified "partially-fulfilled pledges" is slightly different; where legislation is introduced but defeated, it is counted as not redeemed rather than partially-redeemed (Thomson 1999, 82). Partially-redeemed pledges are identified by Thomson in cases where action towards redeeming the pledge is inadequate to realise it fully (eg, two years of a three-year pledge are redeemed). It is Thomson's definition rather than Royed's that this study will use.

A number of different types of output were looked at in order to identify pledge redemption: acts, secondary legislation (statutory instruments) and financial indicators. The power to make laws in Ireland is solely vested in the Oireachtas (Parliament), subject to the obligations of European Union membership, as provided for in the Irish Constitution

(Irish Statute Book Database). The Oireachtas consists of the President, the Dáil (or Lower House) and the Seanad (Upper House). Primary legislation or Acts of the Oireachtas may be either private (promoted by local authorities or private individuals for their own purposes, and which tend to be very rare) or public (applicable to the general public) (Irish Statute Book Database). Both types of act start out as bills introduced into either the Dáil or the Seanad and have to be processed through five stages (Irish Statute Book Database). The Seanad has only limited powers of delay and cannot reject a bill outright. The President has the power to refer a bill to the Supreme Court to test its constitutionality but has little other control over the content of legislation beyond the power of striking it down as unconstitutional. As a result, the Dáil can be said to reign more or less supreme over legislation, and failure to pass legislation may be seen as the government's failure to secure the support of the Dáil.

Secondary legislation, or statutory instruments, come in five main types: orders, regulations, rules, bye-laws and schemes. They are governed by the Statutory Instruments Act, 1947 and several hundred are made annually ([www.Irishstatutebook.ie](http://www.Irishstatutebook.ie)). While not enacted by the Oireachtas, statutory instruments "allow persons or bodies to whom legislative power has been delegated by statute to legislate in relation to detailed day-to-day matters arising from the operation of relevant primary legislation" ([www.Irishstatutebook.ie](http://www.Irishstatutebook.ie)). All secondary legislation therefore has "parent" primary legislation (Page 2001, 20). Most statutory instruments do not require parliamentary approval in Ireland and may be cancelled by either the Dáil or the Seanad.<sup>1</sup>

According to evidence derived from the U.K., statutory instruments tend to deal with local issues (about one third of total), with a similar proportion again devoted to "iterative issues", issues upon which minor adjustments are required on a relatively frequent basis, such as changes to regulated petrol prices or the like (Page 2001, 41). Other types of statutory instruments deal with commencement days for Acts, regulations implementing E.U. legislation, ecclesiastical law and deregulation, among other things (Page 2001, 39). The largest number of statutory instruments in the U.K. deal with the policy areas of education, social security, local government, the National Health Service and income tax (Page 2001, 45). Statutory instruments were usually signed by a single Minister, in 89% of cases by a junior minister in the U.K. (Page 2001, 88). More than half of all statutory instruments passed in the U.K. between 1987 and 1997 were categorised as requiring little political action. Of the remainder, many of these are regulatory, dealing with the "procedures and machinery of government" or give definitions or forms to legislation (Page 2001, 50).

Both primary and secondary legislation passed in Ireland may be found in bound volumes published by The Stationary Office. The source however that I used is *The Irish*

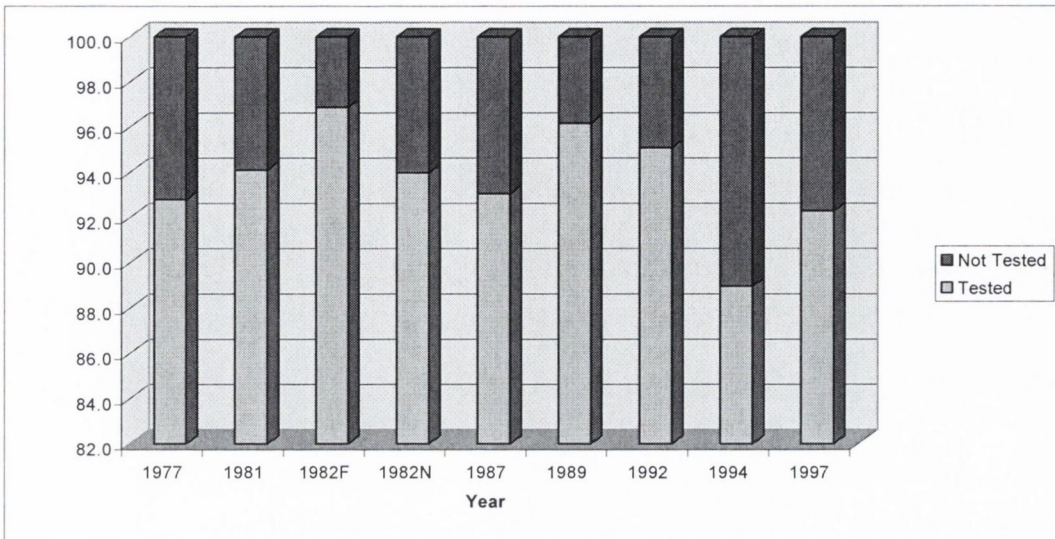


*Statute Book*, a searchable database of both primary and secondary legislation published in Ireland, 1922-1998, provided by the Attorney General's Office. For legislation up to May 2002, I used the Irish government website ([www.irlgov.ie](http://www.irlgov.ie)), where more recent legislation is displayed.

In certain cases where the wording of bills was complicated and some of the provisions appeared ambiguous to my untrained legal eye, I looked for validation in external sources – reference books, the internet, the Parliamentary Debates database 1919-1997 on the Houses of the Oireachtas website ([www.gov.ie/oireachtas/archives/debates-1919.htm](http://www.gov.ie/oireachtas/archives/debates-1919.htm)). In cases where the fulfilment of financial or other pledges needed affirmation, there were two main sources. Firstly, government spending decisions have to be passed through the legislature in the form of estimates and a finance act. These could be found in the Parliamentary Debates database and *Irish Statute Book* respectively (with the Book of Estimates in abridged format). Where statistics in the form of, for example, number of gardai employed in a particular year were required, parliamentary questions, also contained in the Debates database, generally provided an answer. If not, then secondary sources were also consulted, often the websites of newspapers, State agencies or interest groups.

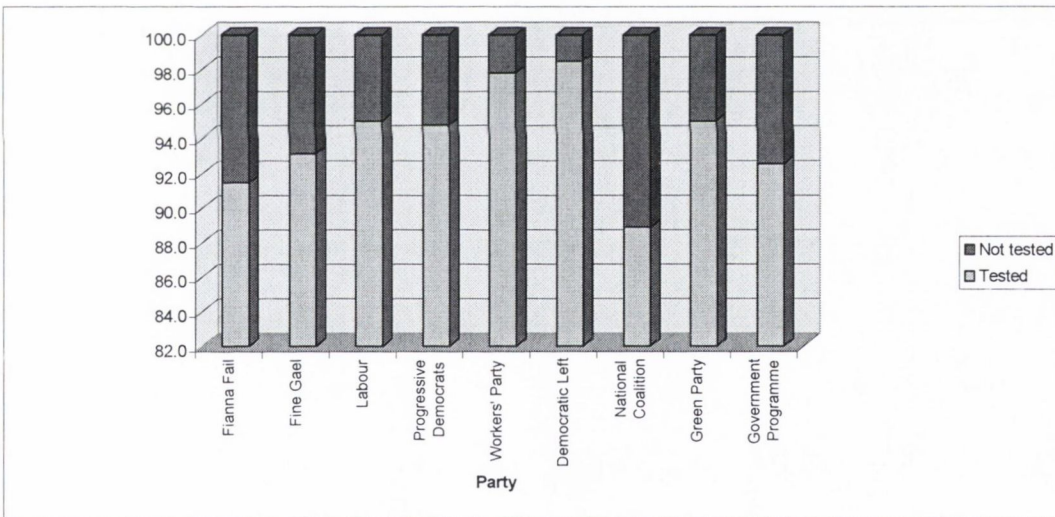
In Figure 5.2, the number of total pledges tested (excluding status quo pledges) by year are displayed. No less than 89% of pledges in any one year's set of documents were tested, and in fact on average over all the years c.94% of pledges in any one year of new government formation were tested. In Figure 5.3, it can be seen that no less than c.89% of pledges identified on average in a party's manifestos/parties' government programmes (excluding status quo pledges) were tested across the nine occasions of government formation between 1977 and 1997. Where a pledge appears untested, it is due to one of two reasons. In some instances, no evidence could be found in the sources cited earlier, to determine whether the pledge had been redeemed (fully or partially) or not. In other instances there was inconclusive evidence as to whether or not the pledge had been redeemed. Such a scenario might arise, for example, where sets of statistics confound each other, or if the wording of an article in a bill is ambiguous.

Unlike the Thomson study of the Netherlands (1999), I did not only test the redemption of pledges made in the socio-economic arena. The reason for this is that socio-economic pledges, while undoubtedly making up the majority of all parties' manifestos (See Table 3.3, Chapter 3), may be treated differently by parties in government from pledges made in other policy areas. As parties clearly feel it necessary to give pledges in policy areas such as foreign affairs and the reform of the political system, it is also important to investigate the redemption of these.



**Figure 5.2** Percentage Pledges\* Tested for Redemption by Election Year

\* Percentage of pledges as identified by principal coder



**Figure 5.3** Percentage Pledges\* Tested for Redemption by Party

\* Percentage of pledges as identified by principal coder

### 5.3 The Organisation of Data

One single database of pledges was set up, containing all of the pledges given by the parties before a change of government. In eight of the nine cases of new governments, this meant coding the manifestos and government programmes deriving from particular

elections for pledges. In the final case, the government that formed in 1994, no election preceded the formation of government. No new manifestos/comprehensive policy documents were issued by the parties so it was assumed that the manifestos of the parties issued in 1992 were still the best outline of the parties' intended actions should they enter government. Pledges that had been redeemed by the 1992-1994 government that preceded it were omitted from the list of pledges for the parties in 1994, as it was deemed highly unlikely that the pledge could be redeemed twice (remember that statements in support of the retention of the status quo are not coded as pledges). An example of such a pledge would be to abolish capital punishment. If the 1992-1994 Fianna Fáil-Labour government had already abolished capital punishment in their term then a pledge to do the same in the Fine Gael manifesto of 1992 was not included again for the 1994 government analysis.

#### **5.4 Dependent Variables**

In my three models of the programme-to-policy linkage, there are only two dependent variables. The first is inclusion of the pledge in the programme for government. The second dependent variable is obviously pledge fulfilment.

Section 5.2.5 discussed the fact that pledges were coded as either not redeemed, partially-redeemed or fully-redeemed according to government action identified in relation to the pledge. To ensure comparability of results, I test each of the three model's hypotheses measuring my second dependent variable in the same binary way as Thomson (1999). In other words, on the basis that partially-redeemed promises should be coded as evidence of at least attempts of good faith, I code partially-redeemed pledges as fully-redeemed when contrasting pledges that were fully redeemed with those that were not redeemed. However, concerned that by using this categorisation, I might be ignoring systematic differences in the various factors which make pledges more likely to be fully-redeemed as opposed to partially redeemed, I also tested each of my hypotheses for the three models using a binary variable fully redeemed/not redeemed, but this time coding partially redeemed pledges as not redeemed.

In every chapter in which a model is tested, both sets of results are reported. Clearly, if the two tests of any one hypothesis produce results that are in accord, then I can be fairly clear that the results have little to do with my coding of the dependent variable. If however they produce different results, one significant, the other not, one result positive, the other not, then an explanation is warranted as to why the inclusion of partially-redeemed pledges should produce a different result.

## 5.5 Independent Variables

Each of the key independent variables was specified in Chapter 4. These are summarised, by model, in Table 5.1.

**Table 5.1** Independent Variables

Dependent Variable	Independent Variable	Baseline Model	Govt. Party Model	Opp'n Party Model
<b>Pledge Included in Govt. Programme</b>	Negotiating Party to Agreement/Not	X		
	Strong Commitment to Pledge/Not		X	
	Pledge Given by More than One Coalition Partner/Not		X	
	Pledge Not Dissensual between Coalition Partners/ Dissensual		X	
	Opposition Pledge Shared with Party in Negotiations/Not			X
	Opposition Pledge not Dissensual with Pledge of Party in Negotiations/ Dissensual			X
	Prospective Minority Administration/Not			X
<b>Redemption of Pledge</b>	In Government/Not	X		
	Duration of Government	X		
	Single Party Administration/Coalition		X	
	Majority Administration/Minority		X	
	Gov't. Party Pledge Shared with Opposition Party/ Not		X	
	Pledge in Issue area of Economy/Not		X	
	Pledge Supported in Government Programme/Not		X	X
	Relevant Portfolio Held by Party Minister/Not		X	
	Pledge Given by More than One Coalition Partner/Not		X	
	Pledge Not Dissensual between Gov't. Parties/ Dissensual		X	
	Opposition Pledge Shared with Party in Gov't/Not			X
	Opposition Pledge Not Dissensual with Pledge of Party in Government/Dissensual			X
	Pledge Shared with Another Party in Opposition/Not			X
Minority Administration in Office/Not			X	

## 5.6 Methodology

I have three models of the programme-to-policy linkage, each of which have produced a set of testable hypotheses. In all cases the dependent variable is either pledge inclusion in the programme for government or pledge redemption. I have also identified what, I believe, are likely to be the most important factors in determining whether or not a pledge is included in the programme for government or redeemed, according to the position of the party relative to office. What remains to be discussed is how I test for a relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable.

In the first instance, I simply want to know if each of the independent variables that I have identified as being important to the realisation of each of the dependent variables, isolated from all other independent variables, can account for a *statistically significant degree of variation in the dependent variable on their own*. For example, does being in government make it more likely that a party's pledges will be redeemed than being in opposition, without taking into account any other factors, such as size of majority, whether the government is a single-party administration or not, and so on. One method of testing whether or not the independent variable is a significant factor in determining the variation in the value of the dependent variable is through the testing for a difference between two sample means. Taking the example cited above, this would involve testing for a statistically significant difference between the mean percentage of party pledges redeemed when parties are members of government and the mean percentage of party pledges redeemed when parties form the opposition. What is compared are the means of the percentage scores of government/opposition parties' pledges redeemed at each individual election/point of government formation respectively. As in this particular example, all of the difference-of-means tests (otherwise known as t-tests) are one-tailed tests as there are prior expectations as to the direction of difference between the two means. So for example with the hypothesis test suggested, I am looking for evidence that the mean of government party pledges redeemed is greater than the mean of pledges of parties in opposition. Taking the most conservative position, all means are expected to have unequal variances. The significance level adopted for the t-tests is a maximum of 5%. It is worth re-emphasising here that for all of the t-tests, my cases are the *mean percentage of a party's pledges at each election* either included in the programme for government (first dependent variable) or redeemed (second dependent variable) when the independent factor is present as compared with when it is absent.

The main thing I am interested in, however, is the extent to which each independent variable had an impact on pledge fulfilment, holding the effect of all other variables

constant. This involves looking at the multivariate impact of *sets of variables* on the likelihood of a pledge being included in the programme for government (first dependent variable) and then the impact of other groups of variables on the likelihood of a pledge being redeemed (second dependent variable). This is done through the use of binary logistic regression. In these logit regressions, *my cases are individual pledges*, each described by row, in my database, under the independent and dependent variable column headings. Using such cases, it is no longer possible to identify the pledges of particular parties or time periods in the determination of the results of the tests. The level of impact is measured by way of the odds ratio associated with each variable. For example, taking other independent variables into consideration (i.e. where each is set at a given level), the odds ratio of a party being in government on its pledge's redemption might be 1.27. In other words, a pledge made by a government party would be 1.27 times more likely to be fulfilled than a pledge of a party not in government. The closer the odds ratio is to one, the less impact the variable has independent of the other variables in the model. If the odds ratio falls below one, this signifies that a one unit increase in the relevant independent variable, makes the dependent variable that number of times less likely to be redeemed. Variables are only regarded as having a significant impact if the associated regression coefficient is significant at the 0.05 significance level or better. The independent variables used in each of the logistic regressions were checked for independence from each other by correlating them against each of the other variables in each regression. No independent variables left in any of the analyses correlated with another variable greater than c.0.4.

As mentioned in Section 5.2.6, when testing for pledge fulfilment in each of the three models, the binary dependent variable comes in two forms. The first includes partially-redeemed pledges as being fully-redeemed, whilst in the second, partially-redeemed pledges are coded as not redeemed. These two forms of the dependent variable are used in the testing of each of the hypotheses using difference of means tests and in the testing of the three models using logistic regressions.

Two further methodological issues need discussing. The first relates to the notion that a party's pledges might carry over from one election to another. For example, suppose Fianna Fáil, in 1977, pledges to increase the number of policemen by two thousand. In 1981, Fianna Fáil makes precisely the same promise again. Do these two promises comprise the same pledge or two different pledges? If the pledge in 1977 was redeemed, then the pledge in 1981 is clearly different because the base from which the number of policemen is being increased is different. The pledge is being made under new circumstances even if the wording remains the same. However if the pledge was not redeemed in 1977, whether or not the party had the potential to do so because it was in office, and the same wording is given again in 1981, then it is still not conceptualised as

the continuation of a pledge (the broad characteristics of the issues upon which actions were promised at repeated elections are described Appendix 3). I have clearly stated, in Appendix 2, my rules for the identification of pledges: where an action is promised, which will take longer than the current period of office to fulfil, it is not categorised as a pledge. Pledges are made by a party before an election and are valid only for the subsequent parliamentary term. Therefore my rules deny the possibility that a pledge may be repeated. Each manifesto pledge at each election is regarded as having been made entirely afresh.

Logistic regression, like ordinary least-squares regression, assumes that the variables used are free from serial correlation. This means that there should be no correlation between error terms in a given time period and successive time periods. Intuitively, though my rules do not allow for so-called *repeated pledges*, one might think my data analysis would be susceptible to this danger because a promise of action in 1981 implies that, in all likelihood, when the same action was pledged in 1977, it could not have been redeemed (Thomson 199, 96). My analysis is not, in fact, in danger. Logically, serial correlation cannot exist for this reason of repetition, as this would imply that a subsequent event has the ability to influence the chances of a former event occurring. This does not make sense. It needs to be remembered that, the same wording given at a later election is irrelevant to a pledge's odds of redemption at any earlier election. As such, I have kept the pledges of my nine government time-periods in one database.

The second methodological issue relates to the aims of the tests. The three models being tested in Chapters 6, 7 and 8 are not in conflict with each other. The Baseline Model tests pledge redemption between government parties and opposition parties. The Government Party Model looks explicitly at factors that will enhance the likelihood of government party pledges being redeemed. The final model, The Opposition Party Model, looks at factors that, if present, will infer the greater redemption of opposition party pledges. The idea of these models is to collect together a diverse set of ideas about how and why pledges are redeemed and explore the impact of these, both individually and when taking other potentially influential factors into account. I am not setting up the tests of these composite models to try to work out what is the *best* model of pledge redemption, using all of the variables I can lay my hands on. The main reason why I do not wish to define this thesis by the predictive value of the models that I produce is that it is obvious that I may well have omitted crucial variables in determining whether or not a party in government, for example, will redeem its pledges. Foremost amongst these would be economic variables. As mentioned in Section 4.5.1, most impending economic problems are long-term or structural in nature and should be known by parties in advance of an election. However, the possibility of the emergence of a dramatic and unanticipated

economic problem during the course of a government also cannot be denied. What I am interested in the political and institutional variables that affect the likelihood of any particular pledge's being fulfilled.

## **5.7 Conclusion**

In this chapter I have set out my methodology for testing the three models of the programme-to-policy linkage, through which I will test for the fourth and fifth requirements of the test of the theory that this thesis is concerned with. However before I move on to these three models, the focus of analysis will be narrowed in the next chapter to looking at just one specific policy area, namely the arts. I shall be seeking to accomplish three things in this chapter: the first is to show the reader, in practical terms, what sorts of statements were identified as pledges, what shared pledges look like, what constitutes support in the programme for government and what qualifies as redemption, full and partial. Secondly, I wish to identify patterns and trends in the sorts of pledges that are made and redeemed. Finally, I am looking to establish the extent to which manifestos and programmes for government actually anticipate the major actions of a government in a particular policy area, the seventh requirement of the test of Partisan Theory.



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## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>See

[www.oasis.gov.ie/government\\_in\\_ireland\\_and\\_politics\\_at\\_national\\_level/civil\\_service/administration\\_of\\_departments.html](http://www.oasis.gov.ie/government_in_ireland_and_politics_at_national_level/civil_service/administration_of_departments.html)

## CHAPTER 6

### ARTS POLICY

#### 6.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is threefold. First, I want the reader to taste a sample of the pledges that were identified from the Irish party manifestos over twenty years and to get an understanding of how pledge redemption was determined. One of the simplest ways of doing this is isolating pledges from one single policy area. Second, I want to illustrate at this stage in the argument, trends and patterns observable in the characteristics of those pledges that are redeemed and those that are not, in one distinct policy area. Third, I wish to show, in one policy area, the extent to which government actions, during various terms of office, are anticipated in manifesto pledges. This is seventh requirement of this programme-to-policy linkage test of partisan theory.

The chapter is divided into three sections. Section 6.2, “Arts Policy in Ireland”, discusses the meaning of *the arts* and gives a brief background to the policy area in Ireland pre-1977, largely sourced from Quinn’s book *Public Policy and the Arts* (1998). Section 6.3 looks at each of the governments that formed 1977-1997 in terms of the pledges made, the variety of pledges which were subsequently inserted into the government programme, and the sorts of pledges that got redeemed once a party got into government. It also assesses the extent to which the commonly-accepted milestones in the development of arts policy were iterated as pledges. This is an approach used by Rose (1984, 70) and by Thomson (1999, chaps 6,7) but for which relatively narrow policy areas are probably best-suited. The milestones are derived from Quinn (1998) and Kelly (1987, 1989) and with regard to the 1997 to 2002 Government, from *The Irish Times*, Dáil debates and the Arts Council website. Section 6.4 looks at the patterns that emerge from the analysis of the individual elections/governments and I conclude by discussing the inferences that may be made with regard to other areas of policy from the arts policy findings.

Arts policy has been chosen as the case study for pledge analysis because it is a domestic policy area in which government action is likely to have greater effect than in other policy areas. Unlike the economy, where the E.U., actions of foreign governments

and other external players, domestic interest groups and so on, may all blunt government policy tools, in the area of the arts, government is undoubtedly the most important player. This is not a mantle that many Irish governments have been eager to wear, evidenced by governments' *laissez-faire* approach to both the Arts Council and arts policy in general over the past fifty or so years. As it has traditionally been seen by the political parties in Ireland as a less important policy area (see for example, Kennedy 1990, 11, 70, 127) and certainly one with few votes in it, any party going into government has greater scope to change the *modus operandi*, to increase spending levels or to continue to ignore the area with virtual impunity. Thomson's study of the Netherlands looked only at socio-economic pledges, largely on the grounds that these policy areas were given a lot of attention by the parties in their manifestos, in all accounting for 49% of all pledges identified over the period 1986-1998 (Thomson 1999, 77). It is difficult to know which is the more representative out of the gamut of other policy areas. On the one hand, there are socio-economic policies – education, health, social welfare and the like – to which a great deal of attention is given by political parties yet their scope for action is delimited. On the other hand, there are policy areas such as the arts, which are relatively neglected in most manifestos yet provide wide scope for government initiative. The point is that both policy analyses are likely to tell us something about the programme-to-policy linkage, the former about more politically-salient policy areas in which government may be constrained, the latter about less salient areas in which the scope for real government action is nonetheless much greater.

## **6.2 Arts Policy in Ireland**

### **6.2.1 What are “The Arts”?**

In order to identify arts pledges, I need to be able to identify what sorts of proposed actions would constitute arts policy and what would not. “Arts policy” across states has no uniform meaning and tends to encompass different sets of art forms. However most authors tend to see the arts as a subset of cultural policy (see, for example, Cummings and Katz 1987). Quinn (1998, 75) differentiates between culture and the arts with “culture [as] the psychological dimension of our society's identity, the arts the physical manifestation of that cultural identity.” The arts are obviously a core part of cultural policy but, as Quinn points out, they also tend to be seen as distinctly separate. The point is that, using

Quinn's differentiation, it is clearly theoretically easier to distinguish between what is arts policy and what is not than what is cultural policy and what is not. "Arts policy" itself is just taken to be that series of actions or proposed actions made during the course of any one government that have to do with the arts.

One possible determinant of what would constitute "the arts" and not just "culture" and hence arts policy in Ireland would be to look purely at the areas of responsibility for which the Minister for Arts has jurisdiction. There are two problems with this. Firstly, the first government to have a full portfolio for the arts in Ireland was that of Fianna Fáil and Labour, formed at the end of 1992, barring the brief tenure of the Department for Fine Arts in 1922. To use this categorisation would require not using any of the pledges for the governments between these dates. Furthermore, the name given to the 1992 arts portfolio was "Arts, Culture and the Gaeltacht". Secondly, the Minister with titular responsibility for the arts in the last three governments (1992, 1994 and 1997) has not been solely responsible for all dimensions of art. For example, a "Per Cent for Art" scheme is variously run by the Office of Public Works, the Department of the Environment and local government and other departments such as Education. The National Library is under the aegis of the Department of Education. The "Writers in Prison Scheme" is jointly funded by the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform and the Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism (2002). The local authorities and the Arts Council also have their own distinct funding arms and responsibilities towards the arts.

The issue of diversified responsibility would also arise if instead I decided to look purely at the areas of responsibility of the designated arts body, the Arts Council (*An Comhairle Ealaíon* in Irish). This problem of arts responsibilities being spread amongst different actors would be compounded by the fact that in Ireland, the first Arts Act passed by the Dáil in 1951 defined the Arts Council's responsibilities as being painting, sculpture, architecture, music, "the drama", literature, and design in industry, hardly an exhaustive list (Quinn 1998, 66). Obvious omissions from this list are film, dance, crafts (Quinn 1998, 66), television and radio.

A further option would be to take the arts categorisation from the Manifesto Research Group (MRG) coding scheme to identify the pledges (Budge et al. 2001, Appendix 3). The MRG category PER502 is labelled "Culture" and encompasses "need to provide cultural and leisure facilities including arts and sport; need to spend money on museums, art galleries, etc; need to encourage worthwhile leisure activities and cultural mass media." This category is both too broad and too narrow, in the sense that it includes too many areas which are broadly-speaking not *art* – such as sport – and too narrow, in that a pledge containing reference to the arts but more generally speaking about government spending, for example, might not have been coded PER502.

The last option, and the one that I took, was to adopt one of the many definitions of the arts provided within the literature. It is a definition also used by Quinn (1998), taken from the National Foundation on the Arts and the Humanities Act of 1965 (US);

The term ‘the arts’ includes, but is not limited to, music (instrumental and vocal), dance, drama, folk art, creative writing, architecture and allied fields, painting, sculpture, photography, graphic and craft arts, industrial design, costume and fashion design, motion pictures, television, radio, tape and sound recording, the arts related to presentation, performance, execution, and exhibition of such major art forms and the study and application of the arts to the human environment (National Foundation on the Arts and the Humanities, 1965 quoted in Quinn 1998, 67 and the website of the National Endowment for the Arts, [www.nea.gov/about/Legislation/Legislation.pdf](http://www.nea.gov/about/Legislation/Legislation.pdf)).

Potential omissions from this list might include street performance, circus performances and, perhaps, language (O’Snoaigh T.D. cited in McKeon, 2003). Even using the above definition there are still cases where the distinction between “arts” and “culture” is nebulous. For example, is a pledge to “improve the protection for listed buildings on a statutory basis and introducing incentives for proper upkeep and maintenance” to do with the arts specifically, or as architecture from a largely by-gone era would it just come under the “culture” umbrella? (Fine Gael, Labour and Democratic Left 1994, Section 123). My decision in this instance was that architectural heritage constituted cultural heritage as many purveyors of the *art* were unlikely to be able to benefit from state or any other form of sponsorship. Kennedy also observes this distinction between so-called “heritage arts” which he describes as “conservation of past creativity and its dissemination” and “the living arts” (Kennedy 1990, 8).

One final issue bears mention. The National Foundation on the Arts and Humanities included broadcasting media as “the arts”. I accept the inclusion of radio and television and broadcasting issues generally as coming under the umbrella of *the arts*, as European media, and in particular state-owned media, are “major consumers and patrons of the arts” (Cummings and Katz 1987, 8) and as such, major distributors of the arts. As Kennedy (1990) states with regard to the earlier years of the Irish State, “radio was to be an important purveyor of state culture and a key element in developing attitudes to the arts. In its first decades, Irish radio was not adventurously artistic but offered listeners a staple diet of concerts, lectures, interviews and plays” (Kennedy 1990, 15). By the 1970s, he claims, “the opening up of Irish society through television, free education and greater travel opportunities stimulated a demand for the arts” (Kennedy 1990, 108). Clearly, any

change in the status, ownership or well-being of radio or television stations may be taken to have an impact on the accessibility of arts products to the general public and any knock-on demand for live performances that such exposure may generate. I have therefore categorised pledges dealing with broadcasting as arts pledges.

### **6.2.2 The Importance of Arts Policy?**

The question of the importance of the arts has only twice been analysed in general population surveys in Ireland. The question put to interviewees in 1993 was “What is your own top priority concern in terms of the issues the Government will have to deal with in the Budget.”<sup>1</sup> They were then shown a card with eight options: job creation, income tax cuts, crime and crime prevention, education, equality issues, the arts, none of these and don’t know. Less than 1% of people (one person) out of 1056 surveyed chose the Arts. Clearly in this one survey, the indication is that the arts do not rank high on most people’s lists of priorities for government action.

A reason for this may be found from the second survey of public opinion on the arts conducted in 1994, which showed that “there is little perception of the arts as a significant economic sector in Ireland, in terms of providing employment” though strong agreement was found on the importance of the arts to the tourism sector (Clancy et al. 1994, 68). In that same survey when asked if the current expenditure on the arts should be maintained even during economic recession, only 24% disagreed (Clancy et al. 1994, 70). Saying that however, 45% didn’t know what the current level was and a further 53% underestimated it.

Investigating the value put on the arts by the political parties results in a slightly different picture. Looking at each party’s manifesto pledges, it is found that, out of the 33 party manifestos looked at in this study, only 20 of them included pledges relating to the arts. In fact in the November election of 1982, no pledge was made which fell squarely into the PER502 “Culture” category at all. As Figure 6.1 shows, a pattern emerges over time. In the early years covered by this study, the late 1970s and early 1980s, arts pledges were seldom given at any particular election. By 1997, however, only the Progressive Democrats did not make any pledge in the field. Arts policy has clearly come to be accepted by the parties as an area in which the State has a role, a conclusion reinforced by the creation of a full ministerial post with responsibility for the arts in 1993. Twenty six of the 79 manifesto arts pledges identified over the years 1977-1997 related directly to the broadcasting sector. In most cases, the political parties discussed broadcasting pledges in

a separate section of their manifesto from their discussion of the more conventional arts. However, both Fianna Fáil and the Green Party in 1997 and Fianna Fáil and the Progressive Democrats in 1987 explicitly discuss broadcasting under sections with either “Arts” or “Culture” in the heading.

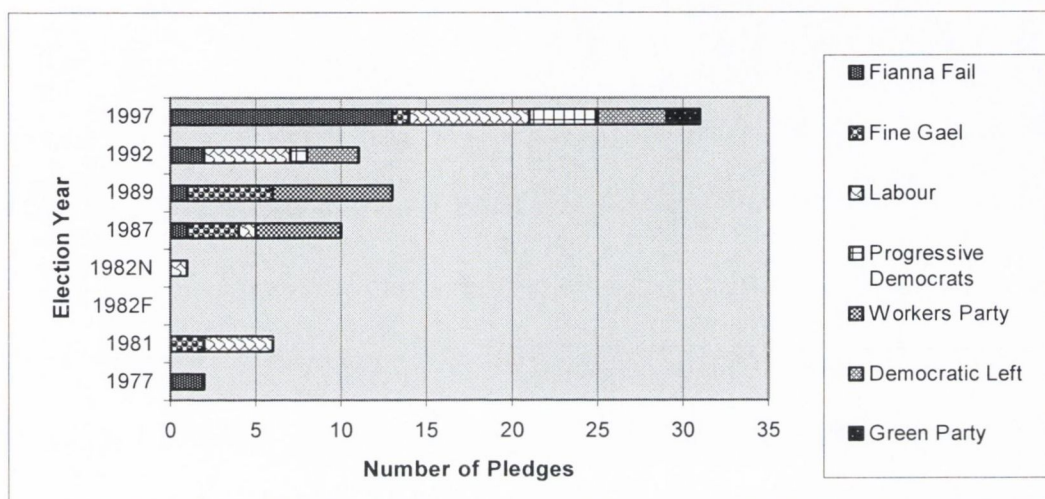
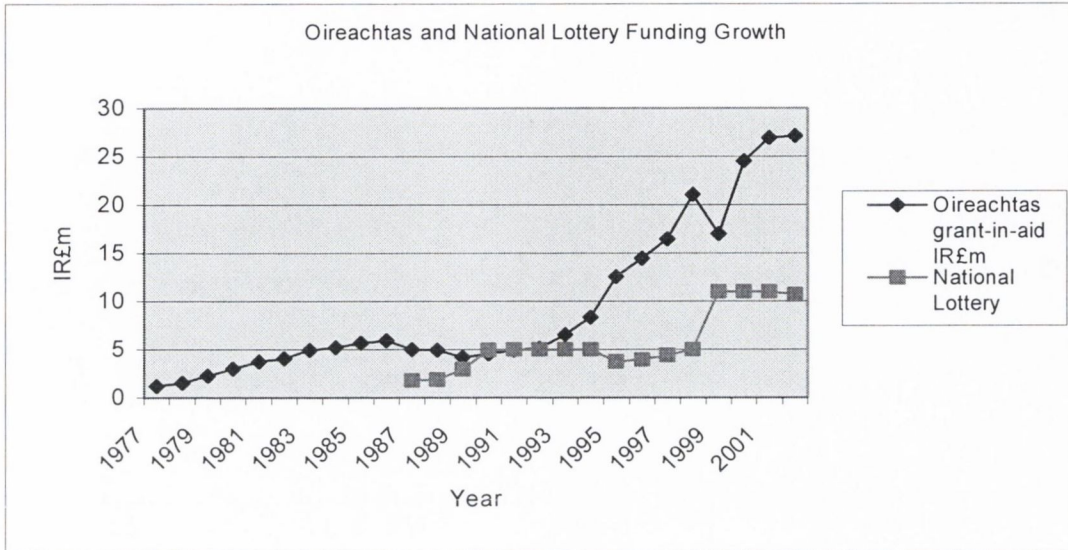


Figure 6.1 Arts Pledges by Party

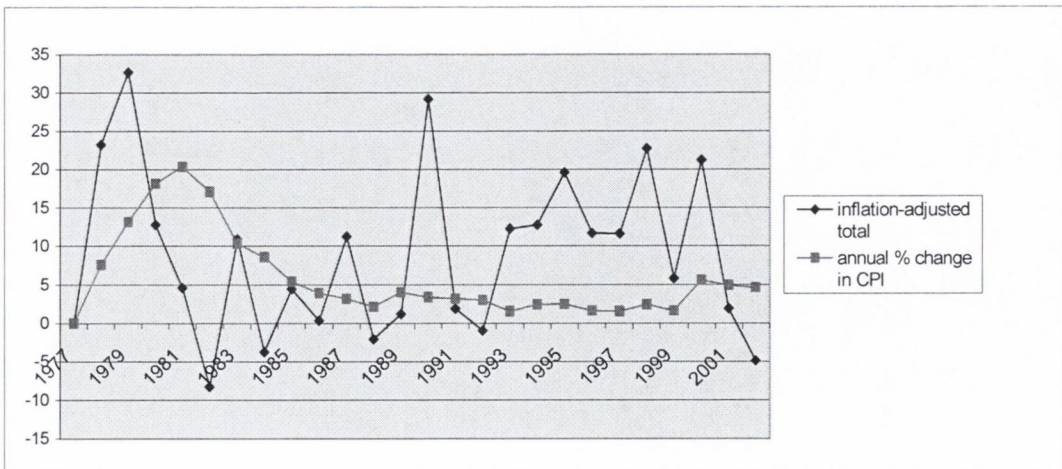
Regardless of which party was in power and when, and of how many pledges they devoted to the area, Irish state expenditure on the arts has lagged behind that of most other European countries in per capita terms. A report written by the International Arts Bureau in 2000, entitled *A comparative study of levels of arts expenditure in selected countries and regions*, surveyed nine E.U. and other developed countries and found that Ireland’s per capita spending was IR£10.48 as compared with IR£14.07 in Northern Ireland, IR£14.23 in England and IR£17.35 in Scotland (Arts Council 2000, 16-7). In 1997 spending directly on the arts in Ireland constituted a mere 0.09% of GDP (International Arts Bureau, 2000).<sup>2</sup> Notwithstanding this, however, there has been a discernible increase in the amount of funds allocated to the Arts Council both directly from the government and from the National Lottery since the early 1990s (See Figure 6.2).



**Figure 6.2** Oireachtas and National Lottery Funding Growth

Source: Arts Council Annual reports (on website), An Post National Lottery Company Annual Report 2001 and Debates of the Houses of the Oireachtas.

If we look at Figure 6.3, we can see that increases in government spending have not been purely inflation-driven. In the late 1970s and 1990s, Arts Council funding clearly outpaced inflation whilst in the early to mid-1980s, it struggled to keep pace with inflation. This is not purely dependent on the health of the economy, as in 1987 the public debt and budget deficit ratios to GDP were still extremely high, at c.132% and c.7% respectively.<sup>3</sup>



**Figure 6.3** Inflation-Adjusted % Increases in Arts Council Funding (Grant-in-Aid and Lottery) as Compared with Annual % Increase in CPI

Source: Annual reports of the Arts Council 1977-2000 and Debates of the Houses of the Oireachtas. Inflation data from CSO website.



Despite both the appointment of a minister with responsibility for the arts and increased funding, arts policy is still not held in the same high esteem by the Irish political parties as other policy areas, such as health, social welfare and even the environment (Quinn 1998, 281).

### **6.2.3 A Brief History of Arts Policy in Ireland pre-1977**

A Department of Fine Arts was established as what we would now call “a junior ministry” under the Second Dáil beginning 26<sup>th</sup> August 1921 (Kennedy 1990, 10). It was abolished as an independent department five months later and merged with the Department of Education. Nothing close to arts policy could be said to have been developed before the Arts Act of 1951, promulgated in Ireland in 1951 allegedly in response to the Bodkin Report but perhaps also emulating developments in Britain (Quinn 1998, 99). The Arts Council, which was set up in the 1951 Act, was given an opaque mandate by the government of the day (the first inter-party government). It was never made clear in the act who were to be the designated beneficiaries of resulting actions, the public or the artists, while funding from the outset was largely targeted at professional organisations (Quinn 1998, 126). Eligibility for membership of the council was not specified. The Arts Council was accountable to cabinet and its members (ordinary and co-opted) were appointed by the Taoiseach (barring the director who was selected by the cabinet but appointed by the president). Jurisdiction over the Arts Council was allocated to the Department of an Taoiseach but no civil servants were given responsibility for it. It was also never made clear how independent the Arts Council was meant to be. The Council was given no explicit responsibility for arts education, which has largely to the present day been the preserve of the Department of Education (Kelly 1989, 66; Kennedy 1990, 116). For the first few years of the Act’s being in force, the Arts Council was grossly underfunded (Quinn 1998, 116).

Two major developments took place in the 1960s. First, funding increased massively, from a low of IR£9,314 in 1951 to IR£70,000 by 1969.<sup>4</sup> Second, in 1969, a major change was brought about in arts policy in Ireland with the introduction by Charles Haughey of a Finance Act that incorporated provisions for tax exemption to artists. To qualify, an artist had to be normally resident in Ireland and be deemed an *artist* by the revenue commissioners (Quinn 1998, 148-9). Another development of note but in 1971, was the establishment of a crafts council to develop design in industry (including the

Kilkenny Design workshops) and craftwork (Kelly 1987, 257). By the early 1970s, developments in the arts were deemed to require a new supporting Act (Quinn 1998, 150).

In 1973, a second Arts Act was passed as an amendment to the first. The fact that it had taken 20 years to get this Act, given the widely-acknowledged flaws in the 1951 Act, illustrates the low priority accorded to arts policy by various parties in government (Quinn 1998, 151). The new Act broadened the definition of art forms to include cinema and specified that members of the Arts Council all had to have some relationship to the arts prior to appointment. It also specified that members of either Houses of the Oireachtas would not be eligible for membership. The Act provided for a sub-structure of committees for the various of the arts, architecture, music, drama, cinema and so on and for a role for local authorities in funding the arts. However, it fell down again in failing to identify the “intended point of impact” (Quinn 1998, 162). An improvement in funding for the arts was also registered in 1973, with the Arts Council getting a grant increase of c.50% (Kelly 1987, 259).

Quinn (1998, 200-1) contends that the Arts Act of 1973 was essentially “cultural window dressing” rather than a sign of greater government interest or funding to come. She claims that the arts were effectively sidelined as successive parties in government failed to put the arts on a par with other socio-economic policy areas and failed to establish a government department with overall responsibility for the area. Governments during the 1970s and 1980s were, in fact, keen to maintain a “hands-off” approach to the Arts Council. Arts policy in Ireland has as a result largely been a matter for the Arts Council, with rarely any interference or, for that matter, interest from civil servants or government except with regard to the issue of its funding.

### **6.3 Arts Policy – Promises and Redemption by Government 1977-2002**

In this section, each of the arts pledges given by each party at each election from 1977-1997 (paraphrased) is followed through the government programme, where it applies, to its redemption (or not as the case may be). All pledges that were fulfilled are checked to see whether or not the commitments made had already been put in train during the previous term by the government of the day. This was done largely through the database of parliamentary debates and Acts of the Oireachtas. In other words, precautions were taken so that parties in government were not given credit for actions largely taken by a predecessor government. Other developments that occurred during the course of the government term but were not included as pledges are detailed in the course of the analysis

of each government's actions. Appended, where relevant, to the descriptions of the arts pledges made is the party history of the ideas contained in the pledges.

### **6.3.1 July 1977- June 1981 – Fianna Fáil Majority Government**

#### Pledges Given

In the election manifestos of 1977, only two arts pledges were made by any party/coalition of parties (in the latter case the National Coalition of Fine Gael and Labour who campaigned on a joint platform) in the system. The first, made by Fianna Fáil, was:

*to support "the people of single channel areas in their claim to entitlement to a choice of television viewing and undertake to establish a programme council strongly representative of these areas, to advise the authority on the selection of the best programmes available from BBC1, BBC2, ITV and other sources, for transmission on the second channel."*

The pledge was essentially to set up a council to inform RTE, the state broadcasting authority, of the sorts of programmes that the population living away from the eastern seaboard would like broadcast on the soon-to-be-established second channel, RTE 2. The population living on the east coast received these programmes directly by aerial. The second pledge was again made by Fianna Fáil (1977), and was:

*to establish a special committee to look into the feasibility of provision of a television service for the Gaeltacht.*

Determination of whether or not this pledge was redeemed was not possible as no evidence could be found to suggest either that such a committee had been established or that it had not.

The fact that there were only two arts pledges out of 107 (sum of pledges given by all parties winning at least two seats at that election) is in part an indication of the paucity of pledges in manifestos (a reflection of the infancy of election manifestos in the country) with the average number of pledges per party c.50% less than the average per party in 1997.

## Pledges Redeemed

Fianna Fáil redeemed its pledge within two years of government, as RTE's programme council was in operation in and around the same time as the inauguration of the second television channel in November 1978. Clearly the party had control of all cabinet portfolios and being in a majority position, had no other party to consult on whether or not this pledge should be redeemed. Fianna Fáil, while in opposition, had proposed an amendment to the Broadcasting Authority (Amendment) Bill, finally passed into law in 1976, in which statutory provision for such a Council was proposed. However this proposed amendment was defeated in the Dáil in the final stages of the bill largely on the grounds that the bill already contained provision for the Broadcasting Council to set up any committees it wanted.<sup>5</sup> It is clear that the pledge made by Fianna Fáil however should have been easily enacted once they got into office. The legislation was already in place. The pledge, in other words, was not highly taxing on the party.

## Other Developments

In the period 1980 to 1983, the Fianna Fáil leader, Charles Haughey, appointed an artistic and cultural advisor, Anthony Cronin, himself a writer and poet. The fact that Mr Haughey appointed a cultural advisor in 1980 though there was not a pledge for such an action is not particularly noteworthy. The appointment of special advisors to members of the government has never been pledged in manifestos, despite the fact that in recent years their numbers have burgeoned. Although no explanation has been offered for this, the reason is likely to be that the government would prefer for the public to think that the ideas and processes of government can all be credited to the politicians' and are not the product of advice from unelected officials.

In 1978 the Arts Council's funding was increased by c.30% and in 1979 by 46%, with no predication on a manifesto pledge. These were both increases well ahead of the annual average rate of inflation. Clearly not all important developments in the policy area were presaged by manifesto pronouncements.

### 6.3.2 June 1981-March 1982 – Fine Gael/Labour Minority Coalition

#### Pledges Given

In the 1981 election, only the manifestos of the parties that subsequently entered office contained pledges that pertained to arts policy. Fine Gael firmly pledged:

*to appoint a minister of state for culture and leisure and to set aside a certain percentage of the cost of any building to its artistic embellishment while assisting young people in the 'plastic arts' (sculpture, ceramics and the like).*

*the licensing of local radio stations provided by community groups, with opportunities for existing local radio stations to participate.*

Labour committed itself to

*the creation of a ministerial post for the arts and culture,*

*a national arts and conference centre*

*greater financial support for the arts.*

Finally, they stated their desire for

*a national youth theatre to be established.*

None of the pledges made by either party was considered to be related consensually with a pledge of the other party (ie, also made by another party). At the time, responsibility for the Arts Council lay with the Department of An Taoiseach while responsibility for broadcasting lay with the Minister for Posts and Telegraphs.

#### Content of the Programme for Government

The joint programme for government issued by the two parties in the aftermath of the election contained four arts pledges. All related back to the governing parties' manifestos in one way or another. Of the original pledges in the manifestos that were later supported in the government programme, three were hard and only one was soft. One pledge represented a compromise between the Fine Gael and Labour positions with regard to governmental responsibility for the arts. The programme endorsed the creation of a junior ministry (Fine Gael) as opposed to a full ministry (Labour) but with responsibility for culture and the arts (Labour position) rather than culture and leisure (Fine Gael). A second pledge was also a compromise reached between the two parties of government, although slanting more towards the original Fine Gael pledge. The Labour Party had made clear in its manifesto that it wished to see no change in the monopoly position of R.T.E. with

regard to both television and radio broadcasting. However as a commitment to retain the status quo, this statement was not coded as a pledge. The government programme promised

*the licensing of local radio to be provided by community-based groups but with the option that R.T.E. could buy 25% of a share in the station, and of more, if desired.*

A third wholly endorsed the Fine Gael promise

*to set aside a percentage of the cost of any public building for artistic embellishment by purchase of Irish art.*

A second part of this pledge was also supported in the programme, committing the government

*“to introduce a scheme to aid young people in the plastic arts in return for a portion of their work accruing to the State.”*

A final pledge supported the Labour commitment to

*establish a national youth theatre.*

#### Pledges Redeemed

None of the arts policy pledges made by either of the two government parties was redeemed, nor were either of the two compromise pledges contained in the programme for government.

#### Other Developments

Nothing of particular note was endorsed by way of arts policy during this very short government period that had not been included in either of the manifestos.

### **6.3.3 March 1982-December 1982 – Fianna Fáil Minority Government**

#### Pledges Given

No pledges pertaining to arts policy were made in any party's election manifesto.

## Other Developments

In the early 1980s as state finances became tighter, the Arts Council's approach was to reduce its funding of the larger arts organisations "so that it could grant aid the activities of a large number of small, young and promising arts groups", much to the irritation of the then Taoiseach, Charles Haughey (Kennedy 1990, 120). Its funding was increased by 22% in the November 1982 budget (Quinn 1998, 210-1). Also noteworthy was the elimination of V.A.T. on books in March 1982, an action that had not been promised in the earlier February budget of John Bruton (FG), and the introduction of a pension scheme for artists (Aosdána) not earning above a certain threshold.

### **6.3.4 December 1982-March 1987 – Fine Gael/Labour Majority Coalition**

#### Pledges Given

In the party manifestos of late 1982, only Labour's document contained a pledge relevant to the arts (although both Fianna Fáil and the Workers' Party devoted space to the arts in their proxy manifesto/manifesto respectively, neither sections were coded as having pledges in them). Labour's pledge was that

*"Pirate radio or TV stations [were] to be prohibited."*

This was coded as a soft pledge as the phrase preceding the statement was "Labour's policy is", which, in my view, indicated support though not strong commitment. My view is that the term *policy* used in this context should be interpreted as *Labour's strategy or guiding principle is* and not *we will* (See Appendix 2 for distinction between hard and soft pledges).

#### Content of the Programme for Government

The Labour Party's pledge was not endorsed in the subsequent programme for government, nor were there any new proposals introduced in that document relating to the arts. Given the overall economic misfortunes of the time, the government programme could be seen as backing the inferred Fine Gael position, i.e., that this was not the time to be introducing new proposals in a perceived lesser productive sector like the arts. If made,

Irish manifesto arts pledges tend to involve spending commitments rather than low-costs actions such as setting up committees or restructuring departmental responsibilities.

### Pledges Redeemed

Labour's pledge was not redeemed. Pirate stations continued to operate with impunity, no new legislation having been passed or action taken to curb their activities.

### Other Developments

Ted Nealon, a Fine Gael T.D. (member of the Dáil), was appointed as Minister of State for Arts and Culture on the 7<sup>th</sup> January 1983, one month after the coalition took office. The functions allocated to this position were taking "responsibility for institutions of art and heritage and [...overseeing] the general development of so-called 'cultural' policy in Ireland" (Quinn 1998, 222 referencing Kelly 1987, 260). The status and functions of the Arts Council were left unaltered as "due to political turmoil and adverse economic factors, peripheral concerns – for example, the arts – received decreasing levels of attention" (Quinn 1998, 228).

A second major development was the introduction of a provision in the Finance Act of 1984 allowing a donor of IR£100 to IR£10,000 to an approved arts body to claim tax relief on that donation (Section 32). This made clear that the parties in government were concerned to alleviate the financial pressure on themselves to provide funds for the arts (Quinn 1998, 214). In the budget of 1984, V.A.T. was removed from theatre and other live performances in an attempt to make the arts more self-sufficient through boosting attendances. The final development was the passing of the National Lottery Act in 1986, for which "moneys paid into the central fund [...] shall be applied for (a) the purposes of such one or more of the following, and in such amounts, as the Government may determine from time to time, that is to say, sport and other recreation, national culture (including the Irish language), the arts (within the meaning of the Arts Act, 1951) and the health of the community, and (b) such (if any) other purposes, and in such amounts, as the Government may determine from time to time" (National Lottery Act 1986, Section 5). By 2002, annual sales by the National Lottery had grown to €533.3m, of which c.32% was raised for beneficiary projects, and again of which c.11% went to art, cultural and heritage projects. Since its inception in 1987, therefore, the lottery has raised a total of €1.9bn for beneficiary projects (National Lottery 2002, 4). By 1987, a government white paper



*Access and Opportunity* (Ireland 1987) extolled the virtues of business sponsorship in the arts, upon which a five year arts plan of the Arts Council launched in June 1987 was based (Quinn 1998, 217). A private sponsorship council was established in tandem, with the impetus coming from the business sector, however, rather than the government (Quinn 1998, 217).

In none of the cases of the three major developments cited was there any mention in the governing parties' manifestos (or those of opposition parties for that matter) that they intended taking these actions should they enter government following the election. Perhaps the most surprising omission of the three from manifestos is that of the appointment of a junior minister shortly after the government was installed. Clearly, it must have been the intention of one of the parties to promote such a post, but for some reason, the intention did not warrant a mention in the manifesto. No reference was made to the likelihood of any of the three developments in the joint programme for government either.

### **6.3.5 March 1987-July 1989 – Fianna Fáil Minority Government**

#### Pledges Given

In 1987, nine arts pledges were made in the parties' manifestos, four in that of the Workers' party and three in the Fine Gael party manifesto and one made by the Labour Party. The resultant government party, Fianna Fáil, had one hard pledge in the issue area:

*“to introduce a Local Radio Bill under which a Local Broadcasting Authority will be established, involving local community groups as well as local authorities, to regulate local and community broadcasting.”*

The Workers' Party manifesto pledged to

*endeavour to establish an Irish language television channel,  
an employment and social welfare category of artist (i.e. an individual who is regarded as being eligible for transfers yet unavailable for work as he/she is a working artist),  
to increase the funding of the Arts Council, and  
to employ local arts officers at the local council level.*

They also supported

*greater trade union representation on the Arts Council*

(although this was excluded from the analysis as determination on fulfilment was inconclusive – while a new council was appointed during the government term, I was not

able to determine if greater trade union representation had been achieved through those newly-appointed). The Workers' Party's were all phrased as soft pledges. The Fine Gael hard promise was

*to control the export of pictures, documents and so on from the country.*

Their soft promises were *to propose to*

*establish four national television stations, and to*

*re-introduce the Local Radio Bill.*

Finally, the Labour Party made a soft promise to

*prohibit pirate radio stations.*

There were two consensual pledges out of the 10. These were the pledges made by Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael to reintroduce the Local Radio Bill. There were slight differences in the detail in that Fianna Fáil pledged to establish a Local Broadcasting Authority while Fine Gael opted to rejuvenate the Local Radio Commission with "responsibility for cable T.V. systems, and any possible alternative independent Irish DBS TV stations."

### Pledges Redeemed

Fianna Fáil's pledge was partially redeemed – the Local Broadcasting Commission never arose in the exact form that had been proposed in the manifesto but instead an Independent Radio and Television Commission was established in the Broadcasting and Wireless Telegraphy Act 1988. This Bill was first presented under this Fianna Fáil administration. Fine Gael's pledge with regard to local radio was deemed fully-redeemed as the initial proposal had been to include responsibility for television stations. None of the Fine Gael Party's other pledges were fulfilled. Pirate stations were prohibited in the Broadcasting and Wireless Telegraphy Act 1988, so the Labour Party's pledge was also deemed enacted. With regard to the Workers' Party's pledges, Fianna Fáil redeemed one pledge, partially fulfilled a second and ignored the last two. An increase in funding for the Arts Council was recorded as was the introduction of arts officers at local level (partial redemption as only seven were appointed by December 1989 and the Minister made it clear that it was a matter for the local authorities). The provision in voted monies (and national lottery funding) for the Arts Council was c.20% higher than it had been in 1986 at c.IR£7m.<sup>6</sup> In sum, therefore, three-and-a-half out of eight of the non-governmental arts pledges were redeemed by Fianna Fáil in government, as well as its own. So, for c.50% of pledges in this issue area, redemption (either partial or full) occurred. Three of these

pledges could be said to have been aided in their redemption by previous governments' efforts, these pledges relating to the Broadcasting and Wireless Telegraphy Act. According to the Minister of the day, Ray Burke, many of the provisions for this Bill were drawn from the Fine Gael/Labour government's Local Radio Bill which was introduced to the Dáil in 1985 but never got further than the second stage.<sup>7</sup>

### Other Developments

In 1988, Dublin city celebrated its millenium. Rather than the events' being organised or even funded largely by the Arts Council, responsibility was given to a public relations company, Dublin Promotions Organisation Ltd (D.P.O.L.) (Quinn 1998, 203). Applications for funds were submitted to D.P.O.L., the details of which were then forwarded on to the Department of the Environment for final approval prior to the funds' being released.<sup>8</sup> By giving the project to D.P.O.L., the Government could ensure their own control over the proposed proceedings to a degree which could not have been achieved had the project been awarded to the Arts Council. By one account, 1988 was perceived as one of the worst years on record for arts organisations (Quinn 1998, 203).

A decision was also made in 1988 to establish a committee to advise the Taoiseach on the arrangements needed for the permanent running of a National Gallery of Modern Art in the Royal Hospital Kilmainham. Work on the Gallery also started in 1988.<sup>9</sup> This opened under the following government as the Irish Museum of Modern Art in May 1991. Under Section 35 of the Finance Act 1987, tax relief was provided for on sums of up to IR£100k per Irish film project per annum.<sup>10</sup> V.A.T. on sales of works of art over one hundred years old was also reduced from 25% to 10% from July 1<sup>st</sup> 1989 in an attempt both to stop the flow of artwork abroad and to entice people to re-import such items as had already left the country.<sup>11</sup> None of these developments was intimated in the 1987 party manifestos.

### 6.3.6 July 1989 - January 1993 – Fianna Fáil-Progressive Democrats Majority Coalition

#### Pledges Given

In the election campaign of 1989, 13 arts pledges were made: five by Fine Gael, seven by the Workers' Party and one by Fianna Fáil. The first four of Fine Gael's pledges were *to provide for a trading company within R.T.E. to promote an export sales drive, to establish reciprocal broadcasting arrangements with Northern Ireland, to introduce a quota for home-produced programmes for both R.T.E. and a third channel (hard pledge), and for there to be greater programming in Irish and for Teilifís na Gaeilge to be established (soft pledge),*

Fine Gael's final pledge was

*that the allocation of such lottery funds in the area of the arts should be decided by the Arts Council, subject to the final approval of the Taoiseach (who at that point had responsibility for the arts) (soft pledge).*

The Workers' Party also supported

*the establishment of an Irish television channel and that contributions directly from the State should be doubled to c.IR£14m.*

In fact, the Workers' Party concerns in the field were generally rather more to do with the administration of arts policy –

*supporting a strong media council, trade union representation for cultural workers on the board of the Arts Council, the appointment of arts officers to local councils and to re-establish a state agency for the development of film in Ireland.*

They also supported the introduction of

*a "social welfare and employment category of artist."*

All of the Workers' Party's pledges were coded as *soft*. Fianna Fáil, one of the two parties that entered government after the election, pledged that

*the National Lottery would be supporting the one-off building of a new theatre for Siamsa Tire (the national folk theatre), in tandem with cultural pledges to foster the use of the Irish language.*

## Content of the Programme for Government

The programme for government, *In the National Interest*, contained no pledges directly concerned with the arts.

### Pledges Redeemed

Only three of the 13 arts pledges tested were even partially redeemed. Fianna Fáil managed to redeem its pledge concerning Siamsa Tire with IR£600k of lottery funds put towards the construction of a new theatre in Tralee in 1990. The pledge for funding for the new theatre for Siamsa Tire was new to the political arena when made by Fianna Fáil in 1989. The administrative pledge of Fine Gael, i.e., that the Arts Council should decide on funding allocations, was also redeemed by the government of the day, albeit only partially. It was certainly the case that the Arts Council got allocations from the national lottery, but this by no means constituted all of the lottery monies spent in the area of arts and culture.

### Other Developments

In 1989, it was agreed with the Minister for Cultural Affairs of the EC to designate Dublin as “European City of Culture” in 1991. The mandate was given by the Taoiseach to Dublin Promotions Organisations Limited (D.P.O.L.) again, though consultation was to occur with the Arts Council.<sup>12</sup> IR£2.8m of state funds were put towards this project covering restoration works, the upgrading of the canals and the staging of events while D.P.O.L. was paid IR£1.25m for their organisational work.<sup>13</sup>

## **6.3.7 January 1993 - December 1994 – Fianna Fáil-Labour Majority Coalition**

### Pledges Given

In the election campaign of 1992, 11 arts pledges were made, three less than in 1989: two by Fianna Fáil, five by the Labour Party, one by the Progressive Democrats and three by

Democratic Left. Fianna Fáil, the major party to get into government after this election, pledged to

*set up Teilifis na Gaeilge and  
to maintain and extend arts funding with greater emphasis on regional and local  
centres.*

The former pledge was also iterated by the Progressive Democrats, and had been given at the two earlier elections by the Workers' Party. All three pledges used hard terminology.

The Labour Party, the smaller party in government, made a number of soft pledges:

*to increase Arts Council funding to the level envisaged by the Programme for  
Economic and Social Progress (1991 partnership agreement between government,  
employers and trade unions – IR£12-IR£13m p.a.,  
that local authorities each appoint an arts officer and establish a cultural committee  
and  
that the councils be required to produce county cultural development plans.*

They also supported

*changes in the planning laws requiring certain buildings to incorporate an arts  
dimension and  
pledged to maintain and expand the favourable tax treatment of artists.*

They referred to Teilifis na Gaeltachta (a pledge for a television station for the people of the Gaeltacht as opposed to just a television station broadcasting predominantly in Irish) in their manifesto but due to a lack of clarity as to exactly what "commitment to Teilifis na Gaeltachta" meant in terms of action, the statement was omitted as a pledge. Interestingly, the pledge to appoint arts officers to each local authority had been made previously by The Workers' Party in 1987 and 1989.

Democratic Left's pledges were also all *soft*,  
*supporting the founding of a National Performing Arts Authority,  
an Independent Council for Music and  
the re-establishment of the Film Board.*

Two sets of consensual pledges were identified: those of Fianna Fáil and the Progressive Democrats relating to Teilifis na Gaeilge and those of the two future coalition partners, Fianna Fáil and Labour, pertaining to increases in Arts Council funding.

## Content of the Programme for Government

The Programme for Government, *A Government of Partnership*, contained nine arts pledges. A first endorsed the Fianna Fáil (and Progressive Democrat) pledge to establish Teilifis na Gaeilge. A second supported the Fianna Fáil and Labour Party consensual pledges to increase the Arts Council's funding, specifically to the level envisaged by the Programme for Economic and Social Progress.<sup>14</sup> A third pledge endorsed the Labour Party position on getting the local councils to produce county cultural development plans. Two more commitments were to a) get local authorities to spend at least 1% of their capital budgets on the arts and b) for government building projects to factor in spending on artistic embellishment, again both derivative of a former Labour pledge although not identical to it. A sixth pledge reiterated the Labour promise to maintain and expand the favourable tax regime for artists in the state. Finally, the government programme contained three pledges which were entirely independent of any of parties' manifestos. One was for access to be provided to the independent production sector to broadcasting media, a second was for the extension of the Arts Council's bursary scheme (not tested) while a final one pledged to repeal the cap in the 1990 Broadcasting Act. All of the programme's pledges were hard, and 75% of them derived from a governing party's manifesto.

## Pledges Redeemed

Teilifis na Gaeilge was not established under this government. Fianna Fáil's second pledge was to maintain and extend arts funding, which did occur. In 1993 and 1994, increase in funding to the Arts Council were by 14% and 15% respectively as compared with an average of 11% for the preceding four years. Despite support for both pledges in the government agreement, it was the only pledge on which Fianna Fáil and its partner in government agreed which was redeemed. Of Labour's other pledges, it was only that dealing with the maintenance and expansion of the tax regime for artists that was redeemed (through the Finance Act, Section 14, 1994 – note pledge also supported in the programme for government). The other three of Labour's commitments were not redeemed, despite support for two in the programme for government.

One of the Democratic Left's three pledges was also redeemed by the government; that supporting the re-establishment of the Film Board. This occurred through legislative amendment in 1993. Of the government programme's pledges, four of the eight that were

tested were redeemed at least in part. Apart from the two that have already been mentioned in this paragraph as being supportive of Fianna Fáil and Labour manifesto pledges, there were two redeemed programme pledges for which no manifesto precedent existed. These were for the independent production sector to get access to broadcasting media and that the cap in the 1990 Broadcasting Act be repealed. These two pledges were redeemed through the passing of the Broadcasting Authority (Amendment) Act 1993, the former pledge delivered in particular by the subsequent establishment of the Independent Productions Unit for RTE. The last programme pledge that had no precedent and *was not redeemed* was for local authorities to be required to spend at least 1% of their capital budgets on artistic embellishment. This scheme has operated since 1988 on a voluntary basis up to this day. None of the pledges fulfilled by this government were pledges that used the efforts or actions of the previous government to claim credit for the newly-installed government.

#### Other Developments

About a month and a half after the election in November, and following intense negotiations first between the Labour Party and Fine Gael and then the Labour Party and Fianna Fáil, an agreement was struck between the latter two parties and on 12<sup>th</sup> January 1993, Dáil approval was sought for the new Taoiseach and cabinet. Michael D. Higgins was appointed to the post of the Department of an Gaeltacht which simultaneously was to become the Department of Arts, Culture and the Gaeltacht. For the first time in the history of the State, a full cabinet-rank minister was established with responsibility for the arts. This might be considered the most significant signal in the history of State involvement in the arts that the area was to remain firmly-encompassed in the domain of the public sector. Neither of the governing parties' election manifestos had hinted that such a position might have been a priority for either Fianna Fáil or for Labour and the post had not been negotiated as part of the Programme for Government.



### 6.3.8 December 1994 - June 1997– Fine Gael/ Labour Party/Democratic Left Majority Coalition

#### Pledges Given

In the election campaign of 1992, 11 arts pledges were made: two by Fianna Fáil, five by the Labour Party, one by the Progressive Democrats and three by the Democratic Left. However by the end of the first government arising from this election, that of Fianna Fáil and the Labour Party, two pledges had already been redeemed. These were the Labour Party pledge to maintain and extend the favourable tax regime for artists (which entitled artists resident in the State to tax exemption on the proceeds of their creative work) (Finance Act 1969, Section 2) and the Democratic Left pledge to re-establish the Film Board. As both of these pledges had already been fulfilled, and could not realistically be redeemed again by the following government formation, it was decided to exclude these from the analysis of 1994-1997 Rainbow Government. However all of the nine other pledges were held to stand as the parties' intentions of what they would do should they get into government (See Section 6.3.7; Pledges Given – 1992-1994).

#### Content of the Programme for Government

The Rainbow Government's, *A Programme for Renewal*, contained six pledges specifically to do with the arts. A first was that the government was committed to the establishment of Teilifís na Gaeilge as a third channel, which had also been in the 1993-1994 programme for government and in the Progressive Democrat and Fianna Fáil manifestos. It therefore had no direct connection to the manifestos of the parties currently in government (Fine Gael, Labour and Democratic Left). They also pledged to publish a green paper on broadcasting in early 1995. Heavily concerned with film, the next three pledges were for funding for the Film Board to be at the level envisaged in the National Plan, for resources to be allocated to the provision of film training at third level and finally for a screen commission to be established, to attract makers to using Ireland as a location for filming. A sixth pledge was for an "arts dimension [to] be incorporated into every government building project", a pledge previously contained in the former government programme and derivative of a Labour party pledge. All of the pledges were deemed to be *hail*.

## Pledges Redeemed

Teilifis na Gaeilge was set up in 1996 (although it did not receive its statutory independence until the Broadcasting Act of 2001). A green paper on broadcasting was published in the month of April, 1995. This followed on from the appointment in 1992 by the then Minister for Transport, Tourism and Communications, Maire Geoghegan-Quinn of a broadcasting advisor in 1992 to look at the provision of a television service in Irish (Newsfeature, 1996). This appointment was renewed by the next minister with responsibility for the area, Michael D Higgins. A pledge to set up an Irish language channel was actually first made in 1987 by the Workers' Party, pledged by them again in 1989 until taken on board by Fianna Fáil and also an opposition party, the Progressive Democrats, in their 1992 manifestos. Clearly, the final redemption of Teilifis na Gaeilge was owing in part to the efforts of previous administrations and parties, to keep the issue on the agenda.

Of the pledges related to film, the Film Board's funding was maintained at the National Plan levels and resources were provided for film training at third level.<sup>15</sup> A screen commission was not however established, despite an announcement two days before the June 1997 election by the Minister for the Arts, Culture and the Gaeltacht that it would be. Both the Labour Party's and the Government Programme's pledge to alter the planning laws to ensure that an arts dimension would be incorporated into every government building project were left unfulfilled. No new legislation in this regard was introduced and the scheme remained optional for government departments (Keena, 1999). Fianna Fáil and the Labour Party's consensual pledges to extend arts funding were redeemed. Labour's pledge to get arts officers installed in local authorities did go ahead, though, on a semi-voluntary basis by the authorities. Therefore it was deemed only partially fulfilled.

The three remaining pledges – to set up a Performing Arts Authority (Democratic Left), to set up an independent Council for Music (Democratic Left) and for local authorities to be required to produce county cultural development plans (Labour) – were not redeemed. None of the three were supported by the Rainbow Programme for Government.

## Other Developments

In 1995 an Arts Plan for the period 1995-1997 was launched, drafted by the Arts Council in close consultation with the Department of Arts, Culture and the Gaeltacht and following on from a number of pieces of commissioned research (Quinn 1998, 286).<sup>16</sup> It had originally been requested by the Minister under the previous Fianna Fáil-Labour administration. The plan essentially was to provide multi-annual funding to enable strategic planning for the arts. The reference to this plan in the 1994 programme for government was not coded as a pledge – “The Three Year Plan 1995-1997 prepared in consultation between the Arts Council and the Dept of Arts, Culture and the Gaeltacht will be the basis for a programme for action” – as “the basis for” was not deemed sufficiently specific.

The Minister also developed a scheme known as the Cultural Development Incentives Scheme, administered under the Operational Programme for Tourism 1994-1999, through which grants were allocated for the provision and development of cultural centres. The IR£3m funding for this project originated in EU structural funds (Boyd, 2000). Again this plan did not originate in either party’s manifesto.

### **6.3.9 June 1997 - May 2002 – Fianna Fáil-Progressive Democrats Minority Coalition**

#### Pledges Given

In 1997, a total of 31 arts pledges were made by the various parties, an indication perhaps that, consistent with the institution of a department with responsibility for the arts, arts policy was increasingly moving into the political mainstream. Alternatively, it could be argued that, because nearly all parties were now covering the area, this shows not so much a growing trend for parties to see the arts as important but more a trend for manifestos to be comprehensive policy documents. Fianna Fáil made 13 hard pledges at this election:

*to set up a music board, (a pledge made in 1992 by Democratic Left)*

*to establish a screen commission, (a pledge made in the Programme for Government of the Rainbow Coalition)*

*the establishment of a National Cultural Institutions Council,*

*the founding of an industry think-tank on the film and television industries and*

*the setting up of a Broadcasting Advisory Council*

constituted the administrative changes. Its funding pledges were to

*increase Arts Council funding to IR£26m in 1998,  
to abolish the levy on the independent radio sector,  
to bring in tax relief for script and project development and  
to fund programme development in the local radio sector.*

The last four pledges were for

*the Arts Council to give feedback to unsuccessful applicants for grants and to shorten decision times,  
to require all local authorities to produce three year cultural development plans (a pledge made by the Labour Party in 1992) and to spend a fixed percentage of their capital budgets on the arts,  
to give Teilifis na Gaeilge statutory independence and  
to implement FAS training in the radio sector.*

Fianna Fáil's single soft pledge was

*to establish a National Centre for the Performing Arts, with Conservatoire for music, dance, opera and other arts.<sup>17</sup>*

The Progressive Democrats, the second party in power, made four arts pledges. The first was shared with Fianna Fáil:

*to establish a Music Board.*

The other three were to

*give full legal protection to sites of artistic, heritage and historical interest,  
for each local council to be required to appoint a local arts officer (a pledge made by other parties at numerous earlier elections) and  
for legislation to be introduced to protect the national broadcaster and to promote independent television production.*

All were hard pledges. The pledge concerning arts officers was not a new one. This was first pledged by the Workers' Party in 1987, and again in 1989. In 1992, the Labour Party had adopted it as a pledge before it was finally endorsed again by the Progressive Democrats in 1997. On no occasion was this pledge included in a government programme.

The Labour Party had one pledge which was consensual with both Fianna Fáil and the Progressive Democrats:

*to set up a music board.*

It also pledged to

*establish a broadcasting commission by statute,  
provide funding for the last two years of the Arts Plan,  
extend the 'Percent for Art Scheme',*

*produce a five year arts plan in 1999 and  
strengthen RTE both financially and legally as the national broadcaster.*

The Labour Party had one pledge which was soft:

*to increase spending on cultural services up to 0.9% of public expenditure.*

The Green Party had one pledge also that was consensual with Fianna Fáil: that of

*setting up a Performing Arts Authority.*

Its other pledge was

*to set up a National Arts and Disability centre.*

Both pledges were hard.

Fine Gael only produced one arts pledge in the 1997 election, and that was to  
*support the regulation of decoders for digital broadcasting.*

### Content of the Programme for Government

The Programme for Government of Fianna Fáil and the Progressive Democrats contained eight pledges, seven of which derived from Fianna Fáil pledges (and in one case, also of the Green Party), and one from the Progressive Democrat manifesto. The Fianna Fáil pledges supported were: to establish a screen commission, the establishment of a National Cultural Institutions Council, to increase Arts Council funding to IR£26m in 1998, to fund programme development in the local radio sector, to require all local authorities to produce three year cultural development plans, to give Teilifis na Gaeilge statutory independence and to establish a National Centre for the Performing Arts. The Progressive Democrat pledge supported was to give full legal protection to sites of artistic, heritage and historical interest. There was no programme pledge that was not sourced from one of the government parties' manifestos.

### Pledges Redeemed

Eleven of Fianna Fáil's original 13 hard pledges were redeemed (one in part). The two that were not redeemed were to establish a Broadcasting Advisory Council and to require the Arts Council to shorten decision times and to give feedback. The Performing Arts Authority, Fianna Fáil's only soft pledge, was partially redeemed. Funding (c.€5m of total cost €35m) was allocated, an interim governing authority was appointed 12 days before the 2002 election, and a newly-built centre was officially opened in Dublin City University

(D.C.U.) on 16<sup>th</sup> October 2002, albeit at that stage under a newly-formed government. However both the Fianna Fáil and government programme pledges had emphasised the importance of a conservatoire being at the core of this centre, and this did not occur. The Green Party had called for a *school* for the performing arts, again something that was only partially redeemed. “The Helix”, as the new centre in D.C.U. was named, is really a set of venues rather than a training ground, with three auditoria and a visual arts space.<sup>18</sup>

As a result all of the government programme pledges were at least partially redeemed. All four of the Progressive Democrats’ pledges were redeemed, including the pledge relating to the appointment of arts officers by local councils, and thereby by default, one of Labour’s and one of the Green Party’s pledges. The government redeemed Fine Gael’s decoder pledge for them, together with all five of the Labour Party’s other hard pledges. It did not carry out Labour’s only soft pledge. Of the Green Party’s two pledges, one was partially redeemed (performing arts school). None of the pledges redeemed could be said to have been restatements of existing practices.

### Other Developments

The new government adopted the same approach as the previous government to the arts, recognising the need for a more medium-term strategic approach to the Council’s funding for projects and arts groups. A second Arts Plan covering the period 1999 to 2001 was agreed to and funded by the government and, so was following that, a third plan covering the five year period, 2002-2006. A IR£36m project was also introduced to deliver greater access to the arts through assisting in the provision of arts and cultural centres throughout the state, the scheme running from 2001 to 2004.

Following on from the publication of a discussion document *Towards a New Framework for the Arts* by the Minister for the Arts, Culture and the Gaeltacht in August 2000 and then consultations with interested parties (233 responses to the discussion document), a new arts bill was drafted.<sup>19</sup> Among the criticisms that had been levied at the government during this consultative process was that the Arts Council “was too big to be effective and too small to be representative” (White, 2000). Further, neither of the two previous Arts Acts had dealt with the relationship between the Arts Council and the minister for the area. As a result, the matter of who exactly was supposed to be making state policy for the arts was left up in the air (Editorial, 2001). Síle de Valera, the Minister of the day, decided it was time to define who was responsible for what and an Arts Bill repealing its predecessors was published in April 2002. The explanatory memorandum to the Bill

explains the arts will be defined “in a way that continues to refer to constituent art forms, but will be sufficiently flexible to include traditional as well as emerging and innovative art forms, and art forms in Irish, English or any other language” (Arts Bill 2002 – Explanatory Memorandum).

A hue and cry developed, based on the idea that the Arts Council’s autonomy would be diminished, through the Bill’s provisions for both the allocation of a statutory role for the Minister and through the setting up of three standing committees, one with exclusive funding powers. As a result of this and some high-profiles’ objections, some of the Bill’s core provisions were watered down. As enacted in July 2003, the Act reduced membership of the Arts Council from 17 people to 13 (as compared with nine in the original published bill), with members being appointed in a rolling manner, keeping a level of continuity in membership at any one time. The proposal to establish three standing committees whose role would be to advise the Council on Irish Traditional Arts, New Art and Innovation and Arts Activity and Local Authorities was replaced with a provision for temporary committees, all without funding capacity, to be established as needed by the Minister (Brennock, 2003). The Act was not however altered with respect to giving the Minister responsibility for formulating State policy on the arts, with which the Arts Council will have to comply when devising its own plans and strategies (White, 2002).

The Act contains no financial or staffing commitments to the Arts Council but, in the same month as the bill was introduced, the government adopted the Arts Council’s new five year plan, committing the government to an increase in spending from c.€48m in 2002 to €80m in 2006. At the time of writing however, the Arts Councils’ funding in 2003 had been cut by c.8% to €44m, in line with the planned contraction in public spending (Falvey, 2002). IR£50m was given to the Abbey Theatre in 2000, to allow it either to refurbish its current building or move to a new site. A Government decision was made in February 2002 to redevelop the theatre at its current site (O’Connor, 2002).

None of the developments mentioned was heralded by either government party or by programme pledges. Another arts plan was pledged by the Labour Party (in opposition) but that plan was envisaged as running for five years from 1999. When launched, however, the plan ran only for three years. The fact that the other parties did not include arts plans as pledges cannot be taken as meaning that they did not intend to pursue a second or third plan. It may just be that they did not feel it was an issue that they would get any political reward from.

## 6.4 General Findings

### 6.4.1 Types of Pledges Made

The general conclusion that one can draw is that the Irish parties tend not to confront or, for that matter, agree with one another when deciding their arts policies, and more particularly their pledges in the area of the arts. There is very little overlap between the parties, with the number of pledges unrelated to another party's pledges standing at 84% for the period 1977-1997. All party pledges that were related to pledges made by another party were consensual, in other words, both parties were pledging the same action. In no instance, did any of the parties pledge to do something that another party pledged to do entirely the opposite of.

### 6.4.2 Content of the Government Programme

As far as arts policy is concerned, 23 of the 69 pledges identified in the area over the years 1977-1997 were later supported in a government programme (a single party government resulted after three elections, so these pledges were excluded from the calculation). Of those 23 pledges, 16 were hard. Therefore, the evidence from the area of arts policy does not support the thesis that soft pledges are more likely to be adopted in the programme. It is suggested in Chapter 4 that theoretically-speaking, not only are soft pledges expected to be included in the government programme more often than hard pledges but also that issues upon which the prospective coalition parties agreed were also more likely to be adopted than those upon which there was explicit disagreement. In the area of arts policy, there were no party pledges which promised directly opposite actions, so no inferences could be drawn for this hypothesis. Of the eight sets of consensual pledges found (17 pledges in total), the government programme endorsed exactly half of them. In three of the four sets, the government programme endorsed the pledge of at least one party in government. It was suggested also in chapter 4 that being a party to the negotiation should significantly increase the party's chances of getting its pledges into the government programme. Indeed, pledges of government parties were 475% more likely to be included in the government programme than were pledges of opposition parties. Obviously, no hard and fast conclusions can be drawn from this limited evidence, which is intended to illustrate rather than *test* the propositions under investigation.



Of 26 arts pledges contained in the government programmes themselves, 17 were manifesto pledges made by negotiating parties who subsequently successfully formed a government together. One pledge in the programme for government derived directly from an opposition party pledge. One other pledge was the result of a negotiated compromise between two government parties. The remaining seven pledges had no history in any of the parties' manifestos.

### **6.4.3 Pledges Redeemed**

I looked at the arts pledges to see if they also showed the characteristics expected in the last chapter with regard to pledge redemption. Indeed, the arts pledges of parties that entered government were marginally more likely to be redeemed than those of the parties in opposition. About 57% of all government parties' pledges over 1977-1997 were either partially or fully redeemed, compared with 46% of those made by opposition parties. Excluding from the opposition count of pledges made and pledges redeemed those pledges that were also made by a party in government, the redemption rate for opposition parties falls to c.39%.

As anticipated in Chapter 4, a strong pattern in the rate of pledge fulfilment has to do with the amount of time a government spends in office. About 59% of all pledges made by parties that spent longer than two years in government were redeemed, compared with 0% for parties that were in government for less than two years. Arts pledges made by parties in government are more likely to be redeemed by single party governments than by parties in coalitions, but given the small number of cases of single party governments where arts pledges were made (2), no firm conclusion should be drawn from this finding. Finally, arts pledges made in government programmes are more likely to be redeemed than pledges made in any party manifesto, whatever their position relative to office.

In summary, Table 6.1 below sets out the findings on pledge redemption in the area of the arts from 1977-1997. The second column details the percentages of pledges supported in the government programme and the final column shows the percentages of pledges redeemed, where both partially- and fully-redeemed pledges count as redeemed.

**Table 6.1** Pledge Redemption in the Arts 1977-2002

	N in Manifesto/ Government Programme	% supported in Government Programme	% Fully/Partially Redeemed
<b>Government Party in:</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>48%</b>	<b>57%</b>
Single Party Govt.	2	-	100%
Coalition Govt.	40	48%	55%
<b>Opposition Party* facing:</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>39%</b>
Single Party Govt.*	7	-	43%
Coalition Govt.*	24	4%	38%
<b>Government Programme</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>62%</b>

\* Excludes pledges shared with a government party

## 6.5 Conclusion

Choosing this policy area permitted an analysis of the types of statements that were identified as pledges and an evaluation of pledge redemption during the lifetime of each government. It also allowed me to look at what was not pledged in the area yet was nonetheless acted on by a party or parties in government.

Many more arts pledges were being made by the end of the study-period than in the previous decades but it is also true that many more pledges in all policy areas were being made by then (see Table 4.3). Similarly, many more arts pledges were being redeemed. This is significant because the arts is a policy area for which the potential for state involvement and interference to be the main factor for change is strong.

Few clear rules can be drawn from an area in which so few pledges are made. Having said that, three generalisations from the study of arts pledges are of particular note with regard to the hypotheses set out in Chapter 5. In the first place, looking at each of the pledges made by the parties at individual elections, it becomes obvious that Irish manifesto politics may be characterised as non-confrontational, certainly as far as arts policy is concerned. Each party tends to stand for something different – whether this is a focus on a particular art form (film, for example), or a particular method of arts management or arts funding.

Secondly, while a weak advantage for government parties is apparent, what is more noteworthy is the sheer extent of opposition party pledges that each government adopted and enacted. To reiterate: on average 46% of opposition party arts pledges were redeemed

by the parties in government and only five of these 17 pledges were also made in the manifesto of a party that subsequently went into government. From a preliminary finding such as this, it can only be said that in the area of the arts at the very least, the benefit of getting into office in order to redeem one's own pledges is only slight. A party out of office can rely on the party in government implementing a substantial part of its ideas with regard to arts policy. A party getting into office may be expected to explore the party manifestos of the opposition for ideas and clearly does not expect to be penalised by the public for doing so.

Thirdly and finally, what a party does once it is in office is only partially determined by what its manifesto contained – in the case of coalition governments, this is to be expected as, to a certain extent, the manifesto will be usurped by the programme for government. However, it is also clear that much of what a party in government does is either unanticipated by the party before the election or deliberately not mentioned. The apparent finding that much of arts policy was made in the course of government is one of the more striking findings of this chapter. It is also worth noting that, of the pledges that were deemed to have been acted on by the government of the day, in only a small number of cases was action already in train prior to the government's installation.

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## Endnotes

- 1 IMS poll carried out 29/01/93 – 29/01/93 for Independent Newspapers.
- 2 When the special tax incentives (both for the film industry and individual donors) are included, the percentage of GDP spent on the arts increases to 0.14% while per capita spending grows to IR£19.22 (Arts Council 2000, 10).
- 3 Dáil Éireann, Vol. 374, 14th October, 1987. Written Answers. Exchequer Statistics. Dáil Éireann, Vol.438, 1st February, 1994. Written Answers. National Debt.
- 4 As calculated by Ireland, Minister of State for Arts and Culture, 1987, 92.
- 5 See Dáil Éireann, Vol.295, 14/12/1976 –Broadcasting Authority (Amendment) Bill 1975: Report and Final Stages on [www.oireachtas-debates.gov.ie](http://www.oireachtas-debates.gov.ie).
- 6 See Dáil Éireann, Vol.388 – 14th March, 1989 – Ceisteanna – Questions. Oral Answers. Arts Council Funding.
- 7 See Seanad Éireann, Vol.120, 21st June, 1988. Radio and Television Bill, 1987: Second Stage.
- 8 Dáil Éireann, Vol.383, 19th October, 1988.Written Answers. National Lottery Allocations.
- 9 Dáil Éireann, Vol.384. 16th November 1988. Ceisteanna- Questions. Oral Answers. Gallery of Modern Art.
- 10 Dáil Éireann, Vol.374. 14th October, 1987. Written Answers. Irish Film Industry.
- 11 Dáil Éireann. Vol.386. 25th January, 1989. Financial Resolutions, 1989. Financial Statement Budget 1989.
- 12 Dáil Éireann, Vol.392. 24th October, 1989. Ceisteanna – Questions. Oral Anwers. European City of Culture.
- 13 Dáil Éireann. Vol.403. 13th December, 1990. Written Answers. Dublin as EC Cultural Capital. Dáil Éireann. Vol.406. 12th March, 1991. Ceisteanna – Questions. Oral Answers. European City of Culture.
- 14 The Programme for Economic and Social Progress was the second of six social partnership agreements to be concluded between 1987 and 2003 in Ireland. Focussed primarily on incomes and competitiveness issues, these agreements are negotiated between the government, trade unions, employers, the representatives of the farming community and, since, 2000, representatives of the community and voluntary sectors.
- 15 Dáil Éireann – Vol. 475. 20th February, 1997. Written Answers. Film Industry.
- 16 Including Clancy, Drury, Kelly, Brannick and Pratschke. 1994. The Public and the Arts – A survey of Behaviour and Attitudes in Ireland. Dublin: The Arts Council/An

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Chomhairle Ealaíon in association with the Graduate School of Business, University Collge Dublin; Durkan 1994. *The Economics of the Arts*. Arts Council/An Chomhairle Ealaíon; and, Arts Council 1995. *The Employment and Economic Significance of the Cultural Industries in Ireland*. Arts Council/An Chomhairle Ealaíon with Temple Bar Properties.

17 Three further Fianna Fáil pledges were identified but no conclusion could be reached on whether these had been redeemed or not.

18 See [www.thehelix.ie/aboutthehelix.html](http://www.thehelix.ie/aboutthehelix.html).

19 Dáil Éireann. Vol.531. 21st February, 2001. Written Answers. Arts Submissions.

## CHAPTER 7

### EMPIRICAL TESTS: THE BASELINE MODEL

#### 7.1 Introduction

I introduced The Baseline Model in Chapter 4. Essentially this is a model which posits that the party (or parties) that gets (get) into government determines the actions that the government is going to take. Clearly if the government being formed is not a single-party government, then no single manifesto is likely to form the plan for action. Rather, it is anticipated that the parties planning to govern together will negotiate a programme for government from their parties' manifestos. As such, it is expected that the pledges of the negotiating parties are more likely to be supported in the programme for government than pledges of the parties that are on the sidelines of the negotiations. Further, the plan for action that subsumes the individual manifestos is expected to be drawn primarily from the manifestos of government parties, certainly more so than from any non-negotiating parties' manifestos. It is also expected that, regardless of the relationship of the party making the pledge to office, the longer the government lasts, the more likely it is that that pledge will be redeemed. Table 7.1, below, delineates the core hypotheses to be tested in this model.

**Table 7.1** Hypotheses Tested in the Baseline Model

<b>Dependent Variable:</b>	<b>Independent Variable</b>
<b>Pledge Included in Gov't. Programme</b>	Negotiating Party to Agreement/Not
<b>Redemption of Pledge</b>	In Government/Not Duration of Government

While these are the core hypotheses of this chapter, there are another couple of hypotheses that need to be tested in order to set the political scene for the three models of the programme-to-policy linkage being tested in this thesis. The first hypothesis is that pledges are made in important areas of policy. Clearly if pledges are only made in unimportant and peripheral areas of policy then to concentrate on manifestos as indicators of potential government intent would be erroneous. Second, I want to know the extent to which parties' manifestos differ from one another. If I were to find that both government

and opposition pledges have an equal likelihood of being redeemed, one potential reason for this might be that they were the same pledges. It is worthwhile finding out the extent to which parties agree and disagree on pledges and to what extent a trend in either is discernible.

The findings of this chapter should largely shape how the next two models are interpreted (Chapters 7 and 8); these are the model of government party pledge fulfilment and the model of opposition party pledge fulfilment. It should be remembered that if government parties have an advantage over opposition parties in getting their own pledges redeemed, then we have satisfied the fourth requirement of the mandate test of Partisan Theory. In Chapter 7, I shall attempt to identify some drivers of government party pledge fulfilment and in Chapter 8, I shall do the same for opposition parties. By doing this, I hope to identify the relevant factors important to party pledge redemption, relative to a party's position vis-à-vis government office.

The outline of this chapter runs as follows. In the next section, I test the two hypotheses dealing with manifesto content, as just discussed. In Section 7.3, I perform two tests, one looking at whether or not government parties get more of their pledges into the government programme than parties of the opposition and another testing the extent to which government programmes are derivative of manifestos at all. In the third section of this chapter, I test the two hypotheses relating to pledge redemption. I summarise the results of the various tests in the final section and review these for the implications of my overall model.

## 7.2 Manifesto Content

### **Hypothesis 1: Pledges are concentrated in important areas of policy**

Test 1: There is a higher frequency of pledges in more emphasised policy areas (Thomson 1999, 47)

In Table 7.2, the distribution of pledges across policy themes in Irish party manifestos 1977-1997 is correlated with the distribution of emphases across manifesto policy areas in the same party manifestos for the same period (the co-efficient shown in column r). The "N" in the table is the number of MRG categories for which there were MRG saliency codes for each party (Budge et al. 2001, CD-ROM). Indeed, the pattern of policy

categories highlighted by a saliency coding of manifestos does accord with that derived from a saliency coding of pledges. Pledges are generally made in important areas of policy. Though some of the correlation coefficients are not very high (See Table 7.2), 24 of the 34 coefficients are statistically significant. One party that stands out for the consistently stronger relationship between the saliency of its coded text units and the concentration of its pledges is the Workers' Party.

What can also be said is that there would appear to be a trend across election years from 1981 to 1997, with more parties showing higher *and* statistically significant correlations between pledge concentration and manifesto emphasis on issue categories in the latter years. Part of the reason might lie in the growing wealth and economy of the country from 1989 onwards, in that previously sensitive spending decisions (such as rates of increase in social welfare benefit or spending on health) were less sensitive as more money could be pledged to these areas. Therefore, more issue areas could be salient and have pledges concentrated in them, without a party's fearing that support would be lost.

**Table 7.2** Correlation Coefficients of Pledge Concentration and Manifesto Issue Saliency by Party by Year

Year	FF		NC		FG		Lab		WP		PD		DL		GP	
	r	N	r	N	R	N	r	N	r	N	r	N	r	N	r	N
1977	0.48**	36	0.82**	29	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1981	0.26	34	-	-	0.45**	31	0.22	34	0.51**	31	-	-	-	-	-	-
1982F	0.48*	14	-	-	0.37	20	0.11	19	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1982N	-0.02	14	-	-	0.44*	25	0.09	31	0.58**	29	-	-	-	-	-	-
1987	0.47**	33	-	-	0.48**	33	0.24	35	0.69**	33	0.46**	28	-	-	-	-
1989	0.67**	30	-	-	0.70**	34	0.04	21	0.60**	41	0.52**	31	-	-	-	-
1992	0.51**	32	-	-	0.38*	29	0.39**	38	-	-	0.03	31	0.45**	33	-	-
1997	0.66**	46	-	-	0.74**	40	0.42**	43	-	-	0.39**	44	0.29	31	0.65**	39

\* Significant at the 5% level \*\* Significant at the 1% level

Test 2: There is a higher frequency of popularly important pledges in more emphasised policy areas (derived from Thomson 1999, 47)

Taking the second measure of the importance of pledges, derived from opinion polls taken prior to each election 1987-97, it is clear that pledges in areas that the public have identified as important are not consistently highly-correlated with what the parties themselves emphasise in their manifestos. Strong correlations (>0.30) occur in nine out of



the possible 21 party cases (See Table 7.3), all of them being statistically significant. This is a relatively strong result in that my criterion for an issue to be identified as *important* was stringent. Only pledges on those issues where more than 20% of people interviewed had mentioned the issue as being one that the parties should fight the campaign on were included in the correlation for each party (thus, issues that the public identifies as important will be the same for all parties in a given year. What differs between the parties is the number of pledges that they will have concentrated in each of those issue areas and the manifesto emphasis that they have accorded to the issue areas).

Both Fine Gael and the Progressive Democrats stand out across the four elections as being in greater accord with the views of the electorate than other parties. This is purely in the sense that their manifesto emphasis across issue areas was consistently more highly correlated with manifesto pledges in issue areas that the polled electorate had identified as important, than other parties'. It should be noted that this test does not distinguish party or voter positions on an issue, just emphasis. Of course, it could be the case that those polled identified health as an issue because they felt services were inadequately funded and therefore a party's pledge to reduce the number of maternity wards nation-wide would have been the opposite of what the people wanted. All that this test assesses is the extent to which parties and voters regard the same issue areas as important. Indeed at every election, at least one party's manifesto emphasis correlates above 0.44 with popularly important pledges, so some parties are either paying more attention to the electorate at particular elections than other parties or are able to influence the views of the electorate more than other parties.

**Table 7.3** Correlation Coefficients of "Important" Pledge Concentration and Opinion Poll Issue Saliency by Party by Year

Year	FF	N	FG	N	Lab	N	WP	N	PD	N	DL	N	GP	N
1987	-0.16	33	0.30*	33	-0.13	35	-0.13	33	0.46**	28	-	-	-	-
1989	0.56**	30	0.36*	34	0.08	21	0.55**	41	0.40*	31	-	-	-	-
1992	0.28	32	0.07	29	0.51**	38	-	-	-0.13	31	-0.13	33	-	-
1997	0.23	46	0.44**	40	0.25	43	-	-	0.29*	44	0.06	31	-0.03	39

\* Significant at the 5% level \*\* Significant at the 1% level N is the number of MRG categories that were salient for the party at a particular election

Therefore with regard to Hypothesis 1 – “Are pledges concentrated in important areas of policy”, it can be concluded that by-and-large, Irish parties concentrate their pledges in areas of policy that, by a saliency measure, are deemed important by the parties themselves. What is clear from the second test however is that issue areas that the parties deem important, again as measured by the amount of emphasis given to the issue areas in

the parties' manifestos, are not always the same issue areas that the general public regards as important at each election, as measured by opinion polls. The concentration of party pledges in issue areas identified as important by the general public was not strongly associated with party emphasis on such issue areas.

**Hypothesis 2: Two or more parties are less likely to promote the same issue areas in systems of single party government than in systems where multi-party government is the norm (Thomson 1999, 107)**

Table 7.4 shows the percentages of total pledges in the manifesto of the column party that were unrelated (ie not consensual or dissensual) to pledges contained in the manifestos of any of the other parties competing at each election (by row). By “consensual”, I mean that a pledge for a certain action was made by two or more parties. By “dissensual”, I am referring to two pledges made by a minimum of two parties which promise directly contrary action on a specific issue. For example, Party A promises to abolish Health Boards while Party B pledges to increase their number. Where pledges are unrelated, ie not consensual or dissensual, I shall henceforward refer to the parties as “talking past each other” (Thomson 1999).

On average 70.1% of party pledges at any one election are unrelated to pledges made by any other party (Note: in aggregate terms, 605 “shared” pledges were identified of the total number of pledges identified (2013) for the eight sets of manifestos). This varies from an average over the eight electoral periods of c.77% for Fianna Fáil to an average of c.59% for Democratic Left.

**Table 7.4** % Pledges of Column Party Unrelated to Those of the Other Parties in the Same Election Year

	FF	FG	Lab	PD	WP	DL	NC	GP	Mean
Other Parties 1977	84.6	-	-	-	-	-	71.1	-	77.8
Other Parties 1981	70.8	76.4	73.3	-	52.9	-	-	-	68.4
Other Parties 1982F	100.0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	100.0
Other Parties 1982N	-	87.5	74.4	-	81.4	-	-	-	81.1
Other Parties 1987	78.5	70.8	68.2	53.8	80.6	-	-	-	70.4
Other Parties 1989	65.1	70.8	70.6	75.8	86.5	-	-	-	74.0
Other Parties 1992	63.8	82.4	80.5	51.9	-	71.9	-	-	70.1
Other Parties 1997	72.4	66.2	60.9	64.7	-	46.9	-	69.9	63.5
<b>Mean</b>	<b>76.5</b>	<b>75.9</b>	<b>71.3</b>	<b>61.6</b>	<b>75.4</b>	<b>59.4</b>	<b>71.1</b>	<b>69.9</b>	<b>70.1</b>

Before testing the hypothesis, I should just explain why the February 1982 statistics for Fine Gael and the Labour Party in Table 7.4 are coded as blanks. The Labour Party specified a small number of pledges in its manifesto but then stated that if placed back in government, its policies would be, with a couple of minor exceptions, the same as the budget proposals that brought down the last government. As Fine Gael had detailed all these in its proxy manifesto (a speech made by Garret Fitzgerald, the leader of the party and Taoiseach of the day), Labour was coded as having made the same pledges also. This would have translated into “talking past each other” scores of 0% for Fine Gael and 18.2% for the Labour Party (Labour higher because of the small number of pledges made in its own document). As these two results were distinctly out of character for the two parties relative to all other years, it was decided not to skew the results by including them and instead to code them as missing data.

Turning now to the hypothesis, what we find from Table 7.5 is that the parties have tended to confront and/or agree on more issues since 1989 than before. The average number of pledges unrelated (ie, neither consensual nor dissensual) to another party’s pledges in the period 1977-1987 was 71.8%. In the second period, 1989-1997, the average had fallen to c.67.5%. The difference between the two is not however statistically significant.

**Table 7.5** Average Percentage “Unrelatedness” Score by Party 1977-1997

Party	Pre-1989	Post-1989	1977-1997
Fianna Fáil	83.5	67.1	76.5
Fine Gael	78.3	73.6	75.9
Labour	72.0	70.7	71.3
Progressive Democrats	53.8	64.1	61.6
Green Party	-	69.9	69.9
Workers’ Party/Democratic Left	71.6	59.4	70.0
<b>Mean</b>	<b>71.8</b>	<b>67.5</b>	

Relative to the U.K., Ireland 1977-1997 emerges clearly as a political system in which more common political debates or agreements occur between the parties, certainly as measured by a pledge-coding of manifestos. According to Royed’s data for the 1979 and 1983 elections, c.84% of pledges made by either the Tories or Labour Party in the U.K. are unrelated to pledges in the other party.<sup>1</sup> Rose (1984, 68), looking at the 1970 election in the U.K., found a comparable figure of c.86% of pledges on which the parties were essentially “raising different points for action by a given government department.” For the US, and the largest two parties, the proportion of party pledges that were given by

both parties made up 69% of all pledges made, as calculated from Pomper and Lederman's analysis of the election years 1944-1976. On the other hand, for later elections Royed found a score of c.84% (as calculated by Thomson 1999, 107). For the four largest parties in the Netherlands, the unrelatedness of party pledges was on average 72%, largely similar to Ireland (Thomson 1999, 104).

Noteworthy are the low levels of direct disagreement between parties found – less than 10% of all pledges of Pomper and Lederman's study of the U.S., c.8% for Royed's study of the U.K. as compared with c.14% for Rose's study of the same system (Pomper and Lederman 1980, 168; Rose 1984, 68; Royed 1996, 65). In Ireland, less than 1% of pledges across all of the parties were actually conflictual, a much lower figure than found in the studies of other countries. That a lower proportion of dissensual pledges was found in Ireland is partially an artefact of the exclusion of status quo statements from the analysis, in contrast to many other studies, where they were coded as pledges (see Rose 1984, 69; Pomper and Lederman 1980, 134; Thomson 1999, 86; Royed 1996, 65). Obviously, where statements to retain the status quo are coded as pledges, any pledge made by another party on the same issue but which advocates a modicum of change has to be dissensually-related to the status quo pledge.

A previous study of Irish "parties talking past each other" was conducted by Peter Mair for the years 1948 – 1981 (Mair 1987). Using the Budge, Robertson and Hearl (1987) convention of only looking at each party's top 10 most emphasised categories according to coded quasi-sentences, Mair uncovered the following picture: whilst Fianna Fáil only retained two categories exclusive to its own manifesto in the top 10 – education (pro expansion) and defence of Irish way of life (positive) – and these were not high ranking in terms of the relative emphasis apportioned to them, Fine Gael had three exclusive policy themes, ranked two, three and eight (Mair 1987, 144). Labour merely owned two exclusive issues and neither of these ranked below five in terms of relative emphasis. He concluded that Fianna Fáil placed greatest emphasis on consensual issues, as did Labour but to a lesser extent, while Fine Gael concentrated their manifesto space on their own issues (Mair 1987, 145).

What is found when analysing Table 7.4 is that in the manifestos studied over the eight elections, Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael are on average the least likely parties either to confront or to agree with other parties' pledges. In other words, for any particular issue area in which a pledge is made by either of the two parties, it is more likely for them than for any other parties, that it is the only party making the pledge. The relatedness of pledges substantiates the notion that Fine Gael still concentrates on its own issues/agenda more than other parties while the Labour Party is more consensual. However Fianna Fáil,

relative to Mair's findings, deals with more exclusive issues than both the Labour Party and Fine Gael.

### 7.3 Content of the Government Programme

**Hypothesis 3: Election pledges of the parties that agree to form a government are more likely to be supported in the government agreement than those of parties that form the opposition (Thomson 1999, 115)**

Traditionally political scientists have assumed that the material input into government programmes comes only from those parties who are taking part in the negotiations for government formation, if from any one source at all.<sup>2</sup> Table 7.6 plots the percentage of each party's pledges that are supported in the government programme, with the government parties highlighted in bold. By *support*, I mean that the party's manifesto pledge was reproduced in the programme for government. What we find using the data from Table 7.6 to test the hypothesis, is that indeed negotiating parties to a programme for government have a distinct advantage in getting their pledges included in the programme for government as compared with their prospective opposition colleagues (Table 7.7). 31.2% on average of negotiating party pledges were included in the government programme as compared with 15.8% on average for non-negotiating parties. In the second column from the right in Table 7.7, the standard deviation for each mean is stated. Clearly, there was a wider spread around the mean of the percentage of negotiating parties' pledges supported in the programme for government, than around the mean of the percentage of non-negotiating parties' pledges supported in the programme for government. In the far right column, the "N of parties" refers to the counts of the percentages of parties' pledges supported in the programme for government by their position relative to government. So the "13" means that I averaged 13 numbers, each denoting a negotiating party's percentage manifesto pledges supported in the programme for government of that government formation.

Thomson (1999, 115) found similar levels of pledge redemption by government formation in the Netherlands where the respective average percentages for socio-economic pledges were c.30% and c.16% for negotiating parties and non-negotiating parties respectively.

**Table 7.6** Average Percentage Pledges Supported by Programme for Government by Position of Party Relative to the Negotiations (a) – figures for parties involved in drafting government agreement **in bold**

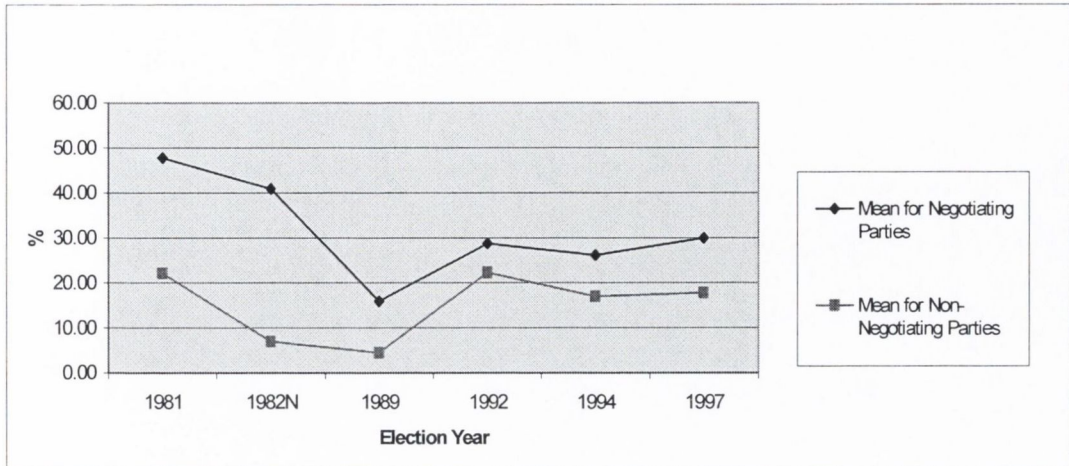
	1981	1982(N)	1989	1992	1994	1997
Democratic Left	-	-	-	18.8	<b>17.9</b>	25.0
Fianna Fáil	20.8	-	<b>12.7</b>	<b>57.4</b>	18.5	<b>29.4</b>
Fine Gael	<b>60.2</b>	<b>45.8</b>	6.6	5.9	<b>0.0</b>	18.3
Green Party	-	-	-	-	-	10.8
Labour	<b>35.6</b>	<b>35.9</b>	5.9	<b>40.7</b>	<b>20.0</b>	17.3
Workers' party	23.5	7.0	1.1	-	-	-
Progressive Democrats	-	-	<b>19.4</b>	25.9	22.2	<b>30.6</b>

**Table 7.7** Average Percentage Pledges Supported by Programme for Government by Position of Party Relative to the Negotiations (b)

	<i>Average % Supported in the Gov't Programme</i>	<i>Standard Deviation</i>	<i>N of Parties</i>
<i>Negotiating Party</i>	<b>31.2</b>	<b>17.4</b>	<b>13</b>
<i>Non-Negotiating Party</i>	15.8	7.8	15
Ind. Samples t-test (1-tail)	<i>T*: 2.94</i>		

\*p=0.005. Unequal variances assumed

Looking at the relationship graphically (Figure 7.1), we find that in all of the programmes negotiated, negotiating parties are much more likely to get their pledges endorsed by the government programmes than are the future opposition parties. However since 1989, the apparent advantage that negotiating parties had in getting their pledges endorsed in the programme for government seems to have waned, relative to non-negotiating parties. Potential reasons for this trend will be investigated in Chapters 8 and 9, where factors important for the inclusion of government party and opposition party pledges will be studied.



**Figure 7.1** % Pledges Supported in Government Programme

**Hypothesis 4: Pledges contained in the programmes for government are more likely to derive from the government parties' manifestos than from opposition parties' manifestos (Hofferbert and Klingemann 1990, 283)**

To finish off this section on the content of government programmes, I shift the focus slightly from looking at the basis on which manifesto pledges are most likely to be reflected in programmes for government to looking at the derivation of programmes for government themselves. In Table 7.7, the mean percentage of government programmes sourced from negotiating parties (government parties) and non-negotiating parties (opposition parties) are displayed, along with their standard deviations. "N" represents the number of government programmes to which negotiating and non-negotiating party pledges contributed. The result of the hypothesis test is as expected. On average, c.53% of the programme for government derives from the negotiating parties' manifestos and only c.5% from the non-negotiating parties' manifestos. This result is statistically significant at the 1% level.

**Table 7.8** Derivation of Programme for Government (a)

	<i>Mean % of Govt. Programme Sourced</i>	<i>Standard Deviation</i>	<i>N of Parties</i>
<i>Negotiating Parties' Pledges</i>	<b>53.1</b>	<b>23.8</b>	<b>6</b>
<i>Non-negotiating Parties' Pledges</i>	4.9	3.7	6
Ind. Samples t-test (1-tail)	$T^*=5.09$		

\*  $p=0.002$ . Unequal variances assumed

The percentages for Table 7.8 were derived from Table 7.9 (next page). In the top part of Table 7.9, I display the number of pledges in the parties' manifestos in each relevant election year which were consensual with pledges in the government programmes. I also give the percentage of the total number party pledges consensual with the government programme contributed by each party. In a number of cases, two or more parties' pledges were consensual with a pledge contained in the government programme so these were divided into pledges given by negotiating parties or pledges given by non-negotiating parties. In operational terms, where two parties negotiating the programme made the same pledge, that pledge was therefore only counted once as a source from which a pledge in the programme came. The same single count procedure was also applied to pledges that were shared by non-negotiating parties to the agreement. Pledges which were duplicated in either of the ways described above are detailed in the second part of the table. Where a non-negotiating party's pledge was consensual with that of a negotiating party, only that of the negotiating party was counted.

In the lower part of Table 7.9, I summarise the extent to which government programme pledges may be traced back to negotiating and non-negotiating party pledges. As stated before, government programme pledges are consistently more likely to be derived from negotiating parties' manifestos than from non-negotiating parties' manifestos. Having said that, however, a sizeable proportion of the pledges contained in the programme for government bear no relation to the pledges of the parties in the system, and more particularly to the negotiating parties' pledges. Kalogeropoulou (1989, 295), studying single-party government formation in Greece, found 149 pledges in PASOK's 1981 manifesto yet only 111 in their subsequent Government Programme. Eleven pledges of the 111 in the Government Programme were not directly drawn from the 1981 manifesto. In Ireland, the manifesto is a weaker source of pledges for the government programme.

Two potential explanations for such a finding are at hand. The first is that, due to intensive negotiations on many of the manifesto pledges upon which the negotiating parties held differing, though not necessarily conflictual stances, new pledges were made which represented a compromise between the multiple stands of the negotiating parties. Such a compromise was not deemed consensual with either/any negotiating party's manifesto pledge. Second, it may be the case that the programme for government is used by parties to introduce new pledges, pledges not previously offered by any other parties. As we can see from Table 7.9, there are some variations between programmes in terms of their derivations. This latter explanation certainly is likely in the case of the 1994 programme for government, where a two-year lapse had occurred between the publication of the manifestos and the publication of the programme for government.



**Table 7.9** Derivation of Programme for Government (b)

Sources of Pledges in Government Programmes	1981		1982(N)		1989		1992		1994		1997	
	N	%Tot.	N	%Tot.	N	%Tot.	N	%Tot.	N	%Tot.	N	%Tot.
Democratic Left	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	1.4	4	3.3	1	1.0
Fianna Fáil	2	1.8	-	-	4	12.1	18	12.7	2	1.7	54	54.5
Fine Gael	60	52.6	8	16.0	4	12.1	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	2.0
Green Party	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1.0
The Labour Party	19	16.7	12	24.0	0	0.0	40	28.2	16	13.2	2	2.0
The Workers' Party	0	0.0	2	4.0	0	0.0	-	-	-	-	-	-
The Progressive Democrats	-	-	-	-	8	24.2	1	0.7	1	0.8	9	9.1
Pledges Given by More than One												
Negotiating Party	14	11.8	3	5.0	4	12.1	9.5	6.7	1	0.8	15	15.2
Pledges Given by More than One												
Non-Negotiating Party	1	0.9	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	0.8	2	2.0
Total N. of Govt. Prog. Pledges	114		50		33		142		121		99	
Sourced from Negotiating Parties	93	81.1	23	45.0	16	48.5	68	47.5	21	17.4	78	78.8
Source from Non-Negotiating Parties	3	2.6	2	4.0	4	12.1	3	2.1	4	3.3	5	5.1
% of Government Programme												
deriving from no manifesto	16.2		51.0		39.4		50.4		79.3		16.2	

## 7.4 Pledge Redemption

**Hypothesis 5: “Election Pledges made by parties that enter government office after elections are more likely to be [redeemed] than those made by parties that enter the opposition after elections” (Thomson 1999, 49)**

In studies performed previously in the The Netherlands, U.K. and U.S., it was found that being a party in government made it significantly more likely for a party's pledges to be redeemed (Thomson 1999, 197; Royed 1996, 76; Pomper and Lederman 1980, 174; Royed and Borrelli 1999, 124). In single party systems, it was found that between 60% (Royed 1996, 62) and 80% (Pomper and Lederman 1980, 164) of governing party pledges were redeemed in the U.S. as compared with c.84% in the U.K. (Royed 1996, 60). The comparable redemption rates of opposition pledges were c.49% (Royed 1996, 62) and c.53% (Pomper and Lederman 1980, 165) respectively for the U.S., and c.24% for the U.K. In the Netherlands, the other system with inter-party coalition experience, on average 57% of government party pledges were redeemed as compared with c.33% for the opposition (Thomson 1999, 198). Testing the hypothesis in relation to the Irish political

parties, and counting both partially- and fully-fulfilled pledges as redeemed, it is found that, contrary to the alternative hypothesis, parties in government are little better at redeeming their own pledges than redeeming those of the opposition (See Table 7.10). Recoding partially-fulfilled pledges as not-fulfilled makes no statistically significant difference as Table 7.11 shows.

**Table 7.10** Average Percentage Full and Partial Pledge Fulfilment by Position Relative to Office

Source of Pledges	<i>Average % Fully- /Partially-Fulfilled</i>	<i>Standard Deviation</i>	<i>N of Parties</i>
<i>Government Parties</i>	<b>50.1</b>	<b>22.5</b>	<b>16</b>
<i>Opposition Parties</i>	45.2	15.9	22
Ind. Samples t-test (1-tail)	$T^*=0.75$		

\*  $p=0.231$ . Unequal variances assumed

**Table 7.11** Average Percentage Full Pledge Fulfilment by Position Relative to Office

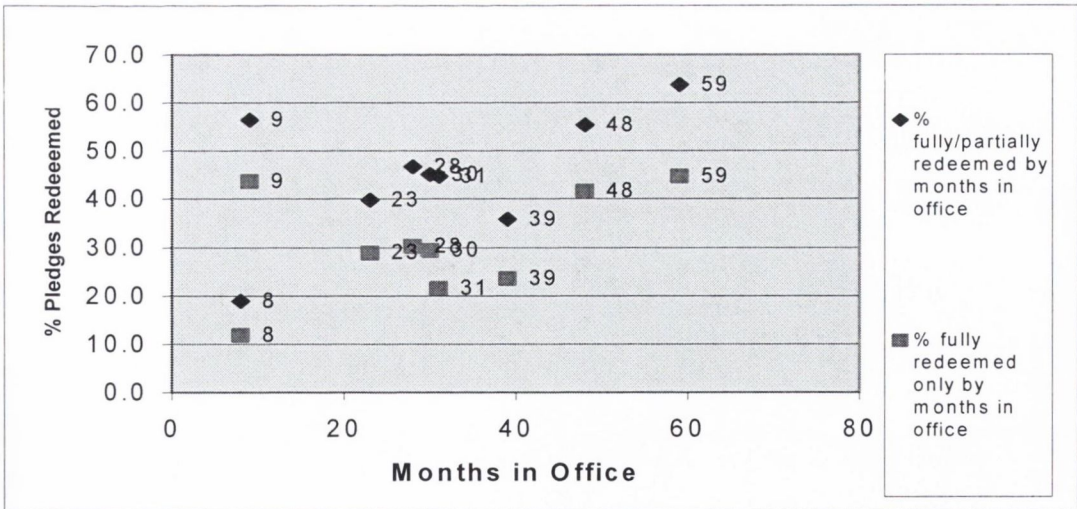
Source of Pledges	<i>Average % Fully-Fulfilled</i>	<i>Standard Deviation</i>	<i>N of Parties</i>
<i>Government Parties</i>	<b>35.9</b>	<b>24.1</b>	<b>16</b>
<i>Opposition Parties</i>	27.6	13.7	22
Ind. Samples t-test (1-tail)	$T^*=1.24$		

\*  $p=0.114$ . Unequal variances assumed

In the cases of the newly formed governments controlled by Fine Gael and the Labour Party in 1981 and by Fianna Fáil in February 1982, neither introduced their own budgets during their terms of office. In the first instance, the coalition formed in the Summer of 1981 and was defeated in the Dáil on their first budget in January 1982. Fianna Fáil, on entering office after them, adopted the bulk of the previous coalition's budget rather than taking the months needed to prepare their own. However even excluding these,<sup>3</sup> the results would suggest that parties in government would appear much of the time to be enacting the opposition's pledges.

**Hypothesis 6: The longer a government remains in office, the greater the proportion of party pledges it will fulfil (Adapted from Hofferbert and Budge 1992, 163)**

We know from Hypothesis 5 that the pledges of government parties are not, statistically-speaking, any more likely to be redeemed by the government of the day than are opposition party pledges, taking no other factors into account. Part of the reason for this, I suggest, is that where governments are short-lived, as many of the Irish governments over the past twenty years have been, they have insufficient time to carry through any pledges. In other words, it takes time for personnel in new governments to settle into their various roles and tasks. More broadly however, the longer a government lasts, the greater the proportion of parties' pledges we should see redeemed. In part this may occur because parties in government weight pledge redemption towards the end of their term (and closer to the next election!) when voters' minds are freshest. However, most importantly, time in itself will allow more pledges to be redeemed. To look at the impact of government duration on percentage pledge fulfilment, I plotted the relationship between the percentage pledge redemption of each government (using all parties' pledges) and the number of months each spent in office.



**Figure 7.2** Percentage Pledge Redemption by Government Duration

The graph shows that, on balance, the evidence from the last nine governments in Ireland suggests a positive relationship between the length of duration of government and the percentage of pledges redeemed, both its own and the opposition parties'. The data point "9 months" which deviates strongly from the trend, is attributable to two factors. First, Fianna Fáil (the new government in February 1982) adopted much of the previous

coalition's failed budget of February 1982, while that budget served as the proxy manifesto for both the Labour Party and Fine Gael in that year. As a result, high levels of opposition pledge fulfilment were recorded. Second, Fianna Fáil itself, only made two pledges at that election, both of which were fully-redeemed.

Another set of points of interest are those that cluster around the 23-39 months marks (five separate elections). According to the rationales given previously, it takes a government time to find its bearings and will intentionally load pledge redemption towards the end of its term. Clearly after two or three years in office, a government should be acquainted with the procedures and processes of getting things done. So there should be no difference between these governments in this respect. On the other hand, a government which has lasted at least two years may not yet anticipate the next election. In fact three of the governments in the cluster 23-39 months fell unexpectedly due to rifts that emerged between coalition partners. In one of the other two cases (28mths), the election date was pre-meditated by the single party in government whilst in the second case (31mths), all parties knew broadly when the election was due as a full term was drawing to a close (there had been a change of government mid-term, without an election). While it would appear that when elections are anticipated, a higher percentage of pledges are either partially- or fully-redeemed than when they are not, this finding is not supported when only fully-redeemed pledges are scrutinised.

In the cases of the two longest governments, those of 1977 (48 months) and 1997 (59 months), the following election dates were both broadly anticipated by the sets of parties in the system.

## **7.5 Conclusion**

By and large, the Irish parties tend to be consistent in terms of placing the vast proportion of their commitments to action in areas that they themselves regard as important. The dialogue or agendas of the parties, as discerned through pledges, however are largely not consistent with what the public at large regards as important. The parties commit to a large number of common actions, certainly more so than any of the other systems so far analysed through a pledge study, both single party and coalition.

Where a coalition government is formed, we find that the pledges of parties negotiating the programme for government are more likely to be included in that programme than the pledges of the parties not negotiating. We shall see in chapters 8 and

9, if support in the programme for government makes it more likely that pledges will be redeemed than pledges without such support.

If it makes it into government, at best a party only has a very modest advantage in terms of getting its pledges fulfilled. Observing the relationship graphically, the longer a government lasts, the more likely it would seem to be to redeem higher proportions of parties' pledges.

In Table 7.12, the proportions of each party's pledges redeemed during each government period are displayed, with the total number of pledges given in each manifesto detailed in each row below. As is obvious from the table, the number of pledges given varies widely across elections and parties. In some cases the disparity in terms of numbers of pledges given by the different parties at a single election leads to odd results in percentage terms. Clearly, the fact the Fianna Fáil redeemed 68% of its 228 in the period 1997-2002 is more remarkable than the fact that it redeemed c.72% of Fine Gael's 71 pledges after the same election, although the percentages belie this. In fact, Fianna Fáil redeemed 104 more of its own pledges than of Fine Gael's. I continue in the next couple of chapters to conduct my difference of means tests using mean percentage figures, as these are the best way to compare the parties' pledge performances under various circumstances. However, the reader should bear in mind the simple point that different Irish parties have offered varying numbers of commitments at different elections.

**Table 7.12** Percentage Pledge Redemption by Party 1977-2002, where Redemption includes both Fully- and Partially-Redeemed Pledges – Figures in bold indicate that the party was in government at the time

	1977	1981	1982F	1982N	1987	1989	1992	1994	1997
Fianna Fáil	<b>56.9</b>	29.2	<b>100.0</b>	-	<b>60.0</b>	<b>82.5</b>	<b>61.7</b>	63.0	<b>68.0</b>
<i>N of Manifesto Pledges</i>	65	24	2		65	63	47	27	228
Fine Gael	-	<b>22.8</b>	55.6	<b>41.7</b>	50.0	45.3	17.6	<b>35.7</b>	71.8
<i>N of Manifesto Pledges</i>	-	123	27	24	48	137	17	14	71
Labour	-	<b>10.0</b>	54.5	<b>46.2</b>	52.3	17.6	<b>37.4</b>	<b>40.0</b>	62.7
<i>N of Manifesto Pledges</i>	-	90	33	39	44	17	123	85	110
Progressive Democrats	-	-	-	-	38.5	<b>38.7</b>	44.4	61.1	<b>63.5</b>
<i>N of Manifesto Pledges</i>	-	-	-	-	26	62	27	18	85
Workers' Party	-	23.5	-	41.9	45.8	28.1	-	-	-
<i>N of Manifesto Pledges</i>	-	17	-	43	72	89	-	-	-
Democratic Left	-	-	-	-	-	-	25.0	<b>35.7</b>	65.6
<i>N of Manifesto Pledges</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	32	28	32
National Coalition	52.6	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<i>N of Manifesto Pledges</i>	38	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Green Party	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	47.3
<i>N of Manifesto Pledges</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	93

*Not:* pledges for 1994 period derive from that subset of 1992 party manifesto pledges which were still available to be redeemed. See explanation of methodology in Section 5.3.

In the next two chapters I test the next two models, thereby setting out to explain why, on some occasions, parties in government redeem copious proportions of many of the opposition parties' pledges (eg, see 1987 and 1997 in Table 7.12) whilst on others they redeem far more of their own (eg, 1992 in Table 7.12).

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## Endnotes

1 As calculated by Thomson 1999, 107.

2 See for example "Platform of main party from 'programmatic coalition'" in Appendix III, Budge et al, 2001. Where a joint coalition programme by two parties was not issued at an election, the procedure adopted to estimate the salient issues of the government was to the programme of the largest party. Also see Mitchell 2000, 143.

3 Excluding the data for 1981 and February 1982, and running the tests again, no significant difference emerges between the mean percentage of government party pledges that a government redeems and the mean percentage of opposition pledges that it redeems either when fully-redeemed and partially-redeemed pledges are counted as "Redeemed" or when only fully-redeemed pledges are counted as "Redeemed".

## CHAPTER 8

### EMPIRICAL TESTS: THE GOVERNMENT PARTY MODEL

#### 8.1 Introduction

All parliamentary parties are assumed to desire re-election with larger seat shares than their current allocation. Voters are deemed to value reliability and responsibility with regard to policy concerns. Parties' leaderships may themselves not be oblivious to the sort of policy agenda they would like to implement. With a majority of seats (assuming proportionality), or even a minority with external support, the government has a clear road through to pledge redemption provided that the ranks of government/support do not splinter. The fifth test to suggest the operation of Partisan Democracy (See Section 2.1 for reminder of the other six tests) requires that parties that get into government after an election, generally redeem the policy promises they offered before the election (Sullivan and O'Connor 1972, 1257).

It is widely acknowledged in the literature on Ireland that it is the government's and not the opposition's role to introduce legislation into the Houses of Parliament. However we want to find out whether the parties in government introduce such legislation or take such non-legislative actions as was promised in their manifestos. This chapter focuses on identifying factors which are important in determining the redemption or otherwise of the pledges of parties in government.

The rest of this chapter is divided into four separate sections. The second section (8.2) tests expectations about the inclusion of government party manifesto pledges into the programme for government. In Section 8.3, expectations about the redemption of pledges made by parties that get into government under different electoral and political circumstances are tested. Following on from this, I test the importance of a number of variables that were expected to enhance the chances' of pledges being redeemed, specifically where the maker of the pledge was a coalition party. In the fifth section, I conclude with the general implications of the findings of this chapter, in particular for the fifth test of the partisan theory of democracy.



## 8.2 Content of the Government Programme

### Hypothesis 7: Soft pledges are more likely to be included in the government programme than hard pledges

Table 8.1 shows the percentage of each party's total manifesto pledges that were coded as hard at each Irish election from 1977 to 1997. On aggregate, for the parties across the 20 years, it was found that hard pledges are made as often as soft pledges. However there are strong variations between the parties: at the extremes, c.87% of Fianna Fáil's pledges across eight elections were hard while c.95% of the Workers' Party (WP)/Democratic Left's (DL) pledges over six elections were soft (as calculated from Table 8.1 below). The explanation may relate to the parties' own estimations of their electoral success, with Fianna Fáil's having fairly good prospects of getting into office at each election and the latter parties' not. The Workers' Party and its successor Democratic Left before 1994 were either not regarded as coalition material by certain other parties (e.g., 1992 where the leaders of Fine Gael and the Progressive Democrats had explicitly ruled out a coalition including Democratic Left) or were not needed to build a working majority government. The main pattern to emerge from Table 8.1 is one of a divide between the two largest parties and their smaller counterparts. Fianna Fáil (FF) and Fine Gael (FG) are fairly consistent in making more hard pledges than they do soft whilst the obverse is true for the smaller parties.

**Table 8.1** Hard Pledges as a Percentage of Total Pledges

Party	1977	1981	1982(F)	1982(N)	1987	1989	1992	1994	1997
DL	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.0	0.0	6.3
FF	67.7	91.7	100.0	-	64.6	93.7	97.9	96.3	93.0
FG	97.4	82.9	100.0	83.3	60.4	63.5	88.2	85.7	38.0
GP	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	57.0
Labour	97.4	84.4	12.1	2.6	0.0	17.6	6.5	4.7	60.0
WP	-	0.0	-	25.6	0.0	0.0	-	-	-
PDs	-	-	-	-	7.7	0.0	25.9	27.8	51.8

Table 8.2 shows the average percentage of hard and soft government party manifesto pledges supported at all relevant elections in the negotiated programme for government. In the second column from the right, the standard deviation for each mean is stated. In the far right column, the "N of Parties" refers to the counts of the percentages of

parties' hard and then soft pledges supported in the programme for government. So the "11" means that I averaged 11 numbers, each denoting a government party's percentage soft manifesto pledges supported in the programme for government of that election year. The discrepancy in "N of Parties" between soft (11) and hard pledges (13) is due to the fact that two parties did not make any soft pledges at one election.

**Table 8.2** Average Percentage Support by Degree of Pledge Commitment

	<i>Average % Supported in the Gov't. Programme</i>	<i>Standard Deviation</i>	<i>N of Parties</i>
<i>Soft Pledges</i>	<b>36.6</b>	<b>27.8</b>	<b>11</b>
<i>Hard Pledges</i>	39.1	27.0	13
Two Sample t-test (1-tail)	<i>T*:</i> -0.22		

\*p=0.413

What we find from the data is that there is no significant difference between the proportion of government parties' soft pledges endorsed by the government programme and the proportion of their hard pledges. In fact, on average 39.1% of hard pledges were supported in programmes for government as compared with a lower percentage of 36.6% for soft pledges, although the difference is not statistically significant. Hypothesis 7 stated that soft pledges were more likely to be included in government programmes than hard pledges. This was suggested in Section 4.3.1 for two reasons: first, an issue upon which one party had made a hard commitment in its manifesto (and which was opposed by its prospective partner in its manifesto) was regarded as more likely to be omitted from the programme to save face for both parties, second, soft pledges (indicating less strong or well-defined support for a particular action) were thought more likely to be included in the programme by both parties, as the stakes for the government as a whole are lower should non-fulfilment of the pledge occur. The results here do not support these arguments. In fact, given the very low levels of pledge dissensus between the Irish parties as a whole (as found in Hypothesis 2, Section 7.2), hard pledges would only rarely be expected to be omitted from the government programme on the grounds of face-saving for both negotiating parties.

**Hypothesis 8: “Election pledges on which a consensus exists between the prospective coalition partners are more likely to be supported explicitly in the government agreement than those pledges on which there is no such consensus” (Thomson 1999, 123)**

From Table 8.3, it is clear that manifesto pledges upon which agreement between the negotiating parties exists are far more likely to be included in the programme for government than pledges upon which no such agreement exists. On average 57.2% of a party’s pledges upon which agreement exists with its prospective partner in government are included in the programme for government as opposed to just 26.3% of a party’s pledges where no such agreement is to be found. This difference of means is significant at less than a 0.1% level of probability.

**Table 8.3** Average Percentage Pledges Supported by Programme for Government by Agreement Versus No Agreement

	<i>Average % Supported in the Gov't. Programme</i>	<i>Standard Deviation</i>	<i>N of Parties</i>
<i>Agreement between Negotiating Parties</i>	<b>57.2</b>	<b>28.9</b>	<b>13</b>
<i>No Agreement between Negotiating Parties</i>	26.3	16.5	13
Paired Sample t-test (1-tail)	<i>T*: 5.40</i>		

\*p=0.000.

**Hypothesis 9: Election pledges on issues on which the prospective coalition parties do not disagree are more likely to be mentioned in the Government agreement than those on which there is explicit disagreement (Thomson 1999, 117-8).**

This hypothesis cannot be tested in the Irish case as there were no occasions upon which prospective coalition parties had dissensual pledges (for definition again, see Hypothesis 2, Chapter 7).

### 8.2.1 Simultaneous impact of variables

In testing two of the three hypotheses (i.e. those possible to test in Section 8.2), I looked at the individual impact of particular variables, each in isolation, on the likelihood of a pledge’s being included in the programme for government. However, we also want to know when the impact of these factors is looked at simultaneously, which one is more important to the inclusion of pledges in the programme for government. To do this, I conducted a binary logistic regression. The dependent variable for the model is “Inclusion of Pledge in Government Programme”, and is coded 1 if the pledge was supported in the programme for government and 0 if no such support was given. The results of this are reported in Table 8.4, which shows the extent to which each of these factors helps predict the inclusion of negotiating parties’ pledges into the government programme, once the other factors are held constant at some level.

**Table 8.4** Dependent Variable: Inclusion of Pledge in Government Programme.

Variable	Odds Ratios	SE
Constant	0.38**	0.11
Soft Pledge	1.15	0.14
Negotiating Party Pledge also Given by Another Negotiating Party	4.46**	0.19
N	1011	
Model Chi-squared	65.55**	
-2 Log Likelihood	1229.64	
Cox and Snell R-squared	0.06	
Nagelkerke R-squared	0.09	

\*\*p is less than or equal to 0.01

The results from Table 8.4 indicate that for a party to the negotiations, its pledge is more likely to be supported in the programme for government where it features in at least one other negotiating party’s manifesto. The odds ratio for the coefficient “Negotiating Party Pledge also Given by Another” is 4.46 and significant at 0.01 level of probability. This implies that when a pledge is shared by partners negotiating the agreement, it is nearly four-and-a-half times more likely to be included than a pledge upon which no such agreement exists, *ceteris paribus*. Whether the pledge was soft or hard made no statistically significant difference to the likelihood of its being negotiated into the programme for government. The overall model is significant at the 0.01 level according to

the Model chi-square statistic. However, the Cox and Snell pseudo R-squared is 0.06, which indicates that the explanatory value of the model is not very strong.

In summary, both the t-tests and logit model suggest that where at least two parties negotiating to get into government made the same pledge for action in their individual manifestos, that the pledge is far more likely to be included in the programme for government than when such consensus does not exist.

### **8.3 Pledge Redemption– All Parties**

**Hypothesis 10: “Election pledges made by parties entering single-party government are more likely to be redeemed than parties entering coalition governments” (Thomson 1999, 202)**

Obviously we would expect single party governments to be able to fulfil more of their manifesto pledges than parties in coalition governments because there is no necessity for single party governments to compromise on their policies in order to entice a partner on board with a negotiated programme for government. Testing for a difference of means of percentage party pledge fulfilment between the two types of government formation, we find that there is a large difference between the respective means. Table 8.5 shows that where both fully- and partially-redeemed pledges are included in the comparison of means, single party administrations redeem c.72% of their manifesto pledges as compared with 42.5% for parties in coalition governments. Excluding partially-redeemed pledges, the percentages fall to c.64% for single party administrations and 29% for parties in coalition governments. Clearly, there is a policy cost to parties when they enter coalitions. Tables 8.5 and 8.6 also show, however, that this finding is not statistically significant at the 0.05 level. This is due to the small number of cases of single party government (3) in the data. In summary, it is clear from the tables that single party governments redeem many more of their manifesto pledges than do parties in coalition governments, but that due to the low number of cases, no statistical significance emerges.

**Table 8.5** Average Percentage Full and Partial Pledge Redemption by Number of Parties in Government

	<i>Average % Fully- /Partially- Redeemed</i>	<i>Standard Deviation</i>	<i>N of Parties</i>
<i>Single-Party</i>	<b>72.3</b>	<b>24.0</b>	<b>3</b>
<i>Coalition</i>	42.5	22.5	13
Ind. Samples t-test (1-tail)	$T^*=1.96$		

\* p=0.072. Unequal variances assumed.

**Table 8.6** Average Percentage Full Pledge Redemption by Number of Parties in Government

	<i>Average % Fully- Redeemed</i>	<i>Standard Deviation</i>	<i>N of Parties</i>
<i>Single-Party</i>	<b>64.1</b>	<b>31.1</b>	<b>3</b>
<i>Coalition</i>	28.9	18.5	13
Ind. Samples t-test (1-tail)	$T^*=1.88$		

\* p=0.100 Unequal variances assumed

**Hypothesis 11: ‘Election Pledges made by parties comprising majority governments are more likely to be fulfilled than parties forming minority governments’ (Klingemann, Hofferbert and Budge 1994, 34-5)**

I suggested in Section 4.3.2 that majority governments should face few impediments to redeeming their pledges, provided the parties involved keep their back-bench parliamentary colleagues on side. Minority governments, however, are in a different strategic situation, whether they comprise a single-party or a coalition of parties. The policies that minority governments are likely to try to get through parliament will only be a subset of what, ideally under majority circumstances, they would like to pursue. Without a majority of seats, a minority government’s best strategy for getting policies through parliament is to ensure that only those policies also supported by sufficient numbers of the opposition parties to make up a majority go forward. According to the data (See Tables 8.7 and 8.8), parties in majority governments are not more likely to redeem more of their own pledges while in government than parties forming a minority administration. In fact, parties in majority administrations appear less likely than parties in minority administrations to redeem their pledges. Where both partially- and fully-redeemed

pledges were used to calculate the average percentages, parties in majority governments on average only redeemed 44.5% of their pledges as compared with 54% for parties in minority administrations. When only fully-redeemed pledges were included, the respective percentages for parties in majority and minority governments were 30.4% and 44%. The difference of means tests provided in Tables 8.7 and 8.8 do not, however, provide statistically significant results at the minimum 0.05 level used in this study.

**Table 8.7** Average Percentage Full and Partial Party Pledge Redemption by Majority/Minority Government

	<i>Average % fully- /partially- redeemed</i>	<i>Standard Deviation</i>	<i>N of parties</i>
<i>Majority Government</i>	<b>44.5</b>	<b>20.3</b>	<b>10</b>
<i>Minority Government</i>	54.0	32.7	6
Ind. Samples t-test (1-tail)	$T^*=-0.64$		

\*  $p=0.272$ . Unequal variances assumed

**Table 8.8** Average Percentage Full Party Pledge Redemption by Majority/Minority Government

	<i>Average % fully-redeemed</i>	<i>Standard Deviation</i>	<i>N of parties</i>
<i>Majority Government</i>	<b>30.4</b>	<b>18.3</b>	<b>10</b>
<i>Minority Government</i>	44.0	32.8	6
Ind. Samples t-test (1-tail)	$T^*=-0.93$		

\*  $p=0.191$ . Unequal variances assumed

Majority coalitions are more prevalent over the 20 year period 1977-1997 than minority coalitions. In total over the period, there were four majority coalitions and two minority. While the first minority coalition of Fine Gael and the Labour Party lasted less than eight months, the second between Fianna Fáil and the Progressive Democrats formed in 1997, and lasted the full term of five years. This constitutes the longest governmental term in the history of the state for any coalition government, despite the fact that the parties in power between them had less than a majority of Dáil seats. It is also this latter administration, along with the Fianna Fáil single-party administration formed after the election of February 1982, which largely boost the percentage of minority parties' pledges that are redeemed. In the latter case, the party only made two pledges, both of which were fully-redeemed. Removing the data for the February 1982 government and running the difference of means tests again, parties in majority governments remain less likely to redeem their pledges than parties in minority administrations. Where both partially- and

fully-redeemed pledges were used to calculate the average percentages, parties in majority governments on average only redeemed 44.5% of their pledges as compared with 44.8% for parties in minority administrations (N=5). When only fully-redeemed pledges were included, the respective percentages for parties in majority and minority governments reduced to 30.4% and 32.8%. Again the differences between the two means in both tests were not statistically significant.

**Hypothesis 12: Government Party pledges that are the subject of consensus with opposition parties are more likely to be redeemed than pledges that are not (Thomson 1999, 208)**

The Irish party system is one characterised by relatively consensual politics. This was noted from the overlap in pledges found in testing Hypothesis 2 of The Baseline Model and Section 3.2, Chapter 3. In one test below (Table 8.9), we can see that the pledges of government parties are significantly more likely (at the 0.05 level of significance) to be fully- and partially-redeemed if they are the subject of consensus with opposition parties than if they are not. However from Table 8.10, we can also see that where only fully-redeemed pledges are studied, it makes little difference to the likelihood of a pledge's redemption whether the pledge of the party in government was shared with a party in opposition or not. Apparently, parties in government have few difficulties partially redeeming pledges that they share with opposition yet they are no more likely to redeem fully such shared pledges than to redeem pledges which are not shared with the opposition. One potential reason for this might be that a party in government, in order to take ownership of actions pledged by both the party and an opposition party alike, puts its own stamp on the pledged actions. In other words, they alter the action to make it more distinctively theirs as opposed to identical with the action proposed by the opposition. Therefore, pledges shared with the opposition are more likely to be partially-redeemed than fully-redeemed.



**Table 8.9** Average Percentage Government Party Pledge Redemption (Full and Partial) by Consensus with the Opposition

	<i>Average % Fully- /Partially-Redeemed</i>	<i>Standard Deviation</i>	<i>N of Parties</i>
<i>Government Pledges Shared with an Opposition Party</i>	<b>64.1</b>	<b>25.6</b>	<b>14</b>
<i>Government Pledges Not Shared with an Opposition Party</i>	48.2	22.8	16
Ind. Samples t-test (1-tail)	$T^*=1.79$		

\*p=0.043. Unequal variances assumed.

**Table 8.10** Average Percentage Government Party Pledge Redemption (Full Only) by Consensus with the Opposition

	<i>Average % Fully- Redeemed</i>	<i>Standard Deviation</i>	<i>N of Parties</i>
<i>Government Pledges Shared with an Opposition Party</i>	<b>39.1</b>	<b>19.8</b>	<b>14</b>
<i>Government Pledges Not Shared with an Opposition Party</i>	36.3	24.6	16
Ind. Samples t-test (1-tail)	$T^*=0.35$		

\*p=0.367. Unequal variances assumed.

### **Hypothesis 13: Pledges made in the issue area of the economy are more likely to be redeemed than pledges made in all other issue areas**

We discerned in Chapter 3 that for most Irish parties, the economy makes up the bulk of space in the manifesto (see Budge et al. 2001, Appendix III) and the largest proportion of pledges of the seven issue domains (identified by the MRG group). It was also found that the Irish electorate generally identified the economy - comprising unemployment, tax and so on - as one of their top few priorities at election time. I therefore expected that if there was any area that parties in government were most likely to be punishable on and punished for non-redemption of their manifesto pledges, that this would be the area. Tables 8.11 and 8.12 show that pledges made in the area of the economy, contrary to expectations, are no more likely to be redeemed than pledges made in all other issue areas and that this result is not dependent on how redemption is measured. Table 8.11 shows that on average only 48.6% of economic pledges made by parties were partially- and fully-redeemed

whilst 49.1% of pledges in other areas were partially- and fully-redeemed. Where only fully-redeemed pledges were included in the difference of means test (Table 8.12), the respective percentages were 34.3% and 35%. Again the differences of means displayed in Tables 8.11 and 8.12 were not statistically significant.

**Table 8.11** Average Percentage Pledges Partially- and Fully-Redeemed by Issue Area

	<i>Average % Fully-/Partially- Redeemed</i>	<i>Standard Deviation</i>	<i>N of Parties</i>
<i>Economic Pledge</i>	<b>48.6</b>	<b>23.1</b>	<b>15</b>
<i>Pledge in Other Issue Area</i>	49.1	21.7	16
Ind. Samples t-test (1-tail)	$T^*=-0.07$		

\* p=0.474. Unequal Variances Assumed.

**Table 8.12** Average Percentage Pledges Fully-Redeemed by Issue Area

	<i>Average % Fully- Redeemed</i>	<i>Standard Deviation</i>	<i>N of Parties</i>
<i>Economic Pledge</i>	<b>34.3</b>	<b>21.3</b>	<b>15</b>
<i>Pledge in Other Issue Area</i>	35.0	23.4	16
Ind. Samples t-test (1-tail)	$T^*=-0.08$		

\* p=0.469 Unequal Variances Assumed.

**8.3.1 Simultaneous Impact of Variables**

To see what impact the variables have on redemption when all of the independent variables are allowed to operate simultaneously, I constructed two logistic regression models. The first model, “Fully- and Partially-Redeemed”, deals with potential determinants of pledge redemption for all government parties where the dependent variable, “Redemption of Government Party Pledge”, contains both fully and partially redeemed pledges. The second model, “Fully-Redeemed Only”, tests potential factors in the determination of the redemption of pledges for all government parties where the dependent variable only includes fully-redeemed pledges. In each of these models I am concerned to look at the extent to which pledge redemption of various types of governments’ pledges can be explained by commonly-accepted important factors. Therefore I selected only those pledges which were made by a party, that after the election, went into office. The independent variables selected for the two models were: whether the pledge was shared or not with a party now in opposition, whether the government was a

single-party administration or a coalition and whether the government of the day was in a majority position or not. Finally, six of the MRG issue areas were placed in the analysis, the final seventh category “Social Groups” forming the reference category. For “Economy”, for example, a pledge was coded 1 if in this issue area and 0 if not.

**Table 8.13** Dependent Variable: Redemption of Government Party Pledge

Variable	Fully and Partially Redeemed		Fully Redeemed Only	
	Odds-Ratio	SE	Odds-Ratio	SE
Constant	0.80	0.16	0.49**	0.17
Government Party Pledge Shared with Opp'n Party	2.23**	0.17	1.58**	0.16
Single Party vs Coalition Administration (Single Party =1)	1.29	0.19	1.55*	0.19
Majority versus Minority Government (Maj=1)	0.99	0.11	0.90	0.12
External Relations/Social Groups	1.15	0.38	1.07	0.39
Freedom and Democracy/Social Groups	1.21	0.27	1.10	0.29
Political System/Social Groups	0.72	0.23	0.69	0.24
Economy/Social Groups	1.34	0.18	1.21	0.19
Welfare and Quality of Life/Social Groups	1.43	0.19	1.38	0.19
Fabric of Society/Social Groups	1.35	0.22	1.07	0.23
N	1362		1362	
Model Chi-squared	45.47**		28.31**	
-2 Log Likelihood	1839.46		1766.75	
Cox and Snell R-squared	0.03		0.02	
Nagelkerke R-squared	0.04		0.03	

\* p is less than or equal to 0.05, \*\*p is less than or equal to 0.01

These two models show clearly that the most important redemption factor for a government party pledge is whether the pledge was also made by a party currently in opposition. In both models, a government party pledge is at least one-and-a-half times as likely to be redeemed if made by a party in opposition as well, than if not. A pledge made by a party participating in a single-party government is also marginally more likely to be redeemed than one made by a party in a coalition administration, although this was only significant in one of the models. No factor had a statistically significant negative impact on the likelihood of a pledge's being redeemed.

Overall, the model including fully-redeemed pledges only (as the dependent variable) explains pledge-fulfilment better than the model “Fully and Partially Redeemed”, in which the dependent variable comprises both fully and partially redeemed pledges. The pseudo R-squareds in the first model are marginally higher than those for the second, indicating a stronger association between some of the independent factors and the

dependent factor. The  $-2LL$  however for the second indicates a better model fit. Having said that, neither of the models perform well. It is clear that a number of the variables that appeared theoretically important turned out not to be significant in the empirical analysis.

To summarise Section 8.3, we can say that what is most crucial to the capacity of a government to deliver on its constituent party's/ parties' pre-election promises is the degree of consensus the administration has with sections of the opposition. Both the binary logit and the t-tests indicate that where consensus between at least one opposition party and a government party on a pledge exists, it is more likely to be redeemed. This is a robust result. While not important when isolated from the effects of other variables on pledge redemption, the government's being a single-party administration emerged as a significant variable in a logit analysis.

#### **8.4 Pledge Redemption – Coalition Parties**

**Hypothesis 14: “Election pledges are more likely to be acted upon if they are supported in the government agreement than if they are not” (Thomson 1999, 44)**

In Hypothesis 14, section 4.3.3, I laid out my rationale for this hypothesis. Briefly, it was suggested that where parties get their pledges incorporated in the programme for government, the likelihood that these pledges will be fulfilled is enhanced because once in the programme, they form part of the action plan for government and are monitored for implementation by their respective parties. Tables 8.14 and 8.15 show that support in the government programme for government parties' pledges makes it significantly more likely that they will be redeemed, regardless of how redemption is measured, than will pledges without such support. This finding is supported by that of Thomson (1999, 204) in the Netherlands. It may be calculated from Table 7.9, Chapter 7 that on average c.65% of pledges in any government programme are sourced from party manifestos in the system.<sup>1</sup> That finding and the supporting results from Hypothesis 14 would indicate that programmes for government are important intervening factors in getting manifesto pledges redeemed, as well as being an opportunity for the parties in government to introduce new policy agendas.

**Table 8.14** Average Percentage Full and Partial Pledge Redemption by Support in Government Programme

	<i>Average % Fully- /Partially-Redeemed</i>	<i>Standard Deviation</i>	<i>N of Parties</i>
<i>Supported in Government Programme</i>	<b>62.9</b>	<b>20.1</b>	<b>12</b>
<i>Not Supported in Government programme</i>	39.0	22.3	13
Ind. Samples t-test (1-tail)	$T^*=2.82$		

\*p=0.005 Unequal Variances assumed

**Table 8.15** Average Percentage Pledge Redemption (Full Redemption Only) by Support in Government Programme

	<i>Average % Fully- Redeemed</i>	<i>Standard Deviation</i>	<i>N of Parties</i>
<i>Supported in Government Programme</i>	<b>43.6</b>	<b>22.7</b>	<b>12</b>
<i>Not Supported in Government programme</i>	27.6	18.3	13
Paired Sample t-test (1-tail)	$T^*=1.93$		

P=0.034 Unequal Variances assumed

**Hypothesis 15: “Election Pledges are more likely to be fulfilled if a representative of the party that made them receives ministerial responsibility for the relevant policy area’ (Thomson 1999, 204)**

It has been suggested by some that, in parliamentary democracies, the party holding a particular ministerial portfolio is more likely to control the policy outputs from that area than its coalition colleague(s). The hypothesis, also attributable to Laver and Shepsle (1990, 874), is not supported by the data for Ireland, unlike in the Netherlands (1999, 204). Tables 8.16 and 8.17 illustrate that there is no great difference between the average rate of pledge redemption of the party in government holding the portfolio and the party without. The differences of means displayed in both tables were not statistically significant at a probability of 5%.

**Table 8.16** Full and Partial Pledge Fulfilment by Portfolio Ownership

	<i>Average % Fully- /Partially-Redeemed</i>	<i>Standard Deviation</i>	<i>N of Parties</i>
<i>Portfolio Owned by Party</i>	<b>46.2</b>	<b>19.6</b>	<b>13</b>
<i>Portfolio Not Owned by Party</i>	47.6	28.2	13
Paired Sample t-test (1-tail)	$T^*=-0.23$		

\*p=0.413.

**Table 8.17** Pledge Fulfilment (Full) by Portfolio Ownership

	<i>Average % Fully- Redeemed</i>	<i>Standard Deviation</i>	<i>N of Parties</i>
<i>Portfolio Owned by Party</i>	<b>29.2</b>	<b>19.4</b>	<b>13</b>
<i>Portfolio Not Owned by Party</i>	34.6	32.0	13
Paired Sample t-test (1-tail)	$T^*=-0.72$		

\*p=0.243.

**Hypothesis 16: “Election pledges that are the subject of consensus between coalition parties are more likely to be fulfilled than those that are not” (Thomson 1999, 208)**

Table 8.18 shows the difference of means test results between the average percentage of fully- and partially-redeemed pledges when the pledges are consensual between coalition partners and when they are not. Table 8.19 displays the difference of means between the average percentage of fully-redeemed pledges when the pledges are consensual between coalition partners and when they are not. Both tests produce the same results. In both cases, it emerges that where one party in government had a pledge in its manifesto which accorded with a pledge of its partner, then that pledge was significantly more likely to be redeemed than one upon which no such agreement existed. Where both partially-and fully-redeemed pledges were counted as redeemed, the relevant percentages were 66.9% for consensual pledges and 41.6% for non-consensual pledges. Where only fully-redeemed pledges were “Redeemed”, the respective percentages were 37.4% and 28.3%. The results from both tests were statistically significant. In the Netherlands study, it was also found that where consensus existed between coalition partners, the pledge was more significantly more likely to be fulfilled (Thomson 1999, 208).

**Table 8.18** Average Percentage Pledge Redemption (Full and Partial) by Consensus between Coalition Partners

	<i>Average % Fully- /Partially-Redeemed</i>	<i>Standard Deviation</i>	<i>N of Parties</i>
<i>Consensus between Coalition Partners</i>	<b>66.9</b>	<b>31.8</b>	<b>13</b>
<i>No Consensus</i>	41.6	20.2	13
Paired Sample t-test (1-tail)	<i>T*=3.18</i>		

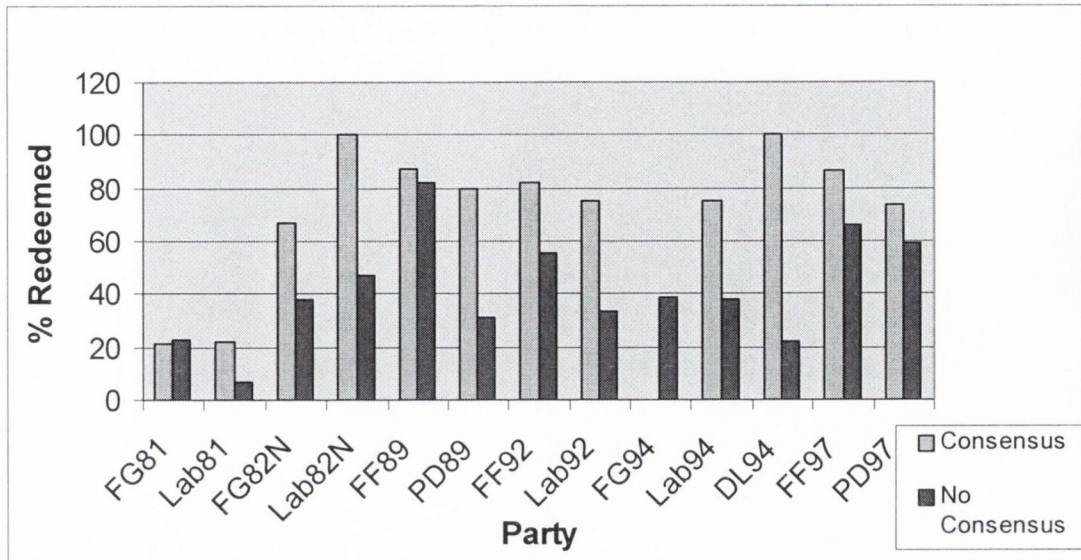
\*p=0.004.

**Table 8.19** Average Percentage Pledge Redemption (Full) by Consensus between Coalition Partners

	<i>Average % Fully- Redeemed</i>	<i>Standard Deviation</i>	<i>N of Parties</i>
<i>Consensus between Coalition partners</i>	<b>37.4</b>	<b>22.4</b>	<b>13</b>
<i>No Consensus</i>	28.3	17.4	13
Paired Sample t-test (1-tail)	<i>T*=2.45</i>		

\*p=0.015.

As one can see from Figure 8.1, only one party's (FG81) non-consensual pledges were marginally more likely to be fulfilled than its pledges upon which consensus existed with another coalition partner. The 1981 government, as was mentioned in Hypothesis 5, Section 7.4, was controlled by Fine Gael and the Labour Party but did not get the chance to introduce their own budget during their term of office. The coalition formed in the Summer of 1981 and was defeated in the Dáil on their first budget in January 1982. However in the intervening eight months, it would appear that of the few pledges that the government did manage to fulfil (they did pass an interim budget in July 1981), Fine Gael was very successful relative to the Labour Party in getting its own non-consensual manifesto policies redeemed.



**Figure 8.1** Pledge Redemption (both Partial and Full) by Consensus between Coalition Partners

**Hypothesis 17: “Election pledges on which the prospective coalition parties do not disagree are more likely to be acted on than those on which there is explicit disagreement” (Thomson 1999, 211)**

Obviously, it should also be expected that pledges through which coalition partners propose contrary action should be less likely to be redeemed than pledges that are not in conflict with each other. Unfortunately, due to a complete lack of cases where such disagreement arose, this hypothesis cannot be tested here.

#### 8.4.1 Simultaneous Impact of Variables

I want to see which independent variables have the greatest effect on the likelihood of coalition party pledge redemption when all of the independent variables are allowed to operate simultaneously. Two logistic regression models are constructed. The first model (“Fully- and Partially-Redeemed”) attempts to isolate predictors of pledge redemption for parties in coalition governments where the dependent variable “Redemption of Coalition Party Pledge” contains both fully and partially redeemed pledges. The second model (“Fully-Redeemed Only”) tests predictors of pledge redemption for all coalition parties where the dependent variable “Redemption of Coalition Party Pledge” merely includes fully-redeemed pledges. The independent variables selected for the two models include all of those from Table 8.13 – the predictors of all government party pledges redeemed – with



one exception. The variable “Single Party vs Coalition Administration” has been omitted. To reiterate, the other variables from Table 8.13 are: pledge shared with a party now in opposition, whether the government of the day was in a minority position, and the issue area that the pledge deals with. The reason for the omission of the “Single Party vs Coalition Administration” variable is that the additional variables to be added into these two coalition models specifically deal with coalition pledges and once entered into the model, “Single Party vs Coalition Administration” variable drops out. This is because the three new variables (detailed below) were only coded for pledges made by parties in coalition government. Obviously we wanted to know whether or not a government party pledge was more likely to be redeemed under a single party government than a multi-party government. Therefore distinct models of government party pledge redemption had to be created, the first type (Table 8.13) dealing with redemption by government parties under both single party and coalition regimes, the second (Table 8.20) focussing more intently on pledge redemption under coalition administrations. The three new variables included in these coalition models, expected to be important to the redemption of coalition pledges are: ownership of the relevant portfolio, support in the government programme and the pledge being shared between coalition parties.

**Table 8.20** Dependent Variable: Redemption of Coalition Party Pledge

Variable	Fully and Partially Redeemed		Fully-Redeemed Only	
	Odds-Ratios	SE	Odds-Ratio	SE
Constant	0.25**	0.24	0.17**	0.26
Government Party pledge shared with Opp'n Party	2.77**	0.19	2.09**	0.18
Supported in Government Programme	1.22	0.15	1.29	0.15
Ownership of Relevant Portfolio	2.17**	0.15	1.86**	0.16
Pledge Consensual with Coalition Partner	1.84**	0.21	1.20	0.21
Majority versus Minority Government (Maj=1)	1.09	0.14	0.95	0.14
External Relations/ Social Groups	0.99	0.48	1.50	0.48
Freedom and Democracy/ Social Groups	1.62	0.33	1.63	0.35
Political System/ Social Groups	0.87	0.28	0.94	0.31
Economy/ Social Groups	1.76*	0.22	1.73*	0.24
Welfare and Quality of Life/ Social Groups	1.54	0.22	1.58	0.24
Fabric of Society/ Social Groups	1.68*	0.26	1.62	0.28
N	1010		1010	
Model Chi-squared	94.52**		51.58**	
-2 Log Likelihood	1301.58		1215.90	
Cox and Snell R-squared	0.09		0.05	
Nagelkerke R-squared	0.12		0.07	

\*p is less than or equal to 0.05, \*\*p is less than or equal to 0.01

The strongest results from the two models are as follows: the strongest factor in the redemption of a pledge, once it is known that that pledge was made by a party that subsequently helped to form a coalition government, is the pledge also being made by an opposition party. Consensus, in this form, makes a pledge twice as likely to be fulfilled whether one looks at fully-redeemed pledges on their own or fully- and partially-redeemed pledges. The second most important factor in pledge fulfilment is possession of the relevant ministerial portfolio for a pledge, a much stronger predictor than support for the pledge in the government programme. Finally, pledges made in the field of the economy, in particular, emerged as a statistically significant factor in pledge fulfilment, with pledges in this field almost twice as likely to be redeemed than pledges in the area of “Social Groups”. Issues relating to the “Fabric of Society” also made pledge fulfilment marginally more likely to occur than pledges made with reference to “Social Groups”.

The analysis of coalition parties relative to that of all government parties produces remarkably similar results. In both sets of logit models, the same variable emerged as most important in determining pledge fulfilment: i.e., the government party pledge’s being shared with the opposition. The coalition models also suggest that coalition partners’ having made the same pledge each in their manifestos before the election (indicating agreement on the substance of the pledge) also provides modestly better odds of a pledge’s being fulfilled. While not important when isolated from the effects of the other variables on coalition party pledge redemption, a pledge’s being made in an area for which a minister of the same party holds the portfolio emerged as a strong aid to manifesto pledge redemption by a coalition party.

## 8.5 Conclusion

The fifth requirement of the test of Partisan Theory, as outlined in Table 2.1, is that parties that get into government generally redeem their pre-election promises. We discovered in the testing of Hypothesis 5, Section 7.3, that on average c.50% of a government party’s pledges are redeemed. This figure disguises quite a degree of variation across parties and governments however. In what follows, I highlight the main factors that enhance a government party’s ability to redeem its manifesto pledges. The greater the number of these factors present, which were found to impact positively on a government party’s likelihood of redeeming its pledges, the greater the likelihood that a strong and statistically significant difference will be found between the proportion of government party pledges

redeemed and the proportion of opposition party pledges redeemed. This requirement, just to remind the reader, was the fourth of seven for a mandate test of Partisan Theory.

Political parties that get into office after an election or after the collapse of another government may be placed in one of two categories: those that have to find a partner or partners with which to form a government and those which can and do choose to govern alone.

For parties that have to form a coalition government, it is not simply a question of getting on immediately with the business of redeeming pledges. First, the parties have to agree which of their respective manifesto pledges will form the basis for their combined plan for government. Many of each party's pledges may prove to be contentious with the other partner. Even if many are not directly in opposition to another partner's pledges, each negotiating party produced its own plan of action before the election for when in government, in which the same issues or solutions may be given different priorities. Clearly, if more than one party gets into government, the plans of action somehow have to be merged to form a single plan for the government. This has traditionally been thought to occur through the institution of a negotiated programme for government. The tests conducted in Section 8.2 of this chapter showed that, where a pledge was independently contained in at least two of the negotiating parties' manifestos, it was four-and-a-half times more likely to be adopted in the programme for government than a pledge on which such consensus was absent (holding another factor constant). No other tested factors emerged as consequential.

In Section 8.3, I turned to the analysis of pledge redemption by parties in both single party and coalition governments. Through difference of means tests, using two forms of "redemption" indicators, single party governments were found to be distinctly more likely to redeem their pledges than parties in coalition governments, although due to the low number of cases of single party governments, these findings were not statistically significant. Logit analysis, holding all other variables constant, suggested that pledges of single party governments were between one-and-a-quarter and one-and-a-half times as likely to be fulfilled as pledges of parties in coalition governments.

The variable that stands out as being most important to the redemption of both a coalition party's and single party government's pledges is the sharing of a pledge by a party in government with at least one party in opposition. A government party pledge which is shared with an opposition party is between one-and-a-half times and twice as likely (depending on the definition of "Redeemed") to be redeemed as a pledge which is not shared in such a way, holding all other factors constant. When the effects of this factor are studied in isolation through two difference of means tests (one with the dependent variable "Redeemed" including both partially and fully-redeemed pledges, the other just

fully-redeemed pledges), we find that a greater average percentage of party's pledges are redeemed when such opposition consensus exists than when it does not. One of the tests was not statistically significant however. As was suggested in Chapter 4, this may be because parties in government will not only strategise as to how they can make their return to government next election around more probable through the redemption of their pledges, they will also try to *pull the rug* from under the opposition's attempts to get into government. One way to do this is to fulfil the pledges made also by the opposition such that they cannot front an effective opposition, either through attacking the government for their policies or by proposing alternative policies. If the opposition does take either of these tacks, they risk appearing inconsistent with regard to their own earlier policy proclamations.

Surprisingly, neither type of government was found by either difference of means tests or logit analyses to be more or less likely to fulfil its constituent parties' pledges if they controlled a majority of seats in the Dáil.

If a government party does not manage to get sufficient seats in the Dáil to govern effectively alone, then the negotiations for government as a whole and not just for the content of the programme for government are likely to be crucial. Certainly, which party gets which portfolio has been shown to be an important factor in determining the likelihood of pledge redemption, according to the logit analysis. A couple of other factors were shown by both the logit analyses of coalition party pledge redemption and difference of means tests to be important for the redemption of pledges. Pledges supported in the programme for government were shown to be more likely to be redeemed than pledges without such support, when ignoring all other factors, yet when analysed with the other factors, this variable's importance lessened dramatically. The sharing of manifesto pledges between the parties in government was also shown to enhance the likelihood of getting the pledges redeemed. Another important factor for coalition but not government party pledge redemption was where a pledge was made in the field of the economy (as opposed to "Social Groups"). This was anticipated for all government parties on the grounds that the issue area is typically the most salient with the general public. Interestingly, apart from the economy, one other issue area emerged in the logit analysis as important for the likelihood of a coalition party pledge being redeemed. This "Fabric of Society" concern, also did not emerge as important in the analysis of all government parties' pledge redemption (Table 8.13).

We found in testing The Baseline Model in Chapter 7 that pledges made by parties that entered government after an election were no more likely to be redeemed than pledges made by parties that subsequently entered the opposition benches. In this chapter, we discovered that one of the major reasons for this is that government parties are more likely

to redeem pledges which are consensual with the opposition than pledges which are not mentioned by them. In the next chapter, I shall test a number of hypotheses to see if there are any factors that enhance the likelihood of opposition party pledges being redeemed and that might have the ability to reduce the gap between rates of pledge redemption by parties in government and parties in opposition.

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## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Arithmetic mean of “% of Government Programme Unsourced”

## CHAPTER 9

### EMPIRICAL TESTS: THE OPPOSITION PARTY MODEL

#### 9.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I set out to identify the factors that make it more likely for opposition party pledges to be redeemed by the government of the day. Obviously, whether or not there is a statistically significant difference between levels of government party pledge redemption and opposition party pledge redemption will depend on the operation (or not) of various factors influencing *both* government party pledge redemption *and* opposition party pledge redemption. In Chapter 8, I investigated factors likely to influence the former, and in this chapter I scrutinise factors that might be expected to affect the latter.

Empirical investigation of The Baseline Model in Chapter 7 showed that pledges of parties in government after an election were only marginally more likely to be redeemed than pledges of parties that entered the opposition. The question is, why would parties getting into government pay any attention to what their opposition colleagues had promised before the election? In this chapter, I show that many of the variables that might be thought, a priori, important to the likelihood of opposition party pledges' being redeemed did prove important to the fulfilment of pledges.

I have divided the chapter into three sections; in the second section (9.2), I look at predictors of the inclusion of opposition party pledges in the programme for government, the programme for government being hypothesised as an aid to the fulfilment of party pledges. In the third section, I look at predictors of the fulfilment of opposition party pledges, whilst in the final section, I draw my conclusions on the importance of opposition party pledges for subsequent government policy.

## 9.2 Content of the Programme for Government

**Hypothesis 18: Election pledges of the prospective opposition parties are more likely to be supported in the government agreement if shared with a party involved in the negotiations than if not (adapted from Thomson 1999, 115)**

In Section 4.4.1, I suggested that where an opposition party had identical manifesto pledges to at least one of the parties in negotiations for the programme for government, that those pledges would have a greater chance of being redeemed than opposition pledges for which no such agreement existed. The rationale behind this is that negotiating parties will be concerned to negotiate their own objectives into the programme for government, regardless of whether or not they are also shared with a party of the opposition. By default, therefore, some opposition pledges may also make it into the programme for government. There is no such clear rationale for negotiating parties to push for non-consensual opposition pledges to be included in the programme for government, except when a minority administration is anticipated. This latter hypothesis will be investigated later.

Table 9.1 shows the mean percentage of opposition parties' pledges that are included in the programme for government according to whether or not the pledges were consensual with at least one other opposition party. In the second column from the right, the standard deviation for each mean is stated. In the far right column, the "N of parties" refers to the counts of the percentages of opposition parties' pledges which were consensual with a party of government (1<sup>st</sup> row) and then the count of those which were not (2<sup>nd</sup> row). So the "15" in the 1<sup>st</sup> row means that I averaged 15 numbers, each denoting the percentage of an opposition party's manifesto pledges consensual with a party in government which were supported in the programme for government of that election year.

It is overwhelmingly the case that pledges shared by an opposition party with a party involved in the negotiation of the programme for government are significantly more likely to be included in the programme than pledges upon which no such agreement exists. In all, c.41% of non-negotiating party pledges shared with a negotiating party are included in the programmes as compared with just c.9% support for those pledges not shared similarly.



**Table 9.1** Average % Opposition Party Pledge Inclusion in Programme for Government by Consensus with Party in Government

	<i>Average % Supported in Govt. Programme</i>	<i>Standard Deviation</i>	<i>N of Parties</i>
<i>Non-Negotiating Party Pledge Shared with Negotiating Party</i>	<b>40.7</b>	<b>14.9</b>	<b>15</b>
<i>Non-Negotiating Party Pledge Not Shared with Negotiating Party</i>	9.4	9.7	15
Paired Samples t-test (1-tail)	<i>T*=5.76</i>		

\*p=0.000

**Hypothesis 19: Election pledges of the prospective opposition parties are more likely to be supported in the government agreement if not dissensual with a party involved in the negotiations than if dissensual (adapted from Thomson 1999, 115)**

It should also be anticipated that pledges upon which there is explicit disagreement between non-negotiating parties and negotiating parties would not be included by the negotiating parties in their programme for government. However, due to the low number of occasions upon which opposition parties make pledges that are in direct opposition to those made by parties in government, this hypothesis cannot be tested statistically by way of a difference of means test. Instead it will be included in the logit analysis at end of Section 9.2, where the impact of all relevant variables to the inclusion of an opposition party's pledge in any programme for government is studied simultaneously.

**Hypothesis 20: Parties negotiating a minority coalition are more likely to include pledges of parties outside of government in their government programmes than are parties negotiating majority formations**

Where minority governments are being negotiated, the negotiating parties may have to make concessions to other informal players outside the proposed government in order to build a working majority. This working majority will be necessary to redeem those pledges that require parliamentary endorsement. The concessions that are made with

outside players of the formal negotiating parties may be included in the programme for government.

Selecting the opposition parties after each change of government, I calculated the percentage of each of their pledges supported in the respective government programmes. The results are displayed in Table 9.2, with the average percentage of opposition party pledges supported in the government programme when the government in the offing is in a minority position shown on the first row. On average a quarter or so of each opposition party's pledges have been supported in government programmes where a minority government was formed, as compared with c.15% of opposition party pledges when a majority government ensued (See Table 9.2). This difference of means is not, however, statistically significant at the 0.05 level.

**Table 9.2** Average % Non-Negotiating Parties' Pledges Incorporated in Programme for Government according to Prospective Majority/Minority Coalition.

	<i>Average % Supported in Govt. Programme</i>	<i>Standard Deviation</i>	<i>N of Parties</i>
<i>Minority Coalition</i>	<b>24.3</b>	7.7	<b>6</b>
<i>Majority Coalition</i>	15.3	12.1	9
Ind. Samples t-test (1-tail)	$T^*=1.77$		

\*p=0.051, unequal variances assumed

This test suggests that where support is needed by a prospective minority government, policy concessions to supporting parties (or individuals in some cases) will sometimes be written into the programme for government, although due to the low number of cases, the results are not statistically significant. It also indicates that, as a matter of course most governments, both minority and majority, voluntarily adopt a few of their opposition colleagues' manifesto pledges. I have not held opposition pledges shared with at least one party in government constant in testing this hypothesis. I therefore cannot tell what proportion of the average percentages of opposition party pledges supported in the government programmes are attributable to the fact that they are shared with a party negotiating the programme for government versus because the parties negotiating are in a likely minority/majority position.

Interestingly, it may not only be prospective minority administrations that include pledges of the opposition in their programmes for government. After the election in 1992, the Labour Party negotiated a common programme position with Democratic Left before it entered negotiations with any other party for the formation of government. Between them, the two parties had nowhere near sufficient numbers to form a government themselves.

When Fianna Fáil responded to Labour with a compromise proposal, a programme comprising aspects of both the Fianna Fáil manifesto and that common programme, it was therefore, presumably, including some of Democratic Left's pledges from the common programme also. The Labour Party's eagerness to adopt some of Democratic Left's pledges into a common programme may relate to a desire on their part to neutralise the potential damage that Democratic Left could do to them, once Labour had entered government. Anecdotally, the Workers' Party was a very effective opposition to the Labour Party in the period 1982-1987.

### **9.2.1 Simultaneous Impact of Variables**

In the last two hypotheses, I have looked at the impact individually of various items on the likelihood of a non-negotiating pledge being included in the programme for government. I also suggested that where no explicit disagreement exists between the non-negotiating party and a negotiating party that this should enhance the non-negotiating party's chances of getting its pledge included in the programme for government, as compared with a pledge upon which they explicitly disagree. Table 9.3 below looks at the impact of the three factors together, to see which if any, amongst the variables has the greatest impact and secondly, how good an overall model the variables produce. To summarise: in this test, three variables were hypothesised to be important – the negotiating parties predicting a minority administration, an opposition party's pledges also being included in one of the negotiating parties' manifestos and the lack of explicit disagreement between non-negotiating party and negotiating party pledges.

The dependent variable for the model is "Inclusion of Non-Negotiating Party Pledges in the Programme for Government", which is coded 1 if the pledge was supported in the programme for government and 0 if no such support was given.

**Table 9.3** Independent Factors in the Inclusion of Non-Negotiating Party Pledges in the Programme for Government

Variable	Odds-Ratios	SE
Constant	0.04**	0.24
Non-Negotiating Party Pledge also Given by Negotiating Party	11.25**	0.24
Non-Negotiating Party Pledge Not Dissensual with Negotiating Party Pledge	0.04	9.02
Negotiating a Minority Government	1.92**	0.25
N	754	
Model Chi-squared	118.65**	
-2 Log Likelihood	456.30	
Cox and Snell R-squared	0.15	
Nagelkerke R-squared	0.27	

\*p is less than or equal to 0.05, \*\*p is less than or equal to 0.01

Table 9.3 overwhelmingly suggests that sharing pledges with a negotiating party is the main factor in getting opposition party pledges endorsed in the programme for government. The odds ratio for the “Non-Negotiating Party Pledge also Given by Negotiating Party” is 11.25 and significant at  $p < 0.01$ . This suggests that when an opposition party pledge is shared with at least one party inside in the negotiations, when controlling for the effects of all other variables in the model, the pledge is over 11 times more likely to be included in the government agreement than a non-consensual pledge. The model also suggests that non-negotiating party pledges are more likely to be included in the programme for government by the negotiating parties when the negotiating parties are anticipating a minority administration. The odds-ratio was also statistically significant at  $p < 0.01$ . According to the odds ratios though, this is a lesser predictor of whether a non-negotiating party pledge is likely to make it into the government programme than if it is shared with a negotiating party to the agreement. Both factors produced results in this logit analysis in line with prior expectations.

Where a pledge was contentious (as between a non-negotiating party and a negotiating party), it was much less likely to be included in the programme for government than a pledge which was non-contentious (odds ratio was 0.04). This result is also in line with prior expectations but given the small number of cases, this odds-ratio was not statistically significant.

Despite the potential for different results,<sup>1</sup> both variables (“Non-Negotiating Party Pledge also Given by Negotiating Party” and “Negotiating a Minority Government”) emerge in both the logit and difference of means analyses as important and statistically

significant factors in the determination of the likelihood of opposition party pledge inclusion in the programme for government.

### 9.3 Pledge Fulfilment

#### **Hypothesis 21: Opposition pledges that are the subject of consensus with government parties are more likely to be fulfilled than those that are not<sup>2</sup>**

I suggested in Section 4.4.2 that pledges made by government parties which are consensual with the opposition would be expected to pass more easily through parliament than the pledges of government parties for which no such consensus exists. The reasoning behind this hypothesis is that opposition parties will seek not to be hypocritical, challenging the policies of the government that they themselves previously supported. As the government parties will anticipate only minor opposition to such pledges, we should expect that these would be redeemed. Thus we have a rationale for why opposition party pledges which are consensual with at least one party of government are more likely to be redeemed than opposition party pledges without support from a government party.

Table 9.4 shows the average percentage of fully- and partially-redeemed opposition pledges where the pledges are shared with a government party (1<sup>st</sup> row) and where they are not (2<sup>nd</sup> row). Table 9.5 shows the average percentage of fully-redeemed opposition pledges where the pledges are shared with a government party (1<sup>st</sup> row) and where they are not (2<sup>nd</sup> row). Both tables suggest it is more likely for pledges shared by opposition parties with parties in government to be redeemed than for pledges which are just made by an opposition party. In both cases, the differences of means are statistically significant.

**Table 9.4** Average % Opposition Party Pledge Fulfilment (Full and Partial) by Consensus with Governing Party

	<i>Average % Fully- /Partially-Redeemed</i>	<i>Standard Deviation</i>	<i>N of Parties</i>
<i>Opposition Pledges Shared with a Government Party</i>	<b>56.0</b>	<b>20.7</b>	<b>20</b>
<i>Opposition Pledges Not Shared with a Government Party</i>	40.4	19.4	22
Paired Sample t-test (1-tail)	$T^*=2.50$		

\*p=0.008

**Table 9.5** Average % Opposition Party Full Pledge Fulfilment by Consensus with Governing Party

	<i>Average % Fully- Redeemed</i>	<i>Standard Deviation</i>	<i>N of Parties</i>
<i>Opposition Pledges Shared with a Government Party</i>	<b>36.9</b>	<b>21.3</b>	<b>20</b>
<i>Opposition Pledges Not Shared with a Gov't Party</i>	26.3	18.5	22
Paired Sample t-test (1-tail)	$T^*=1.71$		

\*p=0.048

**Hypothesis 22: Opposition pledges that are not the subject of dissensus with government parties are more likely to be fulfilled than pledges that are (Thomson 1999, 208).**

In the logit analysis to come, it will be seen whether or not pledges on which government and opposition parties are directly opposed are less likely to be redeemed than pledges upon which no such explicit disagreement occurs. In total over the eight elections that this thesis covers, there were only four occasions on which an opposition party pledged at least one action which was directly contrary to the proposed action of at least one government party. As such, this hypothesis could not be tested as a lone factor operating on opposition party pledge redemption. There were too few cases to perform a t-test comparing the average percentage of each party's pledges that were redeemed when action was pledged which was directly contrary to the proposed government action, and the average

percentage of each party's pledges, that were redeemed when the pledge made was not in direct conflict with one of the pledges of a government party.

**Hypothesis 23: Election pledges that are the subject of consensus between opposition parties are more likely to be redeemed than those that are not (Thomson 1999, 47)**

In testing Hypothesis 2, I did not suggest any reasons as to why we might expect opposition pledges, that are not consensual with the pledges of a party in government, to be redeemed at all. In fact there are a number of possible reasons. One possible reason for a government's adoption of opposition pledges is that the government parties did not cover the policy areas in their manifestos themselves. Second, parties in government, especially if holding only a minority of seats, will be more alert to issues upon which the opposition appears to be united than areas upon which disagreement is registered. In particular, government parties will be particularly concerned where the opposition position gains popular endorsement. A government, faced with such a scenario, has a number of routes open to it. One route would be to ignore the issue and hope that it goes away. Another possible route for the government is to adopt the opposition's more popular stance in place of its own, and claim the plaudit for being able to fulfil the policy. Another two reasons for the adoption of non-consensual opposition party pledges by parties in government will be tested in each of the next two hypotheses.

Pledges of opposition parties are significantly more likely to be adopted by the government of the day if the opposition is united on the pledge than if the opposition holds no shared position (as approximated by both having had the pledge in their respective party manifestos). This is the result if we look at all pledges that were fully- and partially-redeemed by the government of the day (Table 9.6) and pledges that were fully-redeemed only (Table 9.7), although it is only the former that produces a statistically significant result. Table 9.6 suggests the discrepancy in redemption rates between pledges which are shared by at least two opposition parties and pledges which are not shared in such a manner is twenty-three percentage points. Table 9.7 suggests the difference at a reduced level of approximately ten percentage points.

**Table 9.6** Average % Opposition Party Pledge Fulfilment (Full and Partial) by Consensus with Another Opposition Party

	<i>Average % Fully- /Partially-Redeemed</i>	<i>Standard Deviation</i>	<i>N of Parties</i>
<i>Pledges Shared between Opposition parties</i>	<b>63.7</b>	<b>26.3</b>	<b>20</b>
<i>Pledges Not Shared between Opposition Parties</i>	40.7	18.1	19
Ind. Samples t-test (1-tail)	$T^*=3.19$		

\*p=0.002 Unequal variances assumed.

**Table 9.7** Average % Opposition Party Pledge Fulfilment (Full Only) by Consensus with Another Opposition Party

	<i>Average % Fully- Redeemed</i>	<i>Standard Deviation</i>	<i>N of Parties</i>
<i>Pledges Shared between Opposition Parties</i>	<b>36.0</b>	<b>28.5</b>	<b>20</b>
<i>Pledges Not Shared between Opposition Parties</i>	26.7	15.7	20
Ind. Samples t-test (1-tail)	$T^*=1.26$		

\*p=0.108

**Hypothesis 24: “Opposition party election pledges are more likely to be acted upon if they are supported in the government agreement than if they are not” (Thomson 1999, 44)**

There is a third possible reason why an opposition pledge that is not shared with a party in government might be redeemed by the government. If an opposition party pledge was included in the programme for government, we would also expect it to be more likely to be redeemed. The reasons why parties negotiating a programme for government might include opposition party pledges were discussed in Section 9.2.

Tables 9.8 and 9.9 show the results of the difference of means tests, 9.8 using both partially- and fully-redeemed pledges as the dependent variable and 9.9 using fully-redeemed pledges only as the dependent variable. The results displayed in Table 9.8 suggest that on average c.74% of opposition party pledges which are supported in the programme for government are partially- or fully-redeemed as compared with just c.37% of opposition party pledges which are not supported in the programme for government.



This compares with just 63% of government party pledges which were redeemed (either partially or fully) if supported in the government agreement. Table 9.9 corroborates the broad findings of Table 9.8. Both differences of means are statistically significant.

**Table 9.8** Average % Opposition Party Pledge Fulfilment (full and partial) by Support in Government Programme

	<i>Average % Fully/Partially Redeemed</i>	<i>Standard Deviation</i>	<i>N of Parties</i>
<i>Supported in Government Programme</i>	<b>73.6</b>	<b>21.7</b>	<b>15</b>
<i>Not supported in Government Programme</i>	37.3	20.8	15
Paired Sample t-test (1-tail)	$T^*=4.71$		

\*p= 0.000

**Table 9.9** Average % Opposition Party Pledge Fulfilment (full only)by Support in Government Programme

	<i>Average % Fully- Redeemed</i>	<i>Standard Deviation</i>	<i>N of Parties</i>
<i>Supported in Government Programme</i>	<b>38.8</b>	<b>25.9</b>	<b>15</b>
<i>Not Supported in Government programme</i>	23.6	16.2	15
Ind. Samples t-test (1-tail)	$T^*=2.08$		

\*p=0.028

**Hypothesis 25: Parties forming a minority coalition are more likely than parties forming majority governments to fulfil pledges of parties outside of government**

The fourth and final possible reason why governments might adopt the non-consensual pledges of parties in opposition relates to the fact that some governments do not control a working majority of seats and therefore need to garner support. One possible way to secure such support is to cede policy concessions to select parties in opposition.

Testing for a difference of means of percentage opposition party pledge fulfilment between the two types of government formation, we find that there is a large difference between the respective means. Table 9.10 shows that where both fully- and partially-

redeemed pledges are included in the comparison of means, minority administrations redeem c.50% of opposition manifesto pledges as compared with 36.2% for majority governments. Excluding partially-redeemed pledges (Table 9.11), the percentages fall to c.32% for minority administrations and 21% for majority governments. Parties in governments with less than a majority of seats appear to trade policy concessions with parties outside of government in return for their support. Largely due to the small number of cases, however, the results are not statistically significant.

**Table 9.10** Average % Opposition Party Pledge Fulfilment (Full and Partial) by Minority Versus Majority Status of Government

	<i>Average % Fully- /Partially-Redeemed</i>	<i>Standard Deviation</i>	<i>N of Parties</i>
<i>Pledges of Opposition Parties while Minority Gov't. in Office</i>	<b>50.0</b>	<b>20.1</b>	<b>6</b>
<i>Pledges of Opposition Parties while Majority Gov't in Office</i>	36.2	17.8	9
Ind. Samples t-test (1-tail)	$T^*=1.37$		

\*p=0.100 Unequal variances assumed.

**Table 9.11** Average % opposition party pledge fulfilment (full redemption only) by minority versus majority status of government

	<i>Average % Fully- Redeemed</i>	<i>Standard Deviation</i>	<i>N of Parties</i>
<i>Pledges of Opposition Parties while Minority Gov't. in Office</i>	<b>31.8</b>	<b>19.1</b>	<b>6</b>
<i>Pledges of Opposition Parties while Majority Gov't. in Office</i>	21.4	11.4	9
Ind. Samples t-test (1-tail)	$T^*=1.21$		

\*p=0.132. Unequal variances assumed.

### 9.3.1 Simultaneous Impact of Variables

To see what impact the variables have on fulfilment when all of the independent variables are allowed to operate simultaneously, I constructed two logistic regression models. One was tested where all fully- and partially-redeemed pledges were placed in the “Redeemed” Category (“Fully- and Partially-Redeemed”) and the second where all partially-redeemed pledges were coded as “Not Redeemed” (“Fully-Redeemed Only”). In both of these

models I am just concerned to look at the extent to which pledge fulfilment of opposition pledges can be predicted. Therefore I selected only those pledges that were made by a party which after the election went into opposition. The independent variables selected were: pledge shared with a party now in government, pledge not dissensual with party in government, pledge shared between opposition parties, pledge not dissensual between opposition parties, pledge supported by the programme for government, and finally, whether the government of the day was in a minority position. For the first four variables, if the pledge had the characteristics mentioned then it was coded 1. Finally, if the administration had a minority of seats, it was coded 1.

**Table 9.12** Dependent Variable: Opposition Party Pledge Fulfilment

Variable	Fully-and Partially- Redeemed		Fully- Redeemed Only	
	Odds-Ratios	SE	Odds-Ratios	SE
Constant	0.51**	0.12	0.25**	0.14
Opposition Party Pledge Shared with Gov't Party	1.57*	0.21	1.68*	0.21
Opposition Party Pledge Not Dissensual with Government Party Pledge	0.00	8.84	0.01	8.93
Opposition Party Pledge Shared with Another Opposition Party	2.15**	0.25	1.52	0.24
Pledge Supported in the Government Programme	1.83*	0.27	1.24	0.26
Majority versus Minority Government (Min=1)	1.83**	0.16	1.90**	0.17
N	711		711	
Model Chi-squared	67.35**		42.09**	
-2 Log Likelihood	916.38		832.73	
Cox and Snell R-squared	0.09		0.06	
Nagelkerke R-squared	0.12		0.08	

\* p is less than or equal to 0.05, \*\*p is less than or equal to 0.01

Both models suggest that when all other selected variables are taken into account, the two variables to have the strongest impact on the odds of opposition parties' pledges being redeemed, regardless by which method "Redemption" is being measured, are where an opposition pledge is shared with at least one party in government and when the government that forms is a minority administration. Where either variable is present, given the inclusion of the other variables specified in the model, an opposition party's pledge is nearly twice as likely to be redeemed than where the variable is absent. The "Fully- and Partially-Redeemed" model shows that support in the government programme

also makes pledges more than twice as likely to be redeemed, taking all other independent variables into account. This result is significant at  $p < 0.01$ . In the second model, “Fully-Redeemed Only,” however, the odds ratio falls to 1.24 and the level of significance rises to 0.42. Finally, a pledge made by at least two opposition parties would appear according to both models to be an aid to getting the government to redeem the pledge, though it is only in ‘Fully- and Partially-Redeemed’ that the finding is actually statistically significant.

Overall, the model that includes partially-redeemed pledges alongside fully-redeemed pledges in the “Redeemed” dependent variable predicts pledge redemption less well than “Fully-Redeemed Only.” The pseudo R-squareds are much higher for the first model than for the second, but the  $-2$  Log Likelihood for the second would indicate a better model fit. Having said that, neither of the models perform well.

So what can be concluded from this section? A party in opposition after an election, should expect that many of the pledges it shared with a party in government are likely to be redeemed, especially if the government is likely to have a minority of seats in parliament. However even if few of its manifesto pledges are shared with a party in government, it is likely that many of its non-consensual pledges will still be redeemed. This may be because some of its pledges were supported in the government programme, in return for parliamentary support for the proposed government. Alternatively, the parties in government may be fearful that various parties of the opposition are growing more popular on the back of particular policies and decide, as a strategy to minimise such risks, to adopt these popular opposition policies. Finally where the opposition is united on an issue, the parties in government are more likely to try to “steal their thunder” than where only one opposition party makes a particular stance. In general, the theoretical expectations for opposition party pledge redemption are vindicated well by the tests in this section.

## 9.4 Conclusion

We know that in Ireland between 1977 and 2002, on average c.45% of opposition party’s pledges were either fully- or partially-redeemed by the party or parties in government. This compares with c.50% for parties in government (See Table 7.10, Chapter 7). Albeit if we exclude partially-redeemed pledges, opposition pledge fulfilment reached only c.28%, but as compared with only c.36% for government parties. In Chapter 8, I concentrated on looking at factors that might boost government party pledge redemption. In this chapter, I have focussed on factors that enhance the likelihood of opposition party pledges being redeemed. Clearly, the greater the number of factors, at any one election, pulling

government party pledge redemption up and the lower the number of factors promoting opposition party pledge redemption, the more likely it is that both the fourth and fifth requirements of the test of Partisan Democracy will be satisfied. Again, these are:

*parties redeem more policy promises when in government than when they are in opposition* (Klingemann, Hofferbert and Budge 1994, Thomson 1999), and *parties, if they get into government after an election, generally redeem the policy promises they offered before the election* (Sullivan and O'Connor 1972, 1257).

The findings with regard to the explanation of both opposition party pledge inclusion in the programme for government and their fulfilment are fairly robust. Sharing pledges with a negotiating party and the prospective government's controlling only a minority of seats appear to increase the percentage of opposition party pledges that are supported in the programme for government. Once supported in the programme for government, it is more likely that the pledge will be redeemed than one without such support. Opposition party pledge redemption is also more likely where the government in question is in a minority position. However the two factors that are most strongly associated with opposition party pledge fulfilment are where the pledge is also made by a party in government and if not by another party of government, by another party in opposition. Where an opposition party pledge is also made by a party in government it might be suggested that any of these opposition pledges are redeemed by default. The government was going to take the action anyway.

There is little difference between the importance of the various independent variables used in the "Pledge Fulfilment" section depending on the dependent variable used – i.e., whether only "Fully-Redeemed" pledges are counted as "Redeemed" or whether "Partially Redeemed" are included as well. This is surprising as, when government parties decide to take the ideas of the opposition, it might have been expected that they would deliberately only take parts of the ideas, thereby putting their own gloss on them. Or alternatively in the process of the government carrying out its own policies, it inadvertently redeems parts of those of the opposition. An example of the latter might be where an opposition party pledges to increase social welfare spending in real terms by 3% whilst a government party pledges to increase the old age pension by 1.5% (ahead of inflation). By default, the government party has gone some way towards carrying out the opposition party's pledge if it meets its own commitment.

It was suggested in Hypothesis 5, Chapter 4, that a number of other reasons might lie behind the government redemption of opposition party pledges, reasons that have not been tested here. One such reason suggested was that, in coalition cases, the parties in government are ideologically to either side of an opposition party/parties on a number of

major dimensions and therefore the opposition's pledges are a natural compromise point between the government parties. A second potential explanation rests with the idea that government action is a slow and ponderous animal which requires a great deal of time and effort to get a momentum going. In other words action taken in one government time period is only concluded in, and therefore attributed to, the next government time period. This last contention was looked at within the context of my study of arts pledges in Ireland, in Chapter 6. In Chapter 6, it was found that few pledges, for whose redemption the government parties of the day were credited had actually been set in train by the preceding administration.

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## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> It should be expected that there might be differences between the logistic regression results and the difference of means tests for two reasons. First and most obviously, the logit co-efficients are produced for any single independent variable, holding all of the other variables constant. This means that, unlike the t-tests, a variety of other independent factors are taken into account when looking at the independent impact of a single variable on the dependent variable, in this case, pledge inclusion in the programme for government. Second, the cases in the multivariate models are the raw pledges whilst the cases for the t-tests are the percentages of each relevant party's pledges included in the programme when the independent factor is present versus when it is not. It is the aggregate of the percentages of any given party's pledges in its manifesto of a particular year that are supported in the programme for government that goes into making up the mean to be tested.

<sup>2</sup> Derived from Thomson 1999, 47

## CHAPTER 10

### CONCLUSION

#### 10.1 Introduction

In this thesis, I set out to uncover the nature of the programme-to-policy linkage in Ireland, thereby seeking to establish whether or not Irish parties are likely to make a difference to the sorts of public policies that are set in motion. I set out to do this adopting a particular conception of party competition. To summarise this theory again: political parties stand for a particular collection of policies that in some way are representative of the views of some portion of the electorate. It is suggested that parties stand for those policies, in some cases, not because they are truly ideologically-committed to them but because they think it will help them get into office. Once a party takes office, it both can and will redeem the pledges made in the manifestos that it published prior to the election. Therefore, government policy will be determined by the party composition of government and who owns what portfolio, “holding [constant] the distribution of power in parliament and in extra-parliamentary arenas, institutional arrangements, adaptation to environments, socio-economic circumstances and international independence” (Schmidt 2002, 168). The primary reason for parties fulfilling their promises is that they fear a voter backlash if they do not, as part of the vote calculus is assumed to take into account the likelihood of parties behaving as promised. That likelihood is determined both by the consistency of past actions with past promises and past party actions with present promises. The assumption by the parties is that if they do not behave “honourably”, the voters may punish them by switching their votes elsewhere. Parties therefore compete not only on the desirability of their sets of policies to the voters but also on their reputations as “honest brokers”.

The observable implications of this conception of party competition were said to be seven-fold. The first is that parties stand for different policy platforms. The second is that voters perceive these different stances. The third is that voters cast their ballots on the basis of these different policy stances. The fourth is that parties, should they get into office after an election, carry through more of their own promises made before the election than they do of the opposition parties’ promises, with few opposition party pledges at all expected to be redeemed. The fifth is that parties are faithful to their promises, in that they



carry out many of the pre-election promises that they made. The sixth is that, voters punish parties who do not behave in government as predicted in their manifestos. The final observable implication is that government action is largely anticipated in party manifestos. The seven conditions of the theory have rarely been tested altogether in one project/piece of work. Generally, the focus of prior research has *either* been on measuring the differences between party policy positions *or* on the parties' faithfulness to pre-election promises once office-holders.

I acknowledged at the start of the thesis that this pledge approach to testing for a partisan difference in public policy output was less than perfect. Not all possible determinants (socio-economic, parliamentary, extra-parliamentary, etc) of whether or not a particular pledge is redeemed are taken into account and as importantly, the extent to which the fulfilment of pledges from manifestos account for the universe of government actions during a term of office has not been established across all policy areas. Obviously, if most public policy is made during the course of office, indeed often carried over from social partnership deals, then the relevance of manifestos and pledges at all to the determination of how and why parties make a difference is questionable. The course of this thesis was largely designed to show firstly – do parties behave as Downs hypothesised? do they do what they say they will? and under what circumstances/constraints? – and secondly, does adherence to manifesto promises concurrently indicate support for the thesis that public policy is largely determined by the party composition of government?

## **10.2 Principal Findings**

In this thesis I looked at all of the seven conditions of this pledge approach to testing for a partisan difference in public policy; i.e., the mandate (See discussion Section 2.1, Chapter 2 for appropriate use of term). In each subsection of 10.2 below, I summarise the findings of my own and others' research against each condition.

### **10.2.1 Different Irish Parties Stand for Different Policies?**

In Table 3.3, of Chapter 3, a breakdown of the parties' pledges by MRG broad issue category is displayed. Clearly in terms of the number of pledges that each party makes in

each of the seven areas – External Relations, Freedom and Democracy, the Political System, the Economy, Welfare and Quality of Life, Fabric of Society and Social Groups – the parties do concentrate their pledges differently on the various issue areas. It is possible however that “number of pledges” is a poor measure of party difference in that while one party may have three or four subclauses to one pledge, another party may delineate each as a separate pledge. To ensure that the differential number of pledges is not disguising “sameness” of intention, Hypothesis 2 in Chapter 7 should be turned to. Table 7.3 indicates the extent to which each column party shared pledges with any of the other parties in the system at each of the elections (by row) being studied. From this table, it can be calculated that about seven out of ten pledges of the parties in Ireland are unrelated to a pledge made by any other party in the system. Other research elsewhere corroborates these findings (See for example CD-Rom of MRG positions for Ireland in Budge et al 2001 or Laver and Garry 2000). The Irish parties do stand for different policies.

What is most noteworthy about the analysis of types of pledges made is the low number of dissensual pledges to be found (by “conflictual” or “dissensual”, I mean that two or more pledges were pulling in opposite directions in one policy area). Less than 10% of all parties’ pledges in Pomper and Lederman’s study of the U.S. and c.14% for Rose’s study of the U.K. were dissensual between parties (Pomper and Lederman 1980, 168; Rose 1984, 68). In Ireland, less than 1% of pledges across all of the parties were actually conflictual. Typically in Irish manifestos, the parties lay out their plans for action in each of the policy areas that they deal with. Each manifesto is a statement of the party’s priorities should it get into office, and while the specific nature of the pledge clearly differs from party to party, rarely do they contradict another party’s pledge.

Fianna Fáil, at one election, might propose a Christmas bonus for pensioners (1981), Fine Gael might suggest increasing the grants to the Mna Ti (women who house and cater for children visiting the Gaeltacht to study Irish). These pledges are not mutually exclusive (also termed dissensual or conflictual) nor are they consensual. The parties are simply talking past each other, neither in agreement or disagreement with each other.

### **10.2.2 Voters Perceive the Irish Parties’ Different Policy Stances?**

Survey data and analysis available for the period 1997-2002 would suggest that the Irish electorate does perceive policy differences between the parties. When respondents were asked to proffer the issues about which they were most concerned and which party they were most likely to vote for, analysis of the results showed that they were more likely to

vote for particular parties where certain policy areas were a concern to them. For example, if the economy in 2002 was mentioned as a concern by the respondent, the voter had even odds of voting for Fianna Fáil (Garry et al. 2003, 133).

It is commonly-accepted in newspapers and academic writings, that the Irish parties provide less policy choice than is available to voters elsewhere (See for example, Coakley 1999, 26). Perhaps part of the reason for this conclusion is that manifestos and policy debate in general in Ireland are not generally conflictual, certainly not in the same vocal way as those of our closest neighbours in the Houses of Westminster. Part of the reason for this clearly comes down to the fact that there are more parties in the Irish system and perhaps inevitably, more overlap between their policies. Another part of the explanation may simply come down to the fact that in true representative fashion, the Dáil reflects the interests of a small and relatively homogeneous society whilst the House of Commons does not. In other words, the stances of the political parties reflect the relative consensus in society as a whole.

### **10.2.3 The Irish Electorate Votes on the Basis of Their Preferred Policies, Taking into Account the Differential Likelihoods of the Parties to Renege on Their Various Promises?**

The analysis in Chapter 3 indicates that many Irish voters still vote along party lines, though perhaps fewer than in years gone past. As it is difficult to discern which is antecedent – the liking for a party or the liking of a set of policies – the fact that many voters are still shown to vote on these party grounds indicates that policy could be a component of that choice (assuming the party still stands for the same sorts of policies over time). This fairly general conclusion must be tempered by the fact that it is based on fairly lean evidence provided by Irish survey questions dealing with voter motivations and transfer patterns (which have obvious limitations for inferences about voter concerns about policy).

The following question was asked in a survey in 1997: “During this election campaign, politicians of all parties have made numerous promises as to what they will do if they are elected. Do you personally believe that our politicians, if elected, will deliver on the promises they made during the election campaign or not?” Results suggested that only 21% of people believed that the politicians elected would redeem their pre-election promises.<sup>1</sup> The most sceptical among those interviewed were those voters intending to vote for the Green Party, only 3% of whom believed the politicians elected would redeem

their electoral pledges. However it is not clear from the question, whether we should infer that the Green respondents thought it unlikely that the Green Party would get into government or whether they thought if the Greens did get in, they would renege on their promises.

We should therefore suspect that most voters do not see a difference between the parties in terms of their faithfulness and therefore, if motivated to vote on the basis of policy preferences, will choose the party representing their most preferred bundle of policies (assuming no strategic voting). However it should not be expected that they are motivated to vote on the basis of policy alone, and that endorsement of manifestos is often by default. The voter chooses its favoured party or candidate or party leader and therefore often its manifesto by default.

#### **10.2.4. Parties in Government Redeem More of their Own Pledges than Those of Parties in Opposition?**

The fact of a party being in government had only, at best, a very moderate relative impact on the redemption of its own manifesto pledges as compared with those of the parties in opposition. Pledges of parties in government were not found to be statistically any more likely to be redeemed by the government of the day than pledges of parties in opposition. Part of the reason for this is that where an opposition party's pledges are shared with a party in government, of which on average c.21% of all opposition party pledges were, they are more likely to be redeemed.

Negotiating parties' pledges are however far more likely to be included in the programme for government than are non-negotiating parties' pledges. Typically c.31% of a negotiating party's pledges are supported in the government programme as compared with just 16% of non-negotiating parties' pledges. It was found in Chapter 9 that a pledge being supported in the government programme was a less strong predictor of opposition pledge redemption than the opposition pledge being shared with a party in government. However, that opposition pledges are cherry-picked at all for insertion into the government programme would imply, for some at least, the government's intention of redeeming them. Such cherry-picking was found more likely to occur where minority governments were being negotiated.

Even if not included in the programme for government, opposition pledges or certainly parts of them, were over twice as likely to be redeemed if the opposition presented a united front on them than if they were divided on the issue. Parties in

government would seem to indulge in potential damage limitation exercises, adopting policies on which the opposition might appear strong to the public and thereby posing as a credible alternative to the government.

The sheer fact is that parties in government feel free to borrow opposition ideas once in government. In fact, of all the opposition pledges that were not shared with a party in government and that were not supported in the negotiated programme for government, some 40% of pledges made were adopted by the parties in government.

### **10.2.5 Parties that Get into Government Generally Redeem the Policy Pledges that They Give in their Manifestos?**

Moving then on to the fifth observable implication – do parties fulfil their promises, if they get the chance? The Irish political parties that get into government, do, by and large, redeem their pre-election promises, if they can. On average, some 50% of government party pledges made at each election are either partially or fully redeemed by the government of the day. This one figure however disguises the fact that at some elections over 80% of a government party's pledges were redeemed while at others, fewer than 20%-redeemed might be recorded. A number of factors emerged that were shown to impact on a party in government's ability to redeem its pledges but only when all other independent factors were also taken into account. The single factor t-tests showed that on their own, only one of the independent variables was shown to have a significant impact on pledge redemption: this was where the government party's pledge was shared with a party in opposition. When analysed together through logistic regression analysis, the strongest predictor of pledge redemption was also where the government party pledge was shared with a party in opposition. Interestingly, if the party was in a single party administration, its pledges were only very marginally more likely to be redeemed than if in a coalition.

How able a party in a coalition administration is to fulfil its promises, at least partially, was shown to be dependent on a number of other factors. According to the individual level t-tests, support in the government programme and sharing the pledge with one's partner in government were good indicators that the pledge would be redeemed. Most important to the redemption of a party's pledges according to both logit models (i.e. where both partial and full redemption counted as redeemed for the coding of the dependent variable and then, where just full redemption was used) was sharing the pledge with a party in opposition. This made the pledge nearly three times more likely to be fully

and partially redeemed than a coalition party pledge which was not shared with the opposition. Control of the relevant portfolio was another factor. Where the two or more parties going into government together had independently put the same pledge in their respective manifestos also indicated a greater likelihood of a pledge being redeemed as opposed to where such “agreement” was absent. Negotiating parties’ pledges are themselves more likely to be negotiated into the programme for government if the parties negotiating the agreement, concur on the pledge (i.e., both of their respective manifestos contain the pledge). Where the pledge was made on an economic or “Fabric of Society” issue, as opposed to “Social Groups”, it was also more likely to be redeemed.

### **10.2.6 Irish Voters Punish Parties that Renege on their Pre-Election Promises?**

One writer has suggested that Irish parties in coalitions take the threat of electoral punishment seriously. Mitchell (2000, 142) writes: “Although we have very little direct evidence of the precise relationship between the “policy” performance of a coalition and its subsequent electoral fate, the parties involved certainly behave as though there is a strong tangible connection. Parties in government vigorously attempt to implement their key policies.” Another writer, O’Halpin (1992, 178), suggests that if the Irish parties are indeed fulfilling their pledges for fear of electoral retribution they are wasting their time as “there is little sign that the national electorate exacts revenge on a party that forgets its policy promises or rewards one that honours them in government.” Is there any hard evidence, however, to suggest that voters switch their votes away from unpredictable parties to more predictable ones, even if the latter’s policies are less palatable? Do voters blame government parties for not fulfilling the policies that were promised? We need to find an answer to this question to complete the second last of the seven tests comprising a mandate test of Partisan Theory (See Section 2.1). It is important that we can answer this question, for if voters at elections clearly do not castigate governments that ignore their policy promises, then it is not credible to believe that parties will be afraid of losing votes on this basis. Fear of retribution, under such circumstances, could not be the driver behind parties’ redeeming the bulk of their manifesto pledges when in government.

In Section 3.43, empirical evidence from studies of transfer patterns and mass surveys of voter motivations was cited to suggest that approximately half of all Irish voters use party choice, and the other half, preferred candidate, as the determinant of their vote. Some of those who profess to vote according to choice of party may like their preferred

party best on the basis of the policy choices that they have offered in the past, and through which the voter's identification with the party grew, or on the basis of current policies. In this subsection, I shall look more closely at the meaning of "policies" and "policy choices" in the determination of the vote.

The course of this discussion of the sixth requirement is as follows: in the next part, I review two broad theories of voter punishment of errant parties. In "Tests of Voter Punishment Theories", I review previous tests of these theories. In the following subsection, I cite the findings of tests conducted for Ireland and their endorsement (or otherwise) of the two theories of voter punishment. I shall also look at how pledges have been treated in the Irish political arena and the importance attached to them by parties and the media alike. In the final subsection "Voting Behaviour by Perceived Government Performance in Ireland", I also summarise the degree to which Downs' theory with regard to the faithfulness of parties to their pledges is applicable to Ireland.

### Theories of Voter Punishment

In theory, voters can only punish parties for past actions. If voters are driven to vote purely on this basis, then they are voting retrospectively. There are two broad theories of retrospective voting, one attributable to Downs (1957), another to Key (1966) (Fiorina, 1981).

Downs' theory views voters as policy-driven and cost-conscious (in information-gathering terms). When voters make their voting decision, assuming rationality (which Downs does), they decide which party's *future* policies they prefer. For the incumbent parties, the policies that voters will scrutinise are, however, their records in office, which are considered better and less-costly predictors of future behaviour than current policy promises (Downs 1957, 107). Opposition parties, have no recent record in office to call upon, and therefore must be *reliable* in order for voters to be able to predict their future actions (i.e., their current promises must reasonably predict what they will do, if elected)(Downs 1957, 107).

This is not to say that both government and opposition parties will not seek to be both *reliable* and *responsible*. Government parties can never be sure when they will be returned to the opposition benches and, therefore, will seek to be reliable when in office to carry a solid reputation forward into opposition (Downs 1957, 107). Opposition parties, by corollary, once elected will seek to be responsible (i.e., does not renounce its former actions in its new manifesto), in that the policies that get a party successfully elected at one time-period are likely to be re-adopted, in the same hopes, at later time-periods (Downs

1957, 109). If parties are not responsible and reliable, the voters cannot predict what these parties will do should they get elected to office. Downs argues that under such circumstances, new parties will be formed to provide voters with rational policy alternatives (Downs 1957, 107). Such a threat will cause all existing parties to be increasingly responsible and reliable.

Downs' theory suggests that "in deciding how to vote, the rational citizen [will] compare the performance of the incumbent administration to the platform promises of the challenger rather than compare both sets of platform promises" (Fiorina 1981, 46). Therefore when assessing the policies on offer from incumbent parties, the voter will look at the actions taken by those parties in office. From those past actions, the voter "will extrapolate future actions [...] and calculate the consequences of those actions in future environments" (Fiorina 1981, 196; Downs 1957, 105). Fiorina (1981), himself, also endorses this interpretation of voting. If both parties are seen as equally trustworthy, then voters will cast their ballots on the basis of their most-preferred set of policies. However if opposition parties are unreliable or the government parties contradict their actions in office by offering radically new manifesto policies, the calculus changes. As Downs explains - the voter "would rather vote for a party that can be relied upon to carry out its imperfect proposals than one whose behaviour cannot be predicted at all" (Downs 1957, 107). Fiorina (1981, 196) interprets the "vote", in this theory, as a vote for policy instrument rather than policy outcome. Voters do not just care about the outcomes of parties' actions but want to know how the parties intend to achieve these.

To elucidate the latter point; a party might promise to raise income taxes (policy instrument) as part of a plan to improve the state's health service (policy outcome). The party might raise income taxes, in which case, their pledge, according to my methodology, was redeemed. However this does not imply that automatically the state's health services were objectively improved for the patient, even less, that subjectively they were improved (the latter matters more in Key's theory).

An alternative theory is that put forward in the traditional 'reward-punishment theory' of V.O.Key (1966). In this theory, it is suggested that voters cast their ballots on precisely the opposite basis of that theorised for Downs' voters: policy outcomes. Fiorina (1981, 13) explains that, according to Key, "elections have no policy implications other than generalised acceptance or rejection of the status quo. The voter either has confidence in the incumbent's judgement and abilities or does not." In Key's theory, the opposition "cannot play the role of the imaginative advocate, for it is a captive of the majority (Key 1966, xii). As with Downs', the voter must be able to attribute blame to the government party for it to remain accountable (Fiorina 1981, 202). Attribution of blame (for either the state of the economy (Key) or default on promises (Downs)) may however be difficult



where a coalition or minority administration has been in office (Lewis-Beck and Paldam 2000, 120).

### Tests of Voter Punishment Theories

Fiorina (1981) explains that these two broad theories of retrospective voting are only distinguishable from each other when political means and political outcomes are clearly different. “When such a separation is not possible or, at any rate, not present in the political debate, the competency theory of retrospective voting merges with the Downsian theory in that approval or rejection of the past is tantamount to approval or rejection of existing policies and presumably their continuance” (Fiorina 1981, 14). How can we tell which it is, in any political system – political means or political end - that determines voters’ ballots? Fiorina (1981, 195) attempts to answer this question with reference to voting in the U.S. by looking at available survey data. He concludes that the data simply do not make a clear distinction between ends and means. Alvarez, Nagler and Willette (2000, 251) suggest that whether issues or economic outcomes are more important at an election varies across countries and time.

A multitude of tests have been performed to assess the extent to which voters punish parties for policies that they are unhappy with. Most of these analyses have concentrated on the connection between economic performance and the vote and suggest that electorates “punish economic downturn more than they reward economic upturn” (Lewis-Beck and Paldam 2000, 118). The degree of punishment may, however, vary according to a number of different factors. Powell and Whitten (1993, 410) suggest that punishment for a weak economic indicator will be particularly heavy where that indicator is strongly salient for the government party (e.g. unemployment levels for a left-wing government). Anderson (2000, 168) suggests that “voters’ economic assessments have stronger effects on government support when it is clear who the target is [to blame], when the target is sizeable, and when voters have only a limited number of viable alternatives to throw their support to.” By and large, the analyses have supported the idea that voters’ concerns are largely sociotropic rather than egotropic – in other words, they are more concerned about economic conditions at a macro- rather than a micro- level – though there are country differences (Lewis-Beck and Paldam 2000, 118; See also Sanders 2000). Lewis-Beck and Paldam (2000, 118) conclude in their summary of approximately 20 articles or so on economic voting that, “there is very little difference between retrospective and prospective expectations, as people have largely static expectations.”

Fiorina's (1981, 128-9) analysis of panel data from the 1972-1976 U.S. Presidential elections suggests caution in interpreting these results. He showed that "an individual's partisan pre-dispositions exert an across-the-board influence on judgements of a president and his administration, though this influence is sometimes surprisingly weak." Marsh and Kennedy (2003, 7) argue that if partisanship lies behind votes cast for or against governments, then it is unlikely also to be a clear judgement on the performance of the government, as economic voting models tend to argue.

### Voting Behaviour by Perceived Government Performance in Ireland

Until very recently, little work had been done in the Irish context on the extent to which the Irish electorate systematically punishes governments for unsatisfactory policies. Two articles deal with the relationship between government popularity, as indicated in opinion polls, and economic indicators (Laver and Marsh 1999, 167-9). Harrison and Marsh (1994, 306) found that lagged inflation was an important determinant of support, indicated in opinion polls, for Fine Gael in government and lagged unemployment for Labour. However it was not important for either of the parties in opposition and neither factor altered Fianna Fáil's popularity, either in or out of office. Borooah and Borooah (1990), by contrast, showed strong relationships for the period 1974-1987 between various macroeconomic variables – inflation, interest rates, unemployment and new houses built, among others – and the lead of government over combined opposition in opinion polls. Marsh and Kennedy (2003), in a recent paper which forms part of a broader election study, have looked more closely at the relationship between vote and economic indicators. They suggest that Irish voters between 1969 and 2002 regularly routed unsatisfactory governments, evidenced by a change in the composition of government at every election between 1969 and 2002 (Marsh and Kennedy 2003, 2).

Focussing on the 2002 Irish Dáil election, Marsh and Kennedy's (2003) findings support the international evidence in favour of a strong link between economic performance and the vote. In their analysis of the allocation of blame and reward, the authors found that the out-going government had been returned by the electorate for doing well on the issues of health, the economy, and housing, issues that were strongly associated with vote (2003, 19). On issues where the government had been perceived to fare less well – such as the cost of living, transport and crime – a weaker link with the vote was discerned (2003, 19). Part of the reason for this weaker link, Marsh and Kennedy (2003, 10) suggest, is that Irish voters see governments as being responsible for different

policy areas to differing degrees. They suggest that, for tax, health, housing, the economy, unemployment and the cost of living, the government is held largely responsible whilst transport and crime are mostly seen as being beyond the scope of their control (2003, 24). Another part of the reason for a looser tie between these latter issues and the vote is that few voters believed that, on any of the specified issues, another party could have done better (Marsh and Kennedy 2003, 25). In fact, even on the government's weakest issue (transport), 62% of interviewees felt no other party could have done better.

Having said that, Marsh and Kennedy (2003, 11) discerned that the saliency of particular concerns benefited different parties to differing degrees. They suggest that Fianna Fáil benefited strongly from the perception of the improved state of the economy, although its coalition partner did not, whilst concerns about health and housing benefited the opposition (Marsh and Kennedy 2003, 20). The authors conclude that "it is partisanship in conjunction with evaluation that is most strongly associated with whether a voter blames or credits the government, or gives credit or blame elsewhere" (Marsh and Kennedy 2003, 11). In other words, not all of those who had positive assessments of the government's performance actually went on to vote for the government (Marsh and Kennedy 2003, 19).

The "evaluation" that the authors refer to, was assessed to be driven more by national considerations than household ones, for the vast majority of Irish voters (Marsh and Kennedy 2003, 20). This was a finding that the authors were surprised at, given the importance of localism in both voting and candidate choice (Marsh and Kennedy 2003, 20).

The authors suggest that Irish voters cast their ballots on the basis of both prospective and retrospective evaluations of policies (Marsh and Kennedy 2003, 20). This finding endorses Downs' rather than Key's theory. However, they conclude their analysis, asserting that Irish voters are "moved by issues of competence if not by issues of position" (Marsh and Kennedy 2003, 20), which owes more to Key (1966) than Downs (1957). Some Irish voters, according to this analysis (Marsh and Kennedy 2003), not only reward and blame parties in government on issues of past competence but also indicate, through their votes, which parties in the system, they think, will best manage the economy into the future.

On the basis of this one analysis of Ireland, we must conclude that the parties probably pay too much heed to their manifesto promises. Irish voters are more concerned with past and future competence in managing the economy than specific issues. The mandate effect in Ireland is weak at best. While it is clear that many voters see policy differences between the political parties, there is little evidence to suggest that Irish voters believe what their politicians promise them.

That does not mean that a political party should abandon its manifesto. For a political party, the considerations are complicated. No party wants to lose any voters, however small their number. A political party in office which flagrantly ignores its manifesto in the face of public opposition for doing so will disappoint voters who voted for the party primarily on the basis of policy issues (however few and far between these are). This does not make much sense however. Much of the rhetoric, debate and reporting around the last election in Ireland concentrated on the content of party pledges and promises. The parties often insert provisos into their manifestos for their pledges to be redeemed, stipulations about the general state of the economy and “EU agreement” and so on.<sup>ii</sup> Clearly the idea of being accused of “not sticking to their promises” is one that does not sit well with the parties. This is also evidenced by the publication of periodic progress reports during terms of coalition government, dating back to 1977 at the very latest. In such reports, the parties draw up a tally of government programme pledges, which in their view, were redeemed during their period of time in office.

Take the following quotes at the most recent election in May 2002. Ruairi Quinn, leader of the Labour Party (opposition party before and after election), rejecting the notion that they would join any coalition easily: “‘Labour will not join any government unless its six election pledges are met,’ he said. ‘If anyone wants to see a government that delivers on these pledges, then vote for the Labour Party’” (Brennock 2002). *The Irish Times*, a daily newspaper in the Republic, ran an occasional column named “Promises Promises” from January 2002 onwards offering a guide “to the strange and wonderful world of the pre-election pledge, an ephemeral and spectral entity which has the ability to resurface more times than a synchronised swimmer - yet flees from your grip, like a fistful of water, when you reach to claim it” (Humphreys 2002). Another of the multitude of “pledge” articles to come out during the campaign concerned itself with the memorable u-turns of parties in government – free car tax promised by Fianna Fáil at the 1977 election which was duly abolished and then reinstated and “health cuts hurt the old, the sick and the handicapped” from Fianna Fáil’s manifesto in 1987, which on entering government was promptly ignored (O’Brien 2002).

Why do parties continue to talk about and redeem large numbers of their manifesto promises, and the press to hound them on these promises, if the voter simply doesn’t vote on that basis? Thomson (1999, 65) has pointed out that what matters for pledges to be redeemed is the *party perception* of such a threat and not its reality. Obviously, without any evidence whatsoever of voter interest in pledges or their redemption over time, it might be expected that party perception of the threat of punishment for non-redemption of pledges would be very small and therefore that few pledges would be redeemed. We need not expect party perception of the threat of punishment and its reality to be perfectly

linear, but the two should broadly go hand-in-hand. Unfortunately we do not have longitudinal evidence for Ireland that might suggest whether or not economic voting is typical, as 2002 is the first time an election study was run here.

It may indeed be the case that, at most elections, some voters do decide between the parties in terms of issues and, hence, the parties' concern with pledges at the 2002 election. It was not the parties' faults that in 2002, voters switched tack and voted on the basis of competency to govern. One might also hypothesise that competency to govern is perceived as more important by voters when the economy is doing well. They want to vote in a party that will not destroy that prosperity. However when the economy is faring poorly, obviously different parties' proposals as to how they will get the economy moving again may be more important in the voters' minds. In summary, just because Irish voters have not, in the past, used policy instruments (issues) but economic competency as the determinant of their vote does not mean that parties can totally discount the possibility that voters might use such issues to decide their vote in the future.

Alternatively, it might be hypothesised that the Irish political parties are relatively risk averse; they do not know precisely how many voters are motivated to vote for them on the basis of the commitments made in their manifestos, and while they might suspect the numbers to be low, few will take the chance of annoying them, let alone providing the opposition and media with possible ammunition against them? As was mentioned earlier, it was found on the basis of the 1977-2002 data that on average c.50% of government party pledges are redeemed at any election. This is a lower average percentage than for any other country study performed so far, despite the fact that in Ireland three of the nine government periods were single-party administrations (as compared with the Netherlands which had none). Irish parties clearly try to redeem their manifesto pledges if they get into office but are either not compellingly driven to do so or cannot fulfil them all due to constraints of one sort or another. This drive to fulfil may be particularly strong amongst coalition parties, each trying to prove that they have not been outwitted or out-manoeuvred by their partner(s).

A final potential explanation might suggest that many of a government party's pledges are redeemed due to the fact that the manifesto is the primary plan that a party entering government has for action. Its secondary plans, as this thesis and that of Thomson (1999, 198) will aver, are those of the parties that went into opposition. Both the Irish and the Dutch parties when in office seem to fear little when adopting the partisan policies of opposition parties. Either politicians believe that the public will reward them for action, rather than the opposition for the original idea, or they don't believe either punishment or reward is likely, but thought the opposition had a good or practicable idea. One way or another, of Klingemann et al's models of the policy process, Ireland fits

somewhere in between their agenda and mandate models (Klingemann, Hofferbert and Budge 1994, ch.3). Post-election public policy is congruent with both the pre-election promises of the parties that after the election received the seals of office and the partisan promises of those parties that filled the opposition benches, but is weighted towards the former.

In Downs' "Theory of Responsibility and Reliability", he asserted that parties' actions should be predictable from their words (manifestos) and secondly, that parties' actions in one time period should be consistent with their actions in the preceding time period. The reason why they would, in his view, was that voters might transfer their vote from the less "reliable" and "responsible" party to the more. If parties in government rob from their opposition colleagues this means that while parties in government might still be "responsible", their actions in the next time period may not be perfectly foreseeable from their own manifestos. But if rather than adopting opposition party pledges, the parties in office had just invented new policy agendas, the result on the predictability of future action from their own manifestos would have been the same. The party in office is taking the same risk.

The available evidence for Ireland, therefore, suggests that, to the extent that voters cast their ballots on the basis of policy preferences, voters tend to reward or blame parties in government on the basis of their competency to govern. The extent of reward or blame may differ according to the precise area of concern to the voter, his perception of party control over that area and his perception of the saliency of that area to the different parties and a variety of other factors. This implies that those concerned with policy did not punish or reward parties predominantly on the basis of policy promises in the 2002 election. In other words, voters were more concerned in 2002 with the maintenance of the good life than how that would be achieved. Whether or not Irish parties are irrational, according to the Downsian rationale of fear of retribution, by acting on their promises cannot be discerned with the evidence from just one election.

### **10.2.7 Actions Promoted in Manifestos Account for the Vast Majority of Later Government Actions?**

Does the fact that the government programme-to-policy linkage is weak in Ireland imply that the Partisan Theory of Democracy does not best describe the form of governance under which Irish public policies are made? The answer is "No", it does not infer that.

It was noted in Chapter 6 that many of the actions the various Irish governments took in the period 1977-2002 in relation to the arts were never predicted in the parties'

manifestos or government programmes, though the latter was clearly a somewhat better predictor than the former. However even the government programme is only “a drop in the ocean” as far as quantifying what exactly a party does once in office. Just taking one simple example; in the government term 1977-1981, 162 bills passed through the Houses of the Oireachtas and were signed by the President. In total, for all of the parties present at that election, only 107 pledges were made, many of which would have been enacted through one of the five annual budgets rather than by distinctly separate pieces of legislation. Even the most competitive party system, operating under the type of competition conceived by Downs, would be very unlikely to redeem all of its pledges. In fact it is highly desirable, that parties do not do everything that they promised as this would indicate a dangerous rigidity of purpose entirely oblivious to outside events/sentiments.

All that I have tested in Chapters 7, 8 and 9 is the programme-to-policy linkage as mediated through political parties, elections and government programmes. The findings of this thesis are summarised below, in Table 10.1. In the “Aggregate Data 1977-2002” column, the results of the tests/summary evidence for the twenty-five years on aggregate are displayed. It should be remembered that these conclusions say nothing about all of the other policies that the relevant governments pursued in office that were not predicated on a manifesto or manifestos. As such, policies that are not predicated on manifestos but which are still pursued by parties in office may differ radically, or indeed not, according to the party or combination of parties which hold office (although obviously the counter-factual situation still applies – we cannot test what a different set of parties would have done in office).

**Table 10.1** Presence of Partisan Effect Test Requirements using the Programme-to-Policy Linkage in Ireland

	<b>Observable Implications</b>	<b>Aggregate Data 1977-2002</b>
<b>1</b>	Parties may be differentiated according to policy	Yes
<b>2</b>	Voters are aware of these different policies	Yes
<b>3</b>	Voters cast their ballots on the basis of these different policy agendas on offer	No
<b>4</b>	Policy promises of government parties are more likely to be redeemed than those of the opposition	No
<b>5</b>	Parties getting into government generally redeem their policy promises	No
<b>6</b>	Where parties do not remain faithful to their pre-election promises, the voters punish them at the following election	No
<b>7</b>	Actions promoted in the manifestos account for the vast majority of later government actions	No

### 10.3 Implications for Irish Politics and Irish Research on Public Policy

Bearing in mind that the programme-to-policy linkage only describes a small subsection of the universe of government actions, the following inferences may be drawn for the operation of partisan politics in Ireland: first, the Irish party system is relatively consensual. Many pledges are shared between parties. That the parties in government tend also to adopt many of the partisan policies of opposition parties suggests that part of the “difference” each government makes is in the government’s selection of opposition pledges and what pledges of their own they fulfil. The assumption would be that if instead the opposition had got into power, their selection of their own and their now oppositions’ pledges to be redeemed would have been different. However, that many government and opposition pledges are redeemed at each election does infer that the partisan differences provided by different government formations in this country are not likely to be terribly large.

The literature on policy-making in Ireland often concludes that as long as the parties in government can muster sufficient support for their proposed policies in the Dáil, that they will have a straight course through to enactment. Policy-making has therefore been thought to be the prerogative of the governing parties. This is of course true. This study has not negated that view but rather suggests that the origins of ideas for pledges may be far more cross-party than might previously have been thought. Of course, ideas for inclusion in manifestos may not be new or even originally partisan. Some may have been floated by the media previously, or suggested by another party, or be on the agenda of various interest groups or lobbyists or even in the process of being redeemed at the time of the manifestos being written. It may be the case that pledges are only constituted when parties try to claim ownership of ideas already in the system, and that that is why so many pledges tend to be shared between parties. Certainly, the indications from the study of arts policy suggest that in the earlier years of the study, the late 1970s and early 1980s, parties did tend to pledge items which either were already in-train or for which the legislation underpinning the proposed action had already been passed.

That voters are not likely to punish parties which have not redeemed parts of their manifestos is not a problem for Partisan Theory per se, more for Downs’ addition to the theory. Irish parties can still make a difference to the sorts of public policy outputs that emerge in a system over time. However, the primary rationale for why they would remain faithful to their pre-election promises is somewhat weakened. It is unlikely that Irish parties redeem their promises for fear of electoral retribution, that is, unless they overestimate hugely the likelihood of voters reacting adversely. Over time, such a



rationale is not really credible. The alternative reasons for party faithfulness to pre-election promises, as discussed in Chapter 1, Section 1.21, are that the parties themselves support those policies strongly (which is unlikely given the evidence from Laver and Hunt's survey (see page 55)) or that the manifesto is their only blueprint for action on the table.

#### **10.4 Ireland as a Comparative Case**

Irish parties are statistically-speaking as unfaithful to their pledges as parties in the Netherlands. Using just the comparable time period 1987-2002, the average full and partial redemption rate for Irish parties narrows to 52% as compared with the Dutch average of 57% (Thomson, 1999). On average c.80% of pledges in the U.S. and U.K. are redeemed. One reason for the higher redemption rates in these countries may be that in single party government systems, parties tend to be more faithful to their manifestos because they can be more faithful to them (though this was not a strong factor in Ireland).

The idea that parties that form a coalition government are less responsive than parties forming single-party administrations, in the sense that they depart from the manifestos or media coverage thereof, finds only very weak support here. The results showed that single party governments are better at redeeming their manifesto pledges than parties forming coalition governments and redeem higher levels of their manifesto pledges on average than of the coalitions' programme. However given the low number of cases of single party governments and the fact that each time it was a Fianna Fáil government should limit generalisations.

To be conclusive in comparing these results, other factors such as one-off economic events that might impact on a government's ability to enact its promises should also be analysed. However on the face of it the Irish parties would appear to be less faithful to their promises than most of the other countries analysed in this way.

#### **10.5 Future Research**

A first path to be followed should focus on how the manifesto is formulated. Luebbert (1986) discusses the potentially controlling influences of party members on the policy room for manoeuvre of party elites. We know very little about the role of government

departments and civil servants in the formulation of manifestos when the relevant parties are in government. Indeed, we are very ignorant still of the role of ministers, the party leader, members, advisors (both external and internal), policy and focus groups and then, interest groups, in determining what pledges get inserted into manifestos. The next big project in this area should focus on looking at the derivation of manifesto pledges in the wider context of society rather than just political parties.

Secondly, I know that in this thesis I did not explicitly record which types of pledges were redeemed by which type of instrument – primary legislation or secondary legislation – or by any instrument at all. The reason that this is important relates both to the transparency of government action and the extent to which different types of party/government formation favour different types of instruments. Are certain types of pledges using certain types of instruments more likely to be redeemed by certain parties than others? Part of reason that this endeavour was not done in this thesis was due to the time-scale of the project. Many of the sources of confirmation of whether or not a pledge was enacted in the early years of the study did not provide the necessary detail for such an analysis.

A comparative longitudinal study using the same pledge identification and redemption procedures but crucially across many different countries is sorely needed. In particular, there are a large number of countries with multi-party systems in which coalition is the norm, which would provide fruitful indicators of the representativeness of the studies in the area so far.

Having said all that, given that manifestos were shown not to determine much government action, another focus of study should focus on the broadening of sources of pledges. This was also suggested by Thomson (1999, 229). Using leaders speeches or speeches of all cabinet/shadow-cabinet members of a party prior to the election and coding them in the same manner as manifestos would be one suggestion. In addition, a couple of widely-read daily newspapers could be coded for the days of the campaign or merely the summary weekend editions. Finally, all appearances of the leaders of the parties on radio and television could be transcribed and coded for pledges, again over the campaign period or some subset of it.

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## Endnotes

i IMS Survey CMC/SOS/Id.7s-318 commissioned by the Irish Independent 03/06/97

ii See for example, the Progressive Democrat's election manifesto 1997, section headed "Budgetary Assumptions" or the Fine Gael manifesto for 1981, "A Better Future – Let the Country Win".

## APPENDIX I

### MANIFESTOS AND GOVERNMENT PROGRAMMES ANALYSED

#### Manifestos

Democratic Left. 1997. "Making the Future Work - The Democratic Left Vision".

Democratic Left. 1992. "A Programme for Change and Progress". General Election, November 1992

Fianna Fáil. 1992. "The Six-Point Plan for National Progress - We Can Make It Happen".  
Fianna Fáil - The Republican Party.

Fianna Fáil. 1989. "National Recovery – The Next Phase", Fianna Fáil – The Republican Party.

Fianna Fáil . 1987. "The Programme for National Recovery". Fianna Fáil -The Republican Party.

Fianna Fáil. 1982. "Election '82 - Fianna Fáil's Ten Point Programme" (February).

Fianna Fáil. 1981. "Our Programme for the '80s". Fianna Fáil – The Republican Party.

Fianna Fáil. 1977. "Manifesto '77".

Fine Gael. 1997. "Securing and sharing our prosperity". Fine Gael Manifesto 1997.

Fine Gael. 1992. "Priorities for Government 1992-1997. Let's Bring out the Best in the Country". Fine Gael.

Fine Gael. 1989. "Putting the Country First", Election '89.

Fine Gael. 1987. "We've done the Groundwork - Now Let's Build the Nation. Breaking out of this Vicious Circle", Election '87.

Fine Gael. 1982. "Jobs in the '80's – Fine Gael's Policy for Economic Recovery", October 1982.

Fine Gael. 1982. Speech by the Taoiseach, Dr. Garret Fitzgerald to Galway Chamber of Commerce, 30<sup>th</sup> January 1982.

Fine Gael. 1981. "A Better Future – Let the Country Win". National Director of Elections for Fine Gael.

Green Party, Comhaontas Glas. 1997. "Manifesto".

The Labour Party. 1997. "Vision and Challenges". Ireland Labour Manifesto 1997.

The Labour Party. 1992. "Making Ireland Work - A Two-Part Programme To Put Justice Into Economics ...&Trust Into Politics".

The Labour Party. 1989. "Now more than Ever", Labour's Policy Proposals Election '89.

The Labour Party. 1987. "People Matter Most", Labour Party Election '87 Manifesto.

The Labour Party. 1982. "Jobs, Equality and Justice with Labour", Election Programme , November 1982.

The Labour Party. 1982. "Labour Feb '82 Manifesto".

The Labour Party.1981. "Election Programme '81".

The National Coalition. 1977. "Programme for Progress".

The Progressive Democrats. 1997. "Tackling the two-tier society".

The Progressive Democrats. 1992. "Getting the Nation Working".

The Progressive Democrats. 1989. "Putting People First – Forcing Real Change" , Progressive Democrats Manifesto General Election 1989.

The Progressive Democrats. 1987. "A Nation that Works – Progressive Democrats Blueprint for Jobs, Fair Taxation and Social Justice" , February 1987.

The Workers' Party. 1989. "The Socialist Alternative", The Workers' Party General Election Manifesto 1989.

The Workers' Party. 1987. "No Job? Over Taxed? Welfare Cut? Forced to Emigrate? Fight Back with The Workers' Party", Manifesto General Election 1987.

The Workers' Party. 1982. "Workers Unite", General Election Manifesto (November)

Sinn Féin The Workers' Party. 1981. "Peace Work Class Politics", General Election 1981.

## **Government Programmes**

Fianna Fáil and The Progressive Democrats. 1997. “An Action Programme for the Millenium”.

Fine Gael, The Labour Party and Democratic Left. 1994. “A Government of Renewal – A Policy Agreement between Fine Gael, The Labour Party and Democratic Left”. December 1994.

Fianna Fáil and The Labour Party. 1992. “Fianna Fáil and Labour Programme for a Partnership Government 1993-1997 - A Government of Partnership”.

Fianna Fáil and The Progressive Democrats. 1989. “The Fianna Fáil -Progressive Democrats Programme for Government 1989-1993 In the National Interest”.

Fine Gael and The Labour Party. 1982. “Fine Gael/Labour Programme for Government”. December 1982.

Fine Gael and The Labour Party. 1981. “Programme for Government 1981-1986”.

## APPENDIX 2

### Coding Conventions

A pledge is defined as “Unequivocal support for an action that is testable”.

#### Unequivocal Support:

- 1) *Hard support*: “we will”, “we are committed to” ... certain action. Totally unconditional support. Code statement as ‘H’.
- 2) *Soft Support*: “We shall try to”, “We support”, “We must”, “We ought to”, “We propose” “Our major objective/aim is”, “we shall promote”... certain action. Also included in this category should be statements or headings such as “A key priority is”. Code as ‘S’.
- 3) *Conditional Support*: Where support is given by a party for a certain action (either hard or soft support) but that action intended requires a certain response from elsewhere (eg, conditional on EU financial support). Code statement as ‘C’. If the required secondary action does not occur, delete pledge. If it does occur, proceed to code pledge as either hard or soft, as applicable.

#### *Note:*

It is not strictly necessary for the statement to start off with the subjective “The Party will...” or “Fine Gael intends...”. If a line reads, for example, “The old age pension should be increased to £100 per week”, this should be counted as a soft pledge. Essentially the point is any statement that the coder feels places an obligation on the party to follow through on, even if that obligation is weak, and that statement is intrinsically testable then code the statement as a pledge. Rather than the coder imposing rules on the

party manifesto-writer, the coder try to understand whether a commitment (soft/hard) is being made in the context of the language of the document.

Where a pledge is repeated in a single manifesto, count the most detailed one as “the” pledge.

Take the following example: “Fianna Fáil will set up an agricultural agency to develop research activities into the area. A minister will be put in charge of this. Founding capital will be in the region of £400m”. These three sentences should not be coded as three separate pledges. The reason is that the latter two sentences are dependent on the first. If the agency is not set up then the following two sentences are irrelevant. Therefore it should only be one pledge.

There is an issue also with natural sentences. Take the following sentence “Women’s refuges will be given more funding and we will give £100m to help agencies that help the homeless this year”. The two parts to this sentence are in essence dealing with the same subject – funding to non-governmental agencies to help those in need.. Code this as one pledge. However, should you come across two parts of a sentence or more which do not have a strong common theme like “We shall pass legislation dealing with the problem of wandering horses and shall legislate against circus acts which inflict pain on animals” then code as separate. However most bit-part sentences are structured as they are because of common themes.

## **Action**

Do not code as a pledge:

- Where an action promised will take longer than the current period of office – ie time frame envisaged is >5yrs or party is referring to action that will be taken by them in their “next term of office”
- Where support is pledged for an idea, principle or concept unless it clearly refers to a practice in law which can be changed by law.
- Any statement which refers to the implementation of policy rather than policy output – ie, “unemployment must be eradicated” – do not include as a pledge, as the party is not committing itself to specific action but to an outcome.



## Testable

The following types of commitments to action should not be considered as testable, and therefore should not constitute pledges:

- “We shall simplify” – Whether action is successful or not depends entirely on subjective judgement.
- “We shall continue this policy of low personal and company taxation” – not a pledge as it is entirely subjective as to whether or not a 1%/5% increase in taxation rates would constitute a contravention of this policy or not.
- “We will encourage so-and-so to...”, “We will promote action by so-and-so”, “We shall press for”, “We shall negotiate” – onus is on someone other than just the political party to do the action. Unclear whose fault it would be if pledge was not redeemed, ie, the people being pressed or those doing the pressing?
- “We will review/review and reform” - do not include as pledge as statement is not necessarily testable
- “We will deal fairly” – Adverb negates pledge status as it becomes subjective as to whether or not pledge is fulfilled. However, don’t get bogged down in semantics. If the coder thinks it is testable then it should as such be coded.

## APPENDIX 3

### “Repeated” Pledges

In my analysis, identical pledges made at different elections are not counted as repeated pledges. This is because pledges are made at the start of each campaign and lapse at the end of each subsequent term of office. That an identical pledge is made at a following election is an entirely new commitment for a party.

Having said that, other analyses of pledges have recognised the importance of so-called “repeated pledges” and therefore I cannot ignore the issue entirely. In such analyses, the concentration is more on the following through of an idea to fruition rather than strict pledge fulfilment at each election. Thomson (1999, 89) suggests that where a pledge has appeared in a party’s earlier manifesto, it constitutes a core concern for the party. This re-issuance of a pledge may arise because the party that made the pledge was previously in opposition and therefore not in a position to redeem its own pledges. Indeed, it could even be a status quo pledge repeated. Or it may be that the party was in office, but consciously decided not to redeem it or was unable to do so. It is difficult to identify the motivation of a party repeating a pledge at the current election when it did not redeem the same pledge during an earlier term of office despite having had the opportunity to do so I have excluded them from my brief analysis below.

The repetition of a pledge across elections is, therefore, used by some as an indicator of the relative importance of that pledge. As such, I should anticipate that repeated pledges are more likely to be redeemed by parties that enter government after an election than pledges which are entirely new. This supposition is made on the proviso that the party repeating the pledge at the current election had not made the pledge previously before itself and was previously in office, thereby being in a position to redeem the pledge. As with other parts of my analysis, statements in favour of the status quo are not included. What emerges however does not support this hypothesis (Tables A and B). It is found that on average repeated pledges are no more likely than new pledges to be redeemed. In fact, election pledges of a party in government which were pledged by them in at the previous

election would appear less likely to be redeemed than new pledges, though these are not statistically-significant results.

*Table A Average Percentage Party Pledges Partially- and Fully-Redeemed if Repeated/Not*

	<i>Average % Fully- /Partially-Redeemed</i>	<i>Standard Deviation</i>	<i>N of Parties</i>
<i>Repeated Pledge</i>	<b>41.8</b>	<b>28.1</b>	<b>13</b>
<i>New Pledge</i>	49.4	24.4	15
Ind. Samples t-test (1-tail)	$T^*=-0.75$		

\* p=0.229

*Table B Average Percentage Party Pledges Fully-Redeemed if Repeated/Not*

	<i>Average % Fully- Redeemed</i>	<i>Standard Deviation</i>	<i>N of Parties</i>
<i>Repeated Pledge</i>	<b>38.2</b>	<b>28.8</b>	<b>13</b>
<i>New Pledge</i>	40.0	26.4	15
Ind. Samples t-test (1-tail)	$T^*=-0.17$		

\* p=0.434

In total, across nine separate governments, 59 manifesto pledges were ‘repeated’ from the previous election by at least one of the parties that got into office (See Table C). Of those 59 pledges, just 12 were redeemed. Of the original pledges made at the preceding elections, only one had been redeemed. This pledge, made by the Labour Party in 1981, was that “on such matters as adoption, illegitimacy and the social and economic rights of children should be given force in the Constitution so as to further equality, justice and human rights”. In fact, a referendum had already been held in 1979 to deal with the issue of adoption.

Table C

Election	1977	1981	1982F	1982N	1987	1989	1992	1994	1997
N of ‘Repeated’ Pledges	0	9	0	23	0	9	4	12	2
N Redeemed (Fully)	0	0	0	6	0	1	0	4	1
N Redeemed (Fully) at t-1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

What is transparent from reviewing the fifty-nine such pledges, is that most of these are long-term projects, radical changes to the system and proposals that were likely to be politically unpopular with sitting politicians. For example, in 1989 the Progressive Democrats pledged for the second election running to abolish the Seanad. In 1989, unlike 1987, the party made it into government, albeit with Fianna Fáil. The pledge, which would have been deemed ‘Redeemed’ had they at least introduced a referendum on the subject, was not redeemed. Other such large project pledges made by Progressive Democrats at that election fell similarly by the wayside – reducing the number of TDs (members of the Dáil) to 120 from 166, abolishing ministerial pensions for sitting TDs and so on. Other parties in the 1990s talked about establishing Garda Authorities and Family Courts yet, once in government, they weren’t redeemed either. Many of these pledges are perhaps meant as longer-term aims or goals or they are entirely aspirational but important for the parties’ images. By contrast, the repeated pledges that were redeemed have tended to be less taxing, involving the setting up of commissions for social welfare, a Combat Poverty Agency, extending the ban on smoky coal, and so on.

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